

Founded in 1785, Peabody College of Education and Human Development continues to be a place where world-class research is conducted and translated into teaching, practice, policy and service.

Our mission is characterized by practice-oriented academic programs, a strong service ethic, groundbreaking research and a pressing concern for addressing social problems in domestic and international contexts.

Peabody College understands the preparation of researchers, teachers and leaders as among the most important things we do, and that building and sustaining an engaged academic community of learners is central to achieving our mission.

At our core, we are guided by our research. As we consider the evolution of the fields of education and human development over the next twenty years, we are compelled to put forward a strategic vision, congruent with Vanderbilt's strategic plan, for how our activities will both shape and be shaped by that research.

The College is devoted to enhancing opportunity in an increasingly diverse society. Peabody aspires to solve large societal problems and continue strong leadership throughout the nation and the world. This strategic brief helps establish the vision for the College in the coming years and begins the process of establishing how our mission should be brought to life in four broad arenas.

I. Underrepresented and Underserved Populations

Factors from biology to social structure shape education, health, and welfare. Peabody researchers will work to understand and reduce risk and to expand opportunity, learning, empowerment, and resilience via individual, family, community, institutional, organizational and policy interventions. Empirical and theoretical scholarship also will deepen knowledge about the place of culture and context in education and human development.

II. Personalized and Connected Learning

Learning and teaching in schools will continue to be a central focus of the College. But how, when, and where people learn is changing. Personalized learning refers to helping people identify and choose learning opportunities. Connected learning refers to learning across settings and lifespans. Peabody researchers will work to improve learning opportunities within school settings. At the same time, their research will also consider changing relations between schools and other places—homes, communities and civic centers, workplaces and online environments—and how these relations afford new opportunities for personalized and connected learning.

III. Biology of Learning and Environment

Influences of experience and genes on human functioning is a third strategic direction. This strand explores the dynamic relationships among organismic and environmental factors, including ways in which environments can be designed to promote learning. This approach moves past simple gene by environment interactions to include changes in gene expression enabled by environmental influences. Research will address the fundamental role of context in shaping individual developmental trajectories.

IV. Research Methods

New contributions to education and development will require powerful and context-sensitive research methods, including statistical modeling, psychological measurement, observation, neuroscience, action research, intervention, and design research. We propose to expand our world-class social science research methods faculty with a focus on studies of social and developmental change. Innovations in methods will be driven by the substantive issues above.