Strategic Planning
2022-2027
Letter from the Chair

Following a process recommended by the dean’s office and the UW Office of Strategic Consulting, a Biostatistics and Medical Informatics (BMI) Strategic Planning Committee has been working on a strategic plan for the department. I’m excited to share the committee’s findings as an important step in our efforts to improve BMI operations.

BMI is amidst a vibrant period of growth and is seeing tremendous developments in its research, training, and service programs. The number of faculty-initiated sponsored research projects is at an all-time high, with large-scale data-coordinating-center projects, NIH cooperative agreements, and over a dozen investigator-initiated NSF, PCORI, and NIH grants having BMI PI’s. The core service operations are more extensive than ever, with new cores, for example, in biostatistics and bioinformatics supporting large-scale projects in oncology, health disparities, and elsewhere. Last year BMI faculty and staff published over 400 research articles, maintained more than 100 software products, and participated in 387 distinct sponsored projects. Our longstanding training in biostatistics and informatics has been expanded to new audiences, complemented by new courses, and elevated to new realms in the Biomedical Data Science graduate programs. The demand for our expertise is unabated; our work pervades the School of Medicine and Public Health and affects scholarship around the world.

To sustain a vibrant academic unit requires intentional effort, reflection, and ways to efficiently share problems and potential solutions. To this end, the BMI Strategic Planning Committee was formed to develop a mission statement and strategic priorities. The committee was broadly representative, with faculty, academic staff, and students, and it represented the breadth of activities in the department, including research, teaching, computing support, clinical trials, and administration. I thank the committee members for their deliberative work and commitment to the planning process. I also thank Deb Gurke from the Office of Strategic Consulting for her expert facilitation.

Reflecting on the identified priorities will guide BMI activities for the next 3-5 years. In addition to supporting decision making in the chair’s office, I hope the strategic plan will provide a common touchpoint for BMI, will allow us to better appreciate the context of our work, and be well positioned for emerging challenges and opportunities. We have taken the first step in an ongoing process. The next steps are to communicate this plan, refine it, and work towards specific strategic priorities. I am asking a subset of the original planning committee and others to help with implementation. I invite anyone who is interested in being part of the implementation phase to contact me or Sue. We will also reach out to those well positioned to support certain implementation priorities. I am excited about the work we have done so far and am humbled by my colleagues talents and insights.

Thank you, and on BMI.

Michael Newton
Chair
Strategic Planning Committee Members

Thank you to our colleagues in BMI for their time and thinking to complete this strategic plan.

**Faculty**
- Guanhua Chen
- Colin Dewey
- Tony Gitter
- Yin Li
- Qiongshi Lu
- Lu Mao
- Michael Newton (Chair)
- Irene Ong
- Sushmita Roy

**Academic Staff**
- William Annis
- Jen Birstler
- Olive Buhule
- Sue Carlson
- Shelley Maxted
- Emmanuel Sampene
- Renee Zook

**Students**
- Jojo Cheng
- Li Ge

**Facilitator:** Deb Gurke, Office of Strategic Consulting
**Logistics:** Chris Lindstrom

Strategic Plan Implementation Committee Members

Thank you to our colleagues who have agreed to join the implementation committee to determine priorities and timelines.

**Faculty**
- Rick Chappell
- Tony Gitter
- Yin Li
- Lu Mao
- Michael Newton
- Zhengzheng Tang

**Staff**
- Jen Birstler
- Sue Carlson
- Shelley Maxted
- Emmanuel Sampene

**Student**
- Jojo Cheng

**Facilitator:** Deb Gurke, Office of Strategic Consulting
**Logistics:** Chris Lindstrom
Mission

The mission statement describes the reason an organization exists. It can guide leaders’ planning and decision making. The BMI mission statement is:

Advancing data science to accelerate biomedical research and improve human health

The Strategic Planning Process

The strategic directions guide our work. They provide a road map for addressing the challenges an organization is facing, using their resources in the best way possible. Generating the strategic directions were developed using a three-step process:

1. Identify and share the hopes and aspirations of the strategic planning team for the future of the organization to create a practical vision.
2. Identify contradictions and barriers that prevent an organization from realizing the practical vision.
3. Identify the strategic directions that set directions toward something. They operationalize the practical vision for the shorter term future and build on group strengths and opportunities and identifying barriers to be addressed.

Practical Vision

To develop the practical vision, the team considered the following question: What do we want to see in place in 3-5 years as a result of our actions? The following ideas were generated as part of the practical vision:

- Increased diversity—outstanding climate
- Improved reputation
- Improved outward facing communication—compelling branding
- Non-compute department infrastructure, streamlined research, integrated administration
- More successful and connected alumni
- Increased departmental cohesion—integrated research and core services
- Improved infrastructure
- Modernized curriculum and pedagogy—Increased enrollment

Underlying Contradictions

To develop the underlying contradictions, the team considered the following question: What is blocking us from moving toward our vision?

- Ad hoc computing infrastructure
- Short-term mindset
- Student success concern
- Training challenges
- Little departmental cohesion
- Recruiting challenges
- Communication challenges
Strategic Directions

The overarching question the strategic planning team considered in developing the strategic directions: What innovative, substantial actions will deal with the underlying contradictions and move us toward our vision? The following lists include the potential actions that could be implemented to achieve the strategic directions.

Positioning People for Success

- Revise curriculum and teaching responsibilities to cover essential topics
- Incentivize better than average-to-good teaching
- Continue encouraging new faculty to teach special topics courses
- Review BDS curriculum
- Develop alumni relations strategy
- Develop relationships with local companies
- Develop centralized industry connections
- Create department database

Planning for the Future

- Build into meetings a focus on long-term planning
- Take time to consistently plan for the future
- Hold department retreats
- Develop computing strategic plan and identify drivers
- Create cohesive prioritization scheme(s)
- Develop long-term plan for administrative structure

Building Connections

- Hire communications/website person
- Spread write access and train for web site
- Develop department communications strategy
- Reconsider department name
- Prepare recruiting materials for students
- Market the department broadly
- Publish faculty and staff profiles, accomplishments of all sorts
- Develop series of talks for lay people
- Have periodic social events
- Develop departmental symposium
- Regularly conduct climate survey of students
- Identify leadership roles and responsibilities for non-faculty staff
- Celebrate and announce research and teaching accomplishments (not just funding)
- Develop mechanisms for staff/faculty communication
- Establish active diversity committee
- Implement procedures to support diversity

Implementation

A new team of BMI colleagues will begin a process to use the strategic plan to answer the question: What will our specific, measurable accomplishments be for the first year?