



Carl Vinson **Institute of Government**

The University of Georgia

Strategic Plan 2008–2012

# Contents

Introduction.....	1
Mission.....	2
Vision.....	2
Guiding Principles.....	3
Environmental Assessment.....	3
Strategic Goals.....	6
Appendix.....	9

# Introduction

Today's complex challenges demand that governments at all levels be more responsive, efficient, and effective in serving people. Through its programs of technical assistance, training, and research, the Carl Vinson Institute of Government has built a strong record of partnering with public officials across the state to help improve government in Georgia.

The resources and expertise the Vinson Institute has brought to bear on pressing issues affecting governments are significant, and its statewide *and* global reach is impressive. From Bainbridge to Beijing, the Vinson Institute has worked with governments in Georgia and around the world to develop the knowledge and skills that public officials need to manage effectively in the 21st century. The Vinson Institute today is recognized as one of the best institutes of government in the nation.

As the Vinson Institute looks ahead to tomorrow's governance challenges, it must continue to position itself to tackle the complex and ever-changing demands of the future to retain its excellence. This planning document represents the Vinson Institute's strategic goals and aspirations for meeting head-on tomorrow's governance challenges. These goals will help to guide the work of the Vinson Institute's divisions and programs over the next five years. Each division will have a workplan that serves to implement the strategic plan.

Themes emphasized throughout this document are **innovation, responsiveness, self-assessment, excellence, entrepreneurship, and collaboration**. To be on the frontier of serving the needs of governments in Georgia and around the world means that the Vinson Institute must adapt to a constantly shifting and uncertain external environment. Internally, the faculty and staff who make up the Vinson Institute must continually assess whether we are working in the right markets with the right expertise and resources necessary to be the best at all that we do. This document reflects a vision for how the Vinson Institute can best position itself to address the governance challenges of the 21st century.

## Mission

As a Public Service and Outreach unit at the University of Georgia, the Vinson Institute shares in the university's overarching public service mission of extending the institution's resources—professional knowledge and expertise—to help communities improve their quality of life. **Fundamental to quality of life in Georgia and around the world is effective, efficient, and responsive governance.**

**The Vinson Institute's mission is to enhance the capacity of governments to serve people in Georgia and around the world.** By improving governance, every day the Vinson Institute improves the lives of people worldwide.

## Vision

The Vinson Institute will be recognized nationally and internationally for its outstanding programs that enhance the capacity of governments to serve people. This vision entails an institute that:

- Is a pioneer in governance innovations.
- Is focused and clear in its mission and excels in the programs that form its core mission.
- Has a diverse and creative faculty and staff recognized worldwide for their contributions to extending the boundaries of knowledge beyond the university to real-world governance demands of the 21st century.
- Collaborates with strategic partners within the university, state, nation, and international community to address complex governance challenges.
- Effectively communicates its value to existing and new markets.

# Guiding Principles

The core values of commitment, service, and integrity are fundamental to the Vinson Institute's success. Within these core values, the following principles imbue all of the Institute's work:

- Excellence and Quality
- Focus
- Responsiveness
- Innovation and Creativity
- Accountability
- Collaboration
- Diversity
- Entrepreneurship

# Environmental Assessment

The work of the Vinson Institute is shaped by internal and external forces that influence the strategic focus of its programs. These environmental forces are dynamic and require Vinson Institute faculty and staff to adapt, respond to, and sometimes lead change. In charting a course for the next five years, the Institute will be guided by the environment within which it carries out its work.

*Internally, within the Vinson Institute and the University of Georgia, the working environment will be characterized by:*

- Declining state funding for public higher education, requiring the Vinson Institute to balance its traditional service mission with the need to be entrepreneurial and to secure diverse external funding streams for its work.

## Environmental Assessment Internal Environment, continued

- Increasing focus on accountability and measuring impact throughout the university that will require the Vinson Institute to assess the nature and impact of its work systematically.
- A culture within Public Service and Outreach at the university that values collaboration with other university units as well as statewide and internationally and engagement of students.
- The need for continuous assessment of the skill sets required for core and priority Vinson Institute program areas.
- Personnel succession within the Vinson Institute that will mean loss of specific expertise and institutional memory but will also bring new opportunities for the Institute.
- Increasing competition from private and public providers of services in the Vinson Institute's core program areas that will demand a new level of excellence and that will require it to be more focused and responsive in its work.
- The need for constant environmental scanning to uncover emerging service areas and new markets.

*The external environment within the state will include:*

- Dynamic change at all levels of government, characterized by turnover of elected and appointed officials that may result in the loss of long-time institutional ties and some client relationships.
- Fiscal challenges for all levels of government.
- A continuing need for timely, relevant policy research and analysis around demanding issues that will challenge state and local governments alike, including growth management issues such as water and air quality, transportation, and infrastructure.

- A state and local government climate focused on efficiency, customer service, cost-effectiveness, and accountability in the provision of services, may affect both demand for services and kinds of services needed.
- Increasing attention to exploring various forms of local government.
- Increasing interest on the part of state and local governments to keep pace with advances in information technology in order to provide improved, more efficient service.
- Changing demographics and an increasingly multicultural environment that will challenge state and local governments at all levels.

*The Vinson Institute also operates within a global environment that entails:*

- Georgia's increasing internationalization and growing economic and political ties around the world.
- A significant commitment to internationalization on the part of the university and Public Service and Outreach.
- Continuing worldwide governance challenges in Africa, Southeast Asia, Latin America, and Central Asia, resulting in the need to build more effective, transparent, and accountable national and subnational governance structures.
- Governance challenges and opportunities created by the rise of the economic and political powerhouses of China and India and their inextricable link to U.S. prosperity.
- External donor interest in building worldwide governance capacity to address issues important globally such as environment, public health, and security.

# Strategic Goals

## Goal 1 – Culture of Continuous Improvement

The Vinson Institute will seek to establish a culture of continuous assessment and improvement for programs and work across all divisions. Through ongoing and regular formal and informal evaluation and constant environmental scanning, the Vinson Institute will improve its responsiveness, accountability, and excellence. This internal culture of continuous improvement will include:

- Faculty and staff engaging in ongoing formal and informal assessment of whether the Institute as a whole and individuals are working in the right markets and with the right partners.
- Diligence in assessing whether all of the work of the Vinson Institute reflects its core mission.
- Assessment of whether the Vinson Institute has faculty and staff who possess the right skill sets and whether the Institute has a diversity of talent to be able to anticipate and respond to governance challenges at all levels.
- With key statewide and international partners, continuous evaluation and improvement of all programming, including content, delivery, and methodology.
- Constant enhancement and refinement of internal processes and procedures that improve the quality of the Institute's education, research, and technical assistance programs.

## Goal 2 – Innovation and Creativity

In order to become a pioneer in governance innovations, the Vinson Institute must have the capacity to not only respond to the needs of government at all levels but effectively anticipate emerging needs and trends. Achieving this goal will include:

- Responding to current and emerging public policy demands by being on the forefront of generating high-quality, timely, and regular applied research and knowledge that inform policy decisions in Georgia and around the world.
- Becoming a recognized leader in addressing complex international governance issues in nations in transition and post-conflict societies that are most in need of improved governance.
- Utilizing cutting-edge technology to integrate and expand the Institute's learning services and enlarge its markets.
- Using technological innovations to help governments make data and information more accessible to citizens.

### Goal 3 – Entrepreneurship

Declining public funding for higher education and increasing competition from other service providers, coupled with more complex governance demands, mean that the Vinson Institute must strive for a higher level of creativity and focus in its work while securing a diversity of funding streams. Achieving this goal will include:

- Developing the capacity to serve new markets that fit the Vinson Institute's core mission, including the judiciary, local boards and commissions, urban and suburban constituencies, and other underserved customer groups.
- Actively pursuing new and diverse funding streams, including foundations and corporations, for growth and expansion of Institute programs and facilities.
- Developing an institute-wide communications plan that transmits to new and existing partners and clientele the Institute's mission, vision, and capabilities.

## Goal 4 – Collaboration and Engagement

Central to the mission of the Office of Vice President for Public Service and Outreach is developing a culture of collaboration and engagement with the broader university, the state, and the international community. As part of this broader mission, the Vinson Institute will collaborate with strategic partners to better address tomorrow's governance challenges. Achieving this goal will include:

- Collaborating with academic units, government, and nongovernment partners to develop formal programs that engage university undergraduate students in all of the Vinson Institute's work.
- Developing strategic initiatives with key public service and academic units to address targeted cross-cutting governance issues.
- Actively and regularly engaging with existing partners in the university, the state, and the international community to better serve all levels of government.

# Appendix

## Criteria for Assessing New and Current Programs

During the strategic planning process, the management team determined that it was important to come to some common understanding and agreement on how current and new programming within the Institute is assessed and evaluated. The following framework was developed by the management team as a way to both bring focus to our work and engender within the Institute a culture of continual assessment and improvement

*Core Mission* – How well does the program or project fit the Institute’s core mission?  
– How well does it fit with the core mission of UGA? Of Public Service and Outreach?

*Financial* – To what degree can the work/program support itself?  
– What are the hidden costs of the work/program?  
– How do financial considerations relate to the project’s strategic value?

*Personnel* – Do we have the necessary faculty expertise in-house? What is our capacity?  
– Do we have the right expertise to carry out our mission?

*Intangibles* – How does it feel?

*Value* – Can we do the work better than anyone else? Is second best good enough?  
– What is the overall short- and long-term impact of the work?  
– How does the Institute gain/lose from the program/work (including fiscal and political considerations and whether the Institute can be an innovator)?  
– Is there strategic value to the project?

*External Factors* – Where is the demand coming from?  
– How will constituents, customers, and others perceive it?  
– Are we operating in the right markets?

Carl Vinson Institute of Government