



m SOUTH DAKOTA MINES

FY2027 ANNUAL STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The first focused body of work that will move the plan
from aspiration to execution.

WHAT

Introduction

Our strategic plan defines where South Dakota Mines is going. The annual strategic priorities define what we will accomplish this year to move in that direction. They are part of a broader institutional operating system, and their purpose is to translate long-term strategy into concrete work for the coming year.

This structure is intended to make the strategic plan a living management tool rather than a static document. Each year, Mines will identify a focused set of annual priorities, review progress regularly, allocate strategic investment where appropriate, and communicate results to campus.

The FY2027 Annual Strategic Priorities are intentionally limited in number. They do not represent every important activity occurring across campus; they identify a smaller set of institution-wide initiatives that require cross-functional coordination, executive attention, and focused effort during the year ahead.

The priorities for FY2027 reflect several common themes that emerged from the planning process:

- Mines must strengthen its position as a future-ready STEM university.
- Experiential learning must become a more intentional and consistent part of the student experience.
- The university needs greater capacity to innovate in academic programs, partnerships, credentials, and delivery models.
- Industry engagement, entrepreneurship, applied research, and economic development must become more coordinated.
- Long-term enrollment success depends on building stronger pathways into Mines, beginning with K-12 STEM outreach.
- A future-ready university requires a culture of collaboration, shared ownership, and continuous improvement.
- The physical campus must evolve to support the university's academic, research, and student experience goals.

Together, these priorities represent the first year of focused implementation for the next phase of Mines' strategic direction. They are meant to create momentum, clarify accountability, and establish a repeatable annual planning process that connects long-term strategy to near-term action.

Strategic Directions

The FY2027 priorities support the following strategic directions:

1. Reimagine STEM Education Around Experiential Learning and Professional Formation:

Integrate hands-on, project-based, work-connected, and reflective learning throughout the student experience.

2. Accelerate Research, Innovation, and Economic Impact: Strengthen Mines' role in research translation, industry engagement, entrepreneurship, workforce development, and regional economic growth.

3. Expand Access and Affordability While Strengthening Student and Workforce

Outcomes: Improve student pathways into Mines, increase the value of the student experience, and strengthen preparation for meaningful careers.

4. Build an Agile, High-Performing Institutional Culture: Build the structures, culture, systems, and physical environment necessary for a more responsive and future-ready institution.

5. Strengthen Mines' Reputation Through Storytelling and Engagement: Strengthen the university's reputation through coordinated communications, strategic marketing, alumni and donor engagement, and public outreach.

FY2027 Institutional Priorities Overview

Priority	Title	Strategic Emphasis
1	Launch the Center for Education Innovation	Educational innovation, agility, experiential learning
2	Strengthen the K-12 STEM Pipeline	Enrollment pipeline and outreach infrastructure
3	Expand Experiential Learning Throughout the Curriculum	Experiential learning across the undergraduate curriculum
4	Advance Campus Facilities for Experiential Learning, Safety, and Renewal	Facilities planning, campus renewal, experiential learning space, safety, and stewardship
5	Build the South Dakota Mines Innovation Ecosystem	Innovation, industry engagement, research translation, economic development
6	One South Dakota Mines: Strengthen Cross-Campus Collaboration	Cross-campus collaboration and organizational effectiveness
7	Develop a Sustainable Research Investment Model	Sustainable research growth, investment criteria, workload, facilities, and cost recovery

Priority 1: Launch the Center for Education Innovation

Strategic Direction(s) Supported: Reimagine STEM Education Around Experiential Learning and Professional Formation; Expand Access and Affordability While Strengthening Student and Workforce Outcomes; Build an Agile, High-Performing Institutional Culture.

Why This Matters

American higher education—and engineering education in particular—has remained largely unchanged for decades, even as the students we serve, the employers who hire our graduates, and the society our graduates will shape have changed dramatically.

Mines faces several related challenges. The traditional-age student population is shrinking. Students and families are increasingly focused on value, affordability, career outcomes, and flexibility. Employers need graduates who can work across disciplines, adapt quickly, solve ambiguous problems, and use emerging tools effectively. At the same time, traditional curriculum development processes can be slow, academic structures can be difficult to adapt, and high-quality teaching and educational innovation do not always receive the same institutional recognition as research.

The Center for Education Innovation will create institutional capacity to respond to these changes. It will serve as a focused semi-autonomous unit for developing new academic and non-credit offerings, piloting new educational and personnel models, supporting experiential learning, and building partnerships that connect students more directly to work, innovation, and impact.

The Center is not intended to replace existing academic programs or diminish the role of departments. Rather, it will create a complementary structure that allows Mines to move more quickly, test new models, and scale successful innovations across the university.

Desired Outcome by June 2027

By June 2027, Mines will have established the Center for Education Innovation with a clear operating model, leadership structure, initial portfolio of programs or initiatives, and implementation plan for new educational offerings.

Key Initiatives

- Develop the mission, scope, governance structure, and operating model for the Center for Education Innovation.

- Define how the Center will operate in alignment with South Dakota Board of Regents policies, shared services, and the Mines brand.
- Identify the Center's initial portfolio of academic, non-credit, and experiential learning initiatives.
- Develop a framework for launching responsive academic and non-credit offerings more quickly.
- Develop the university's approach to artificial intelligence in teaching and learning, including guidance for AI-enabled pedagogy, curriculum design that builds student judgment alongside tool fluency, and faculty development in the applied and ethical use of AI.
- Create a proposal for a new faculty appointment model that supports high-quality teaching, experiential learning, industry engagement, and educational innovation.
- Establish processes for program development, admission practices, personnel models, partnership development, and evaluation.
- Identify staffing, space, technology, and budget needs required for initial implementation.

Measures of Success

Implementation Measures

- Center for Education Innovation operating model completed.
- Leadership structure and reporting relationships defined.
- Initial staffing and resource plan developed.
- Governance and decision-making processes established.
- Faculty appointment model proposal developed and submitted through the appropriate review process.
- Initial academic and non-credit program concepts identified and advanced.
- Institutional framework for artificial intelligence in teaching and learning drafted, with at least one pilot course or program applying it.

Outcome Measures

- One new graduate degree or graduate-level credential launched or in formal development by fall 2027.
- One new undergraduate degree, pathway, certificate, or experiential learning initiative launched or in formal development by fall 2027.

- Proposal for a new non-tenure, multi-year faculty rank or appointment model submitted to the Board of Regents by spring 2027.
- Fifty students enrolled across new programs or offerings within the first year of launch (FY2028 measure).
- Initial set of academic programs or offerings infused with high-quality experiential learning.

Executive Sponsor

Vice President for Strategic Initiatives and Learning Innovation

Primary Collaborators

Provost; department heads; faculty leaders; Center for Teaching and Learning Excellence; Registrar; Enrollment Management; Career Services; Industry Relations; Research Office; Advancement; Finance and Administration; Human Resources; Information Technology Services; Graduate Education

Priority 2: Strengthen the K-12 STEM Pipeline

Strategic Direction(s) Supported: Expand Access and Affordability While Strengthening Student and Workforce Outcomes; Build an Agile, High-Performing Institutional Culture.

Why This Matters

Long-term enrollment success depends on building strong pathways into Mines well before students begin the college application process. K-12 STEM outreach is one of the university's most important tools for increasing awareness, building affinity, supporting regional workforce needs, and helping students see themselves as future scientists, engineers, innovators, and problem-solvers.

Today, many K-12 outreach activities depend heavily on ad hoc faculty availability and informal coordination. Mines has strong programs and committed people, but the overall effort lacks a centralized structure, consistent follow-up, shared tracking, and scalable infrastructure. This limits the university's ability to grow outreach strategically and to understand how early engagement eventually connects to inquiries, applications, enrollment, and student success.

This priority will create clear ownership for K-12 STEM outreach within the Events and Outreach team. By realigning existing responsibilities rather than creating a new position, Mines can build a more sustainable outreach structure without adding significant personnel costs. The goal is to create a coordinated pipeline strategy that makes Mines visible to STEM-interested students long before they are ready to apply.

Desired Outcome by June 2027

By June 2027, Mines will have established centralized ownership of K-12 STEM outreach within the Community Engagement Events and Outreach team, with clear responsibilities, a coordinated outreach calendar, modest supply funding, and an initial system for tracking participation and long-term pipeline impact.

Key Initiatives

- Assign primary responsibility for K-12 STEM outreach coordination within the Community Engagement Events and Outreach team.
- Define the roles of the Events Coordinator and Campus Visit Coordinator in supporting outreach, campus visits, recruitment events, and related activities.
- Build a coordinated annual calendar for major K-12 outreach activities, including Science Fair, Engineers Week, STEM Cafe, and related events.

- Establish consistent processes for school communication, event follow-up, faculty involvement, student ambassador participation, and data collection.
- Develop a phased implementation plan that produces measurable progress in the first year.
- Create a lightweight tracking system to connect outreach participation to future inquiry, application, and enrollment behavior.
- Maintain core campus visit and recruitment event functions during the transition.

Measures of Success

Implementation Measures

- Outreach ownership assigned within the Community Engagement Events and Outreach team.
- Events Coordinator and Campus Visit Coordinator responsibilities documented.
- Annual K-12 outreach calendar completed.
- Outreach communication and follow-up processes established.
- Initial outreach tracking system implemented.
- Modest supply and travel budget identified and deployed.

Outcome Measures

- Increase in the number of K-12 students engaged.
- Increase in the number of schools engaged.
- Growth in outreach reach by grade level, geography, and number or scale of events.
- Core campus visit and recruitment event functions maintained without disruption.
- Baseline data established to track future inquiry, application, and enrollment behavior among outreach participants.

Executive Sponsor

Vice President for Marketing and Enrollment Strategy

Primary Collaborators

Community Engagement Events and Outreach team; Admissions; Marketing and Communications; academic departments; faculty outreach volunteers; student ambassadors; Career Services; CAMP; local and regional K-12 partners; community organizations

Priority 3: Expand Experiential Learning Throughout the Curriculum

Strategic Direction(s) Supported: Reimagine STEM Education Around Experiential Learning and Professional Formation; Expand Access and Affordability While Strengthening Student and Workforce Outcomes; Accelerate Research, Innovation, and Economic Impact.

Why This Matters

Experiential learning is one of Mines' strongest differentiators and one of the most important features of future-ready STEM education. Our students already encounter experiential learning in several ways, including first-year introductory experiences, laboratories, student organizations, competition teams, internships, undergraduate research, and capstone design.

However, the student experience is not yet consistently structured so that every student has meaningful experiential learning opportunities throughout all four years. In many programs, students move from first-year introductory experiences into a second- and third-year curriculum dominated by core and specialized technical courses, with major applied or integrative experiences often delayed until capstone.

This creates a gap in the middle years of the curriculum. Students need recurring opportunities to apply what they are learning, connect technical knowledge to real problems, develop confidence, work in teams, explore innovation, and see the relevance of their academic work before the senior year.

This priority will ensure that each undergraduate program develops a plan for second- and third-year experiential learning. The goal is not to mandate one model for every program. Experiential learning may take the form of project-based learning, problem-based learning, KEEN-related activities, Innovation-Based Learning (IBL) Hub participation, industry-connected projects, design-build experiences, research-integrated courses, service learning, or other approaches appropriate to each discipline.

Desired Outcome by June 2027

By June 2027, every undergraduate program will have developed a plan for required meaningful experiential learning components in the second and third years of the curriculum.

Key Initiatives

- Define a common institutional understanding of, and framework for, experiential learning at Mines.
- Map current experiential learning touchpoints across all undergraduate programs.
- Identify gaps in second- and third-year experiential learning experiences.
- Review existing models within Mines, including mechatronics, EECS experiential learning concepts, IBL Hub activities, KEEN-related practices, capstone, CAMP, undergraduate research, and industry-sponsored projects.
- Support each program in identifying the experiential learning model that best fits its curriculum.
- Develop implementation plans for stand-alone courses, course-integrated projects, lab-based experiences, or other program-specific approaches.
- Establish baseline data for student participation in experiential learning across all four years.

Measures of Success

Implementation Measures

- Experiential learning definition and framework completed.
- Current experiential learning map completed for all undergraduate programs.
- Every undergraduate program identifies second- and third-year experiential learning opportunities.
- Program-level implementation plans completed.
- Initial resource needs identified for faculty support, facilities, equipment, project coordination, or industry engagement.
- Baseline participation data established.

Outcome Measures

- All undergraduate programs demonstrate a path for students to engage in experiential learning across all four years.
- Increase in the number of second- and third-year students participating in applied, project-based, innovation-based, or industry-connected learning.
- Increased faculty engagement in experiential learning design.
- Improved student ability to connect coursework to real-world problems, professional formation, innovation, and career preparation.

Executive Sponsor

Provost and Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs

Primary Collaborators

Academic department heads; faculty across all undergraduate programs; Center for Education Innovation; Center for Teaching and Learning Excellence; IBL Hub; KEEN leaders; Career Services; Industry Relations; Research Office; Registrar; Accreditation and Assessment leaders

Priority 4: Advance Campus Facilities for Experiential Learning, Safety, and Renewal

Strategic Direction(s) Supported: Reimagine STEM Education Around Experiential Learning and Professional Formation; Accelerate Research, Innovation, and Economic Impact; Build an Agile, High-Performing Institutional Culture.

Why This Matters

Mines' physical campus must evolve to support the university's future academic, research, innovation, and student experience goals. As experiential learning, student teaming, capstone design, industry-sponsored projects, applied research, and innovation activities continue to grow, the university needs facilities that support hands-on, collaborative, interdisciplinary work.

At the same time, the university must continue to address facilities that no longer support its future direction. Many of our classrooms and existing instructional spaces were designed for traditional styles of teaching that are no longer sufficient for active, project-based, and experiential learning, and therefore need to be redesigned and updated. The old Mineral Industries building creates ongoing maintenance, utility, safety, security, and liability concerns. Removing the building will reduce institutional risk, improve campus appearance, open the campus more visibly to the community, and restore the site to green space.

These efforts are not dependent on the same physical site. Rather, they are connected by a common strategic purpose: ensuring that the campus environment supports the future-ready Mines model. One effort plans the next generation of experiential learning and innovation space; the other removes an obsolete facility and improves the campus environment.

Desired Outcome by June 2027

By June 2027, Mines will have completed initial planning for a future experiential learning and innovation facility. We will also develop a multi-year plan for upgrading existing classrooms to accommodate active, project-based, and experiential learning. Finally, we will have the old Mineral Industries demolition project under contract and underway, with completion anticipated by the end of summer 2027.

Key Initiatives

Experiential Learning and Innovation Facility Planning

- Appoint an internal team to drive the planning and design efforts for an experiential learning facility.
- Team members bring ideas from universities that have been visited.
- Team will conduct an internal needs assessment with academic departments, student teams, capstone programs, CAMP, IBL Hub leaders, and industry engagement stakeholders.
- Identify the types of spaces needed to support student teaming, design projects, prototyping, innovation, applied research, industry connections and projects, business competitions, and emerging curriculum models.
- Identify funding for initial architectural work to submit an OSE work order for facility.
- Submit a Preliminary Facility Statement to the Board of Regents to have a building committee assigned for selection of an architect.
- Internal team will work with architects to develop initial layouts, space concepts, and cost estimates.
- Begin engagement with donors, industry partners, the South Dakota Board of Regents, and other potential funding sources.
- Develop an initial fundraising and funding plan.

Upgrade Existing Facilities for Experiential Learning

- Identify classrooms, laboratories, collaboration spaces, and other existing facilities that are strong candidates for upgrades to support active, project-based, and experiential learning.
- Assess current classroom layouts, furniture, technology, storage, power, accessibility, and flexibility to determine barriers to hands-on and team-based learning.
- Develop criteria for prioritizing upgrades based on instructional impact, student use, cost, feasibility, and alignment with academic program needs.
- Engage faculty, students, department heads, the Center for Education Innovation, Facilities, and Information Technology to define common classroom and facility upgrade needs.
- Develop a multiyear classroom and facility renewal plan that includes initial cost estimates, phasing, funding options, and implementation priorities.
- Identify one or more near-term pilot spaces that could demonstrate effective conversion of traditional classrooms into active and experiential learning environments.

Old Mineral Industries Removal and Site Restoration

- Finalize the old Mineral Industries demolition scope, timeline, budget, and funding strategy.
- Coordinate institutional funds and M&R funds required for the project.
- Ensure demolition planning preserves continued operation of the tunnel beneath the building and returns area to green space.
- Bid project and initiate construction plan to complete work.
- Coordinate communication with campus and external stakeholders.

Measures of Success

Implementation Measures

- Appointment of team to initiate experiential learning and innovation facility project.
- Benchmarking visits for experiential learning and innovation facilities completed.
- Internal programmatic needs assessment completed.
- Space needs and facility concepts documented.
- Preliminary Facility Statement submission to the BOR and assignment of a Building Committee for architect selection.
- Selection of architect.
- Layouts and cost estimates developed.
- Donor, industry, and Board of Regents engagement initiated.
- Initial funding and fundraising strategy drafted.
- Existing classrooms and facilities assessed for experiential learning upgrade opportunities.
- Priority list of classroom and facility upgrades completed.
- Multi-year classroom and facility renewal plan developed.
- Pilot experiential learning classroom or facility upgrade identified.
- Old Mineral Industries project scope completed.
- Funding plan for demolition finalized.
- Contractor selected via bid process and project under contract.
- Site restoration plan completed.

Outcome Measures

- Clear institutional plan developed for a future Experiential Learning and Innovation facility.
- Facility concept tied directly to experiential learning, innovation ecosystem development, and future academic needs.
- Existing classrooms and facilities evaluated and prioritized for upgrades that support active, project-based, and experiential learning.
- Baseline established for the strategic plan indicator “% of classrooms, labs, and other spaces available for experiential learning.”
- Initial plan developed to modernize traditional classrooms into more flexible, collaborative learning environments.
- Initial philanthropic, public, and partnership funding opportunities identified.
- Old Mineral Industries demolition underway by June 2027.
- Demolition completed by the end of summer 2027 (FY2028 measure).
- Site restored to basic green space.
- Ongoing utility, maintenance, safety, security, and liability exposure reduced.
- Campus appearance and openness improved.

Executive Sponsor

Vice President for Operations, in partnership with the President and Provost

Primary Collaborators

Facilities; Finance and Administration; Public Safety; Risk Management; department heads; faculty; student team leaders; CAMP; capstone programs; IBL Hub; Center for Education Innovation; Industry Relations; CARA; Marketing and Communications; architects and planners; South Dakota Board of Regents; donors and industry partners

Priority 5: Build the South Dakota Mines Innovation Ecosystem

Strategic Direction(s) Supported: Accelerate Research, Innovation, and Economic Impact; Reimagine STEM Education Around Experiential Learning and Professional Formation; Build an Agile, High-Performing Institutional Culture.

Why This Matters

Mines has many of the building blocks of a strong innovation ecosystem: applied research, industry engagement, IBL, I-Corps, student projects, intellectual property processes, entrepreneurial activity, professional education, faculty expertise, and emerging partnerships connected to the Innovation District.

However, these components are not yet fully coordinated. Faculty, students, industry partners, entrepreneurs, and community stakeholders may encounter separate processes, unclear entry points, or disconnected activities. As a result, Mines may not be capturing the full value of its research, talent, ideas, partnerships, and regional economic impact.

This priority will create the foundation for a more intentional innovation ecosystem. The goal is to move beyond being a university that supports innovation in selected areas and toward becoming a university whose educational model, research activity, partnerships, and regional identity are organized around innovation and value creation.

A stronger innovation ecosystem will help students graduate with the ability not only to solve technical problems, but also to identify opportunities, create value, lead innovation, support venture creation, and translate ideas into real-world impact. It will help faculty move research more quickly into technologies, products, companies, partnerships, and solutions. It will give industry more effective access to talent, expertise, facilities, and emerging technologies. It will support workforce development, business attraction, startup formation, and economic diversification for South Dakota and the broader region.

Desired Outcome by June 2027

By June 2027, Mines will have established the foundation for a coordinated innovation ecosystem, including leadership, governance, funding strategy, partnership processes, and integration among key innovation-related activities.

Key Initiatives

- Define the purpose, scope, and structure of the Mines innovation ecosystem.

- Establish a coordinating entity or leadership structure that brings together people, space, funding, and programs related to innovation.
- Coordinate the Innovation Cycle, IBL, I-Corps, intellectual property processes, faculty incentives, student projects, entrepreneurial-related activities (EMGE, EIR, business competitions, etc.), and industry engagement.
- Develop a clearer pathway for industry partners to engage with Mines.
- Create a partnership continuum that helps move partners from initial engagement to deeper collaboration.
- Align innovation ecosystem planning with the Innovation District in partnership with Elevate Rapid City.
- Identify funding sources to support innovation programming, staffing, seed projects, student experiences, and research translation.
- Develop shared measures for innovation activity, partner engagement, and economic impact.

Measures of Success

Implementation Measures

- Innovation ecosystem structure established.
- Leadership and governance model defined.
- Key innovation-related programs and processes mapped.
- Initial funding strategy developed.
- Industry engagement framework drafted or implemented.
- Alignment established with Innovation District planning.

Outcome Measures

- Increase in active industry affiliates.
- Increase in new industry partners added annually.
- Increase in repeat partnerships year over year.
- Increase in faculty engaged in industry-sponsored research, teaching, or projects.
- Growth in industry-sponsored research and instructional dollars.
- Growth in industry-supported student projects and experiential learning opportunities.
- Increase in average partnership value and depth of engagement.

- Reduced time from external inquiry to faculty or program connection.
- Movement of partners through a defined engagement continuum.
- Demonstrable progress toward Innovation District implementation with Elevate Rapid City.

Executive Sponsors

Vice President for Research, in partnership with the Vice President for Strategic Initiatives and Learning Innovation

Primary Collaborators

Research Office; Center for Education Innovation; IBL Hub; I-Corps leaders; CARA; Industry Relations; Career Services; department heads; faculty innovators; intellectual property and technology transfer support; Elevate Rapid City; regional economic development partners; industry affiliates

Priority 6: One South Dakota Mines: Strengthen Cross-Campus Collaboration

Strategic Direction Supported: Build an Agile, High-Performing Institutional Culture.

Why This Matters

Mines succeeds when faculty and staff work effectively across departmental and divisional boundaries. The university's most important work—student success, enrollment growth, industry engagement, experiential learning, research, advancement, campus operations, and innovation—depends on people understanding how their work connects to the work of others.

Many employees have limited opportunities to learn about the responsibilities, challenges, processes, and best practices of colleagues outside their immediate units. This can lead to duplicated effort, inconsistent processes, communication gaps, and missed opportunities for collaboration.

The One South Dakota Mines initiative will create intentional opportunities for employees to connect, learn from one another, share effective practices, and solve problems collaboratively. By increasing understanding of how work is performed across campus, Mines can strengthen relationships, improve operations, reduce friction, and build a more unified institutional culture.

This priority is not simply about morale or internal communication. It is about institutional effectiveness. A more connected campus will be better able to execute strategic priorities, support students, serve partners, and adapt to change.

Desired Outcome by June 2027

By June 2027, Mines will have established a sustainable cross-campus engagement program that enables employees from all divisions to regularly learn about one another's work, exchange ideas, identify shared challenges, and improve institutional effectiveness.

Key Initiatives

- Launch the One South Dakota Mines cross-campus engagement program.
- Create a regular "How We Do It at South Dakota Mines" series highlighting departmental operations, challenges, processes, and best practices.
- Establish cross-functional discussion groups around institutional priorities and operational challenges.

- Launch process improvement teams focused on selected campus-wide issues.
- Create mechanisms for employees to identify duplicative processes, communication gaps, opportunities for shared practices, and opportunities to utilize emergent technologies like AI to improve performance.
- Build feedback loops to track whether engagement activities are strengthening collaboration and improving institutional effectiveness.
- Share successful practices and process improvements across campus.

Measures of Success

Implementation Measures

- One South Dakota Mines program structure established.
- Annual schedule of cross-campus engagement activities created.
- Minimum of six "How We Do It at South Dakota Mines" sessions conducted.
- At least two cross-functional process improvement teams launched.
- Participation tracked across divisions.
- Feedback mechanisms implemented.

Outcome Measures

- At least 40% of staff employees participate in one or more cross-campus engagement activities during FY2027.
- Employee engagement survey results show improvement in staff understanding of other campus departments.
- Employee engagement survey results show improvement in confidence in cross-campus collaboration.
- At least five documented process improvements or best practices are identified and adopted by multiple departments.
- Qualitative feedback demonstrates stronger relationships, improved understanding of campus operations, and increased collaboration across divisions.

Executive Sponsor

Vice President for Finance, in partnership with Human Resources and Executive Council

Primary Collaborators

Human Resources; Campus Culture Committee; division leaders; staff representatives; faculty representatives; Institutional Research; Marketing and Communications; department heads; process improvement teams; all campus divisions

Priority 7: Develop a Sustainable Research Investment Model

Strategic Direction(s) Supported: Accelerate Research, Innovation, and Economic Impact; Reimagine STEM Education Around Experiential Learning and Professional Formation; Build an Agile, High-Performing Institutional Culture.

Why This Matters

Research is central to the mission and identity of Mines. It creates opportunities for students to work on meaningful problems, advances knowledge and technology, supports graduate education, contributes to startup formation and commercialization, strengthens industry partnerships, and helps drive regional and state economic growth.

At the same time, the current research model is under increasing strain. Federal and other external funding models often require institutional cost sharing, matching funds, unrecovered facilities and administrative costs, startup commitments, specialized facilities, compliance infrastructure, and significant faculty time. For a smaller institution, these requirements can make research growth financially difficult, especially when investments are spread too broadly across too many areas.

Mines needs a clearer and more honest understanding of the full cost of research. Across campus, research is often viewed primarily as a source of revenue or prestige, while the institutional subsidies required to support it are less visible. Faculty workload expectations, startup investments, space allocation, facility upgrades, graduate support, and internal matching commitments must be understood as strategic choices with real opportunity costs. In some cases, research activity can strengthen the educational mission; in other cases, it can compete with the time, attention, and resources needed to serve students well.

This priority will create the foundation for a more sustainable research model. The goal is not to reduce the importance of research, but to grow research in a more focused, financially responsible, and mission-aligned way. Mines must identify where it can build distinctive strength, where institutional investment is justified, how research can better support student learning and economic impact, and how future decisions about workload, facilities, startup funding, cost sharing, and research growth should be made.

Desired Outcome by June 2027

By June 2027, Mines will have completed a comprehensive analysis of the current research model, communicated an accurate and transparent view of research finances to campus, and

developed a proposed model for sustainable research growth that aligns institutional investment, faculty workload, facilities, student learning, external funding, and strategic research priorities.

Key Initiatives

- Analyze the full institutional cost of research, including faculty workload, startup funds, cost sharing, unrecovered indirect costs, facilities, equipment, compliance, graduate support, research administration, and internal matching commitments.
- Map the current research portfolio by funding source, discipline, strategic theme, facility needs, student involvement, external impact, and level of institutional subsidy.
- Assess how current faculty workload expectations, research incentives, space allocation, startup commitments, and internal investment practices align with institutional capacity and strategic priorities.
- Benchmark research funding models, cost-sharing expectations, workload models, indirect cost recovery, and research investment practices at selected peer and aspirational institutions.
- Develop a clear campus-facing explanation of research finances, including how sponsored projects are funded, where institutional subsidies occur, how indirect costs work, and what tradeoffs exist between research growth and other institutional priorities.
- Identify a focused set of principles for sustainable research growth at Mines.
- Develop criteria for future institutional research investments, including startup packages, facility upgrades, matching commitments, research centers, strategic hires, and workload allocations.
- Define a proposed future research model that supports selected areas of strength, expands student research opportunities, strengthens industry and applied research, improves cost recovery where possible, and protects the university's core educational mission.

Measures of Success

Implementation Measures

- Full-cost research financial analysis completed.
- Current research portfolio map completed.
- Faculty workload, startup funding, space, facility, and cost-sharing practices reviewed.
- Peer and aspirational benchmarking completed.

- Campus communication materials on research finances developed and shared.
- Principles for sustainable research growth drafted.
- Research investment criteria developed.
- Proposed sustainable research model completed and reviewed by executive leadership.

Outcome Measures

- Campus has a clearer and more accurate understanding of the financial realities of research at Mines.
- Research growth strategy is more focused around areas of institutional strength, student learning value, external relevance, and financial sustainability.
- Future research investments are guided by transparent criteria and institutional priorities.
- Faculty workload and research expectations are better aligned with mission, capacity, and available resources.
- Institutional commitments to cost sharing, facilities, startup funding, and research support are made more selectively and strategically.
- Research activity is more clearly connected to student training, innovation, industry engagement, commercialization, and economic impact.
- A sustainable research model is ready for implementation beginning in FY2028.

Executive Sponsor

Vice President for Research, in partnership with the President and Provost

Primary Collaborators

Research Affairs; Provost; department heads; faculty researchers; Faculty Senate; Finance and Administration; Institutional Research; Graduate Education; Facilities; Human Resources; Industry Relations; CARA; Center for Education Innovation; research center directors; compliance and sponsored programs staff; student research and graduate education representatives

Annual Review Process

The FY2027 Annual Strategic Priorities and Strategic Investment Fund will be managed through a structured review process intended to keep the priorities visible, actionable, funded where appropriate, and connected to institutional decision-making.

Quarterly Executive Council Review

Executive Council will review progress on each annual priority and funded Strategic Investment Fund project at least once per quarter. Each review will focus on:

- Progress toward June 2027 outcomes.
- Key accomplishments.
- Risks or barriers.
- Decisions needed from executive leadership.
- Resource implications.
- Cross-functional coordination needs.
- Adjustments to timelines or scope.

Strategic Leadership Council Review

The Strategic Leadership Council will meet monthly to coordinate implementation across priorities, surface barriers early, align communication, and review learning from funded Strategic Investment Fund initiatives. The Council prepares issues and recommendations for the quarterly Executive Council review and supports division and unit leaders in translating institutional priorities into local plans.

Board of Regents Reporting

Consistent with the Strategic Operating System, the Board of Regents will receive a semiannual strategic review and an annual strategy update covering progress on the FY2027 priorities, institutional metrics, and Strategic Investment Fund activity. Specific Board actions embedded in the FY2027 priorities, including the Preliminary Facility Statement and building committee assignment under Priority 4 and the faculty appointment model proposal under Priority 1, will be sequenced against the Board's regular agenda calendar.

Mid-Year Progress Update

A mid-year update will be prepared for campus summarizing progress on the FY2027 priorities and initial Strategic Investment Fund activity. The update should be concise, transparent, and focused on what has been accomplished, what remains underway, and where challenges exist.

Annual Campus Report

At the end of FY2027, the university will prepare an annual strategic priorities report documenting:

- Progress on each priority.
- Key outcomes achieved.
- Measures of success.
- Strategic Investment Fund projects funded and results achieved.
- Lessons learned.
- Priorities that should continue into FY2028.
- Priorities that have been completed.
- New priorities recommended for the next year.

Budget Integration

Annual priorities and the Strategic Investment Fund should inform budget development, resource allocation, staffing decisions, fundraising strategies, and external engagement. Not every priority will require significant new funding, but each should be considered during budget planning to ensure that institutional resources align with institutional strategy.

Division and Unit Alignment

Each division should engage in strategic planning efforts and identify how its work contributes to the FY2027 priorities. Division plans should include specific actions, owners, timelines, and measures that support the institutional priorities where relevant. Divisions should also identify opportunities for savings, revenue growth, reprioritization, external support, or partnership funding that could contribute to the Strategic Investment Fund.

Communication to Campus

The annual priorities should be communicated clearly and repeatedly throughout the year. Communication should emphasize that these priorities are not the only important work

happening at Mines, but they are the institution-wide initiatives receiving focused attention during FY2027. Communication should also reinforce that the Strategic Investment Fund is an annual mechanism for turning good ideas into funded experiments, pilots, and growth opportunities.

FY2027 Execution Risks

The following risks are most likely to affect delivery of the FY2027 priorities. Each will be reviewed at the quarterly Executive Council review.

- **Capacity.** Seven priorities and the Strategic Investment Fund draw on a small leadership team, and several priorities share the same executive sponsors and collaborators. Mitigation: each quarterly review includes an explicit capacity check, and Executive Council may sequence, narrow, or pause work rather than allow uniform under-delivery.
- **Funding.** The \$1 million Strategic Investment Fund depends on savings, reallocation, one-time funds, and external support that are not yet fully identified. Mitigation: Finance, Advancement, and division leaders identify and validate sources before the framework is finalized in December 2026, and the first portfolio is sized to confirmed funds rather than to the target.
- **Faculty engagement.** Priorities 1, 3, and 7 change faculty work, appointment models, workload expectations, and research investment practices. Mitigation: early and sustained engagement with Faculty Senate, department heads, and academic governance; the faculty appointment model and research investment criteria advance through normal review rather than around it.
- **External dependencies.** Priority 4 depends on Board of Regents approvals, Office of the State Engineer processes, architect selection, and donor commitments. Priority 5 depends on Innovation District timelines set with Elevate Rapid City and regional partners. Mitigation: sponsors track external milestones separately from internal ones and flag slippage at the earliest quarterly review.
- **Measurement.** Most annual indicators in the strategic plan do not yet have baselines, which limits what can be reported in the first year. Mitigation: Institutional Research establishes definitions and baselines by December 2026 so that FY2027 becomes a defensible baseline year.

FY2027 Strategic Priorities Dashboard

Element	Executive Sponsor	June 2027 Outcome	Key Measures	Status
Strategic Investment Fund	President, with Executive Council and Vice President for Finance	Framework established by December 2026 for a \$1 million annual Strategic Investment Fund; first portfolio funded in Q3 FY2027	Funding sources; proposal process; initial portfolio; matching support; outcomes from funded projects	TBD
Priority 1: Center for Education Innovation	Vice President for Strategic Initiatives and Learning Innovation	Center established with operating model, leadership structure, and initial portfolio	Center structure; initial programs; faculty model; enrollment targets	TBD
Priority 2: K-12 STEM Pipeline	Vice President for Marketing and Enrollment Strategy	Centralized outreach ownership established within Community Engagement Events and Outreach	Students and schools engaged; outreach calendar; tracking system; no disruption to visits	TBD
Priority 3: Experiential Learning Throughout the Curriculum	Provost and Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs	Every undergraduate program has a second- and third-year experiential learning plan	Curriculum maps; program plans; participation baseline; implementation needs	TBD
Priority 4: Campus Facilities for Experiential Learning, Safety, and Renewal	Vice President for Operations, with the President and Provost	Experiential learning facility planning completed and Old Mineral Industries demolition under contract and underway	Benchmarking; needs assessment; conceptual design; fundraising plan; demolition contract; tunnel preservation; site restoration	TBD
Priority 5: Innovation Ecosystem	Vice President for Research, with the Vice President for Strategic Initiatives and Learning Innovation	Coordinated innovation ecosystem foundation established	Governance; industry affiliates; partnerships; sponsored projects; Innovation District progress	TBD
Priority 6: One South Dakota Mines	Vice President for Finance, with Human Resources and Executive Council	Sustainable cross-campus engagement program launched	Six sessions; two improvement teams; participation; survey improvement; process improvements	TBD

Element	Executive Sponsor	June 2027 Outcome	Key Measures	Status
Priority 7: Sustainable Research Investment Model	Vice President for Research, with the President and Provost	Comprehensive analysis and proposed sustainable research growth model completed	Full-cost analysis; portfolio map; benchmarking; campus communication; investment criteria; proposed model	TBD

Closing Statement

The FY2027 Annual Strategic Priorities represent a focused set of actions designed to move Mines toward a more future-ready model of STEM education. They connect academic innovation, experiential learning, enrollment pipeline development, industry engagement, campus culture, financial capacity, and physical transformation into a single year of coordinated institutional progress.

The purpose of this document is not to capture everything Mines will do in FY2027. Its purpose is to clarify what the university will do together.

By identifying a limited number of priorities, creating a Strategic Investment Fund, assigning executive ownership, reviewing progress regularly, and communicating outcomes clearly, Mines will strengthen its ability to act with focus, agility, and shared purpose.