



OUR FIRST FIVE YEARS



WashU
Bursky Public Health

STRATEGIC PLAN

2025 - 2030

A LETTER FROM THE DEAN

Dear Colleagues,

The world needs public health more than ever. We are living through a moment of challenge, and of opportunity. Establishing a school of public health in a post-pandemic era in the middle of the country allows us to be flexible, to innovate, and to build differently. That is why we are delighted to share a forward-looking plan that will guide our work through 2030, and that equips us to meet current and future public health challenges in St. Louis and globally.

Washington University in St. Louis established the Bursky School of Public Health in 2025 as its first new school in 100 years. It was a bold commitment by the university to contribute to a healthier world. We are leaning into that vision. We now have the people and structures in place to enable us to lead in science and scholarship, to achieve distinction in education, to excel in interdisciplinary work, and to make a local and global impact. Our strategic plan, summarized here, charts a course for us to do even better in the coming years.

Thank you to all who have been engaged. Our strategic plan is stronger because of the extensive involvement from those within the school and friends of the school. Nearly 300 people participated in the formation of this plan. Involvement included those inside the school, and across and outside WashU. Along the way, we are committed to measuring our impact and sharing our progress. We invite you to join us on this journey.

Warmly,



Sandro Galea

Margaret C. Ryan Dean

Eugene S. and Constance Kahn
Distinguished Professor in Public Health

Vice Provost for Interdisciplinary Initiatives

VISION

To ensure all can live healthier, fulfilling lives.

MISSION

To promote health and well-being through excellence in interdisciplinary population health science and scholarship, distinction in education, and a deep commitment to local and global impact.

VALUES

The Bursky School of Public Health is committed to excellence, diligence, compassion, and integrity. We aspire to be an optimistic, inclusive, collaborative community with a sustained focus on advancing our shared mission.

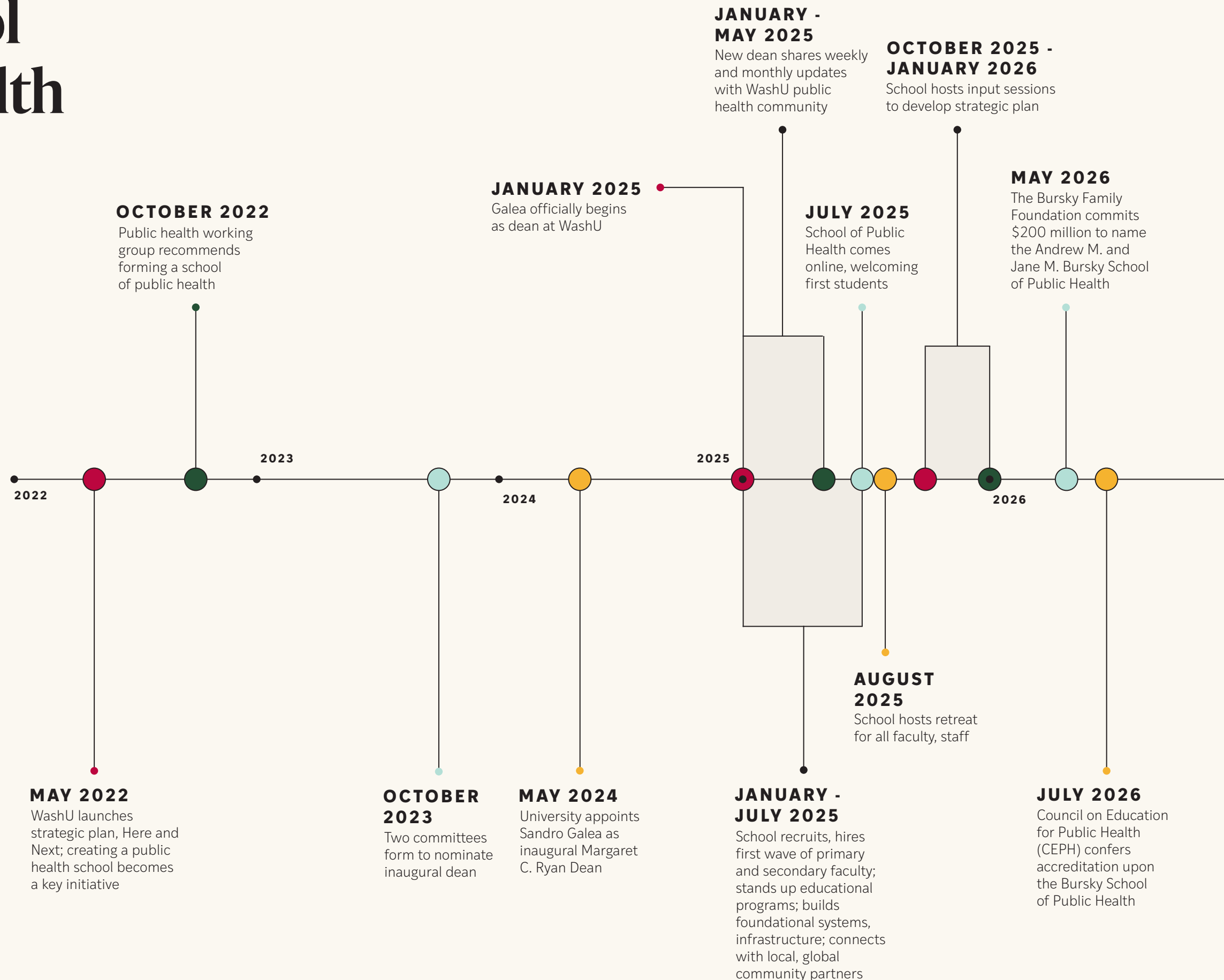


Visit our website
to learn more about
the work of our school.

Bursky School of Public Health Timeline

The trajectory toward a school of public health at WashU began in 2008, when the university formed the Institute for Public Health as an interdisciplinary venture with one foot on the Danforth Campus and the other on the Medical Campus. The same year, the Brown School hired its first public health faculty and staff and, in 2009, established its master of public health program. In 2016, the Brown School started the public health sciences doctoral program. These milestones laid the foundation for the school as it exists today. The moments in recent years that accelerated the launch of the school and its strategic plan are highlighted in the timeline here, including the university's strategic plan and recruitment of key personnel.

Our strategic planning involved 270 people overall. These included 194 people inside the school (students, faculty, and staff), 28 people elsewhere at WashU, and 48 people outside WashU, including local and national community and public health leaders. To all who engaged in our strategic planning process: thank you.



FOUR CHALLENGES

We are building a school of public health with a clear understanding of the challenges the field faces. The ability of our school — or any school — to genuinely contribute to the health of the public in the coming quarter century depends on confronting four interrelated challenges.

FOUR SOLUTIONS

How do we, as a new school of public health, contribute to solving these fieldwide challenges? We solve these challenges, as we do all challenges: centrally, by understanding them, by being clear what has gone wrong, to point then to solutions. It is this clarity of thought that has long informed the writing and thinking that underpins what we are building at WashU, and that points to why we can indeed create a school designed from the outset to meet these four challenges.

Lack of clarity about the role of public health and the institutions that support it

The pandemic revealed glaring gaps in public health as an infrastructure, which then eroded the public's trust. We now see the dismantling of core public health institutions nationally and globally as a result of this mistrust.

1

We need to lean into science. The work of science is about holding up a mirror to nature, allowing us to understand how the world works so that we can affect positive change. Affecting transformative change requires excellent, path-breaking science that leads to practical and scalable solutions for better health, and that is unencumbered by political sways and external forces. **See Strategy 1: Engage world-class faculty and staff**

Outdated approaches to emerging threats

Many traditional public health approaches, and slow academic research cycles, have shown themselves to be poorly suited to fast-evolving crises and new threats. From climate change to novel pandemics, to the burden of poor mental health among adolescents, public health must adopt more agile, innovative methods and prevention-focused strategies to stay ahead of complex 21st-century health challenges.

2

We need to lead with and teach the values that inform our approaches and the values that inform how societies act. These values — scientific rigor, humility, pluralism — have to underpin the work of health and need to infuse a distinctive educational program. This paves the way toward health rooted in shared values, an aspiration that brings people along with the science and innovation that can make all of our lives better. **See Strategy 2: Nurture outstanding teachers and students**

Fragmented partnerships limit impact

Solving today's health problems requires broad collaboration, yet the field lacks the multi-sector partnerships needed for tangible impact. We know that breakthroughs to protect the public's health (e.g., rapid vaccines) can happen when academia, government, industry, and communities join forces. Public health must forge new alliances across private and public sectors to translate knowledge into widespread change.

3

We need to embrace work in partnership across sectors and disciplines. The challenges that hold back health — the opioid epidemic, adolescent mental illness, chronic disease associated with aging, large-scale disasters — do not align neatly with disciplinary or sectoral bounds. These are complex, knotty problems that require the work of many, that call for the ingenuity of the private sector coupled with the capacity of the public sector to scale to millions. It is the job of health to find ways to bring these together to truly improve health for the many. **See Strategy 3: Pursue Public Health Plus**

Evidence generation lags decision-making

Policy decisions and public needs often outpace the evidence base. Research translation is too disconnected from real-time policymaking, hindering effective responses. Public health science must produce rigorous, actionable evidence at the speed of relevance — providing data and insights that leaders and communities can use immediately.

4

We have a moral and practical imperative to find pathways to action, to make the science real, to create opportunities for those who can make change happen, to communicate in a way that convinces, and to ensure that we remove the gap between science and practice so that the work of discovery aligns apace with the actions needed to realize its potential. **See Strategy 4: Prioritize local to global impact**

STRATEGY 1

Engage world-class faculty and staff

We are recruiting innovative, intellectually curious, and heterodox thinkers who are animated by the call of science and scholarship.

Our core goal as a school is to foster the creation of ideas, science, and data. Achieving this demands unwavering support and nurturing of our faculty and staff, who are the architects of the transformative ideas that benefit our society. Their dedication and innovation propel our research, education, and practice work forward. At the heart of our efforts is the steadfast commitment of our faculty and staff to produce rigorous and impactful scholarship. Their contributions help shape the next generation of leaders and thinkers, ensuring our continued impact on the world.

To this end, we are:	Measured by:
Broadly disseminating our scholarship	• Publications
Producing scholarship that creates a better world for all	• Diffusion of innovations
Building infrastructure and obtaining resources to support world-class science and scholarship	• Funding • Quality of infrastructure
Fostering a sense of belonging where all can thrive	• Sense of belonging and well-being • Faculty and staff retention • Tenure and promotion
Supporting external recognition of our faculty and staff	• Awards and recognitions • Extramural service



STRATEGY 2

Nurture
outstanding
teachers and
students

We are building a curriculum that is rooted in public health fundamentals, with the flexibility to evolve as the field progresses and to offer both in-person and digital learning options.

Nurturing outstanding teachers and students is pivotal in preparing the next generation of leaders and thinkers. We aim to achieve distinction in our educational programs and teaching, recognizing that public health faces problems of enormous complexity. To confront these challenges, we must equip students with the ability to think critically and innovatively, rooted in real-world practice. By working at the spaces between disciplines, we aim to meet the evolving needs of our students. We are dedicated to building a school that, through existing and new partnerships, supports faculty with mentorship, continuing education, and professional development opportunities. This commitment elevates our teaching and also fosters new ways of thinking in the scholarship of teaching and learning.

To this end, we are:

Measured by:

Attracting and retaining
a broad student population

- Successful enrollment
- Background of students
- Retention

Preparing students to address current
and future public health concerns

- Quality of curriculum
- Effectiveness of curriculum
- Inclusive learning environments

Graduating alumni who go on
to impact the field

- Graduates' employment rate
- Contribution of alumni to the field

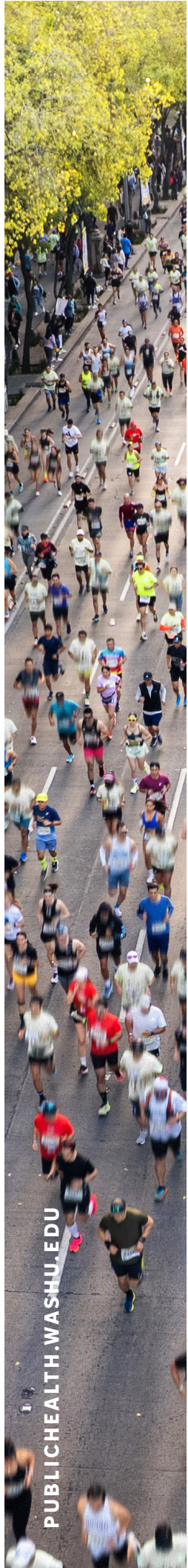
Contributing to the scholarship
of teaching and learning

- Growth in educational engagement
and scholarly output

Fostering participation
in professional development

- Mentorship opportunities
- Student practicum experience
- Student research experience





STRATEGY 3

Pursue
Public Health
Plus

We are forging partnerships across WashU’s nine schools and with the public and private sectors to create a big-tent movement for public health.

In service of the mission to solve the public health challenges of today and tomorrow we engage in work that ranges from multidisciplinary to interdisciplinary to transdisciplinary. There is a place for each of these perspectives. We are inherently multidisciplinary, meaning that our work involves disciplines situated next to one another. We encourage interdisciplinary work, which occurs when various disciplines bring their perspectives together to synthesize, while preserving the perspectives of their distinctive disciplines. We strive for transdisciplinary work when and where it makes sense. This occurs when multiple disciplines come together to create a perspective that transcends disciplines. Our research networks, for example, aspire to see transdisciplinary work. We aspire for this work to unfold in intra-institutional (e.g., multiple schools at WashU) or inter-institutional (e.g., WashU and another university) settings.

To this end, we are:

Measured by:

Building infrastructure that enables interdisciplinary collaborations

- Infrastructure
- Convenings

Obtaining resources to catalyze interdisciplinary science

- Funding awarded for interdisciplinary science

Strengthening our interdisciplinary curriculum

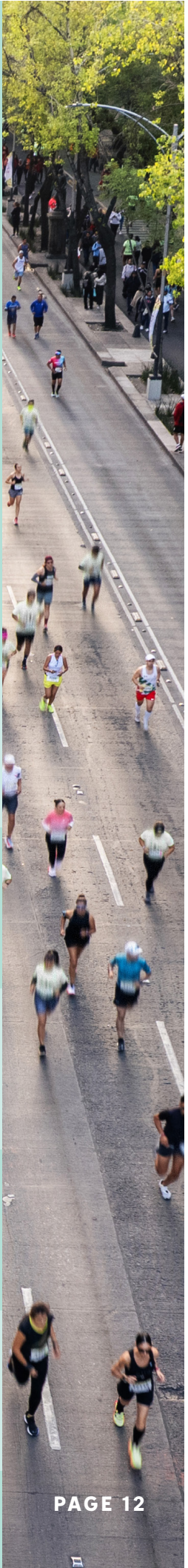
- Interdisciplinary teaching

Engaging in interdisciplinary science both inside and outside the university

- Interdisciplinary collaborations

Strengthening our interdisciplinary collaborations and disseminating our scholarship

- Strength of interdisciplinary collaborations
- Interdisciplinary science publications





STRATEGY 4

Prioritize
local to
global impact

We are pursuing research, education,
and practice that help build a better world,
starting in St. Louis and extending
our reach globally.

Driven by a commitment to improve the health of all, we aim to make a difference at the level of individuals, communities, and the social and economic forces with which they intersect. We believe that our work must be accessible and actionable for those who bring it to life in the field. Bridging the gap between knowledge and practice is essential to ensuring that academic public health genuinely enhances the well-being of the public. Our enduring partnerships – crossing sectors and disciplines – focus on fostering community-driven solutions to address the evolving health challenges we face. By working together, we strive to build a healthier, more fulfilling future for all.

To this end, we are:

Measured by:

Building infrastructure to facilitate
collaborations locally to globally

- Infrastructure

Positively impacting the health
of our communities locally to globally

- Impact of external collaborations

Becoming a good community partner

- Community and practice
partner perceptions of the
impact of Bursky Public Health

Forming and sustaining partnerships
locally to globally to advance
community health

- Local and global collaborations



Discover more about the strategic plan
by scanning this QR code.



PUBLICHEALTH.WASHU.EDU

