



UNIVERSITY  
AT ALBANY  
STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

# Signature Strengths

FRAMEWORK



Since its founding in 1844, the University at Albany has evolved from a state teacher's college to a Research 1 institution with dynamic academic and research portfolios. Through collaboration across the strong departments of our nine schools and colleges, research institutes, centers and laboratories, UAlbany conducts world-class research and creates transformative solutions to the most significant challenges we face: the climate crisis, minority health disparities, cybersecurity, and, most recently, the COVID-19 pandemic.

While inherently an interdisciplinary undertaking, this work is driven by UAlbany's future-facing programs in **emergency preparedness, climate science, and health sciences**. These key areas, combined with nationally leading programs in **public affairs and policy**, create a meaningfully unique academic and research cluster from which to expand UAlbany's visibility and impact. These Signature Strengths also move us toward our unifying institutional vision: *to be the nation's leading diverse public research university—providing the leaders, knowledge and innovations to create a better world*.

This emerging framework will require input not only from the academic and research sides of the house—there are also significant implications and opportunities for Marketing and Communications, Admissions, Advancement, Financial Management, and Career Services, among other areas.

This document is intended as a starting point for conversations across schools, colleges and divisions—about how these Signature Strengths could and should be developed and leveraged as strategies for growth, innovation, and resilience.

## **SIGNATURE ACADEMIC AND RESEARCH STRENGTHS**

UAlbany's growing expertise and reputation in **emergency preparedness**, with a strong focus in **cybersecurity and artificial intelligence**, creates a unique area of strength. Research and teaching excellence in the [College of Emergency Preparedness, Homeland Security, and Cybersecurity](#) (CEHC), is complemented by both longstanding research and teaching from business, public health, engineering, public policy and administration, and criminal justice.

UAlbany also has globally leading expertise and state-of-the-art research in **climate science**, which draws on many disciplines, including emergency preparedness, engineering, social sciences, social welfare, public health, and the humanities. UAlbany's globally acclaimed [Atmospheric Sciences Research Center \(ASRC\)](#), the [Department of Atmospheric and Environmental Sciences](#), and the nationally leading [NYS Mesonet](#), highlight our strengths and impact in the area of weather and climate.

UAlbany's selection as the host of the November 2019 [RISE 2019 Conference](#) put a spotlight on some of our nationally leading academic and research areas.

The conference, which attracted 175 institutions and 500 individuals from a variety of disciplines, explored how higher education can strengthen preparedness, response, and recovery in the face of growing threats from climate change and extreme weather.

UAlbany's longstanding strength in **health sciences** has been highlighted during the pandemic, with prominent COVID-19 research and leadership in critical surveillance testing and contact-tracing programs, a collaboration between our [RNA Institute](#) and the [School of Public Health](#).

A critical differentiator within the health sciences is our leadership in **health equity and minority health disparities**, which resulted in a \$10 million NIH endowment grant, as well as a \$1 million gift from the Hearst Foundations to expand the Health Disparities Fellows program within the University's [Center for the Elimination of Minority Health Disparities](#) (CEMHD), The Center is also actively working to diversify the field of health sciences.

Because of our expertise in this area, along with emergency preparedness, Governor Cuomo commissioned [UAlbany to lead New York State's research into the disproportionate impacts of COVID-19 on communities of color](#). In response, over 35 researchers from public health, social welfare, emergency preparedness, social sciences, public policy, and education have come together to provide the Governor with new understanding of the demographic, socioeconomic, and occupational factors causing these significant disparities and a set of policy recommendations focused on their mitigation.

Within our health equity work, **mental health** is a critical and growing area of focus where our [School of Social Welfare](#) plays an important role, in concert with the [School of Public Health](#), the [School of Education](#), and the [College of Arts and Sciences](#).

#### **Other Key Differentiators:**

- UAlbany's orientation toward **interdisciplinarity** will leverage our signature strengths to address complex societal challenges, such as climate change and minority health disparities. We will work with faculty and researchers to identify and incentivize connections to our signature strengths—a process that will also help to cultivate interdisciplinary research teams positioned to compete for federal funding.
- As a leading diverse R1 institution, UAlbany has a proven ability to provide **transformative educational opportunities to a diverse student body**—having received multiple national recognitions for contributing to the upward social mobility of our graduates. As an academic community, we continue to cultivate inclusive excellence and foster a campus climate where everyone *is* welcome and *feels* welcome. As part of this commitment, we are

working across our curricular and co-curricular activities to deepen our collective understanding of systemic racism and social injustice.

- Our ability to have a broad impact on our communities and society is amplified by our ongoing contributions as a ***publicly engaged university***, as recognized by our 2020 Carnegie Foundation Community Engagement Classification.
- In addition, ***UAlbany's location in New York's Capital Region*** provides exceptional access to internships, hands-on learning experiences, career opportunities, and leadership development—particularly in public service.