



Merrill Palmer Skillman Institute

STRATEGIC PLAN 2023-2027

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Introduction

The Merrill Palmer Skillman Institute (MPSI) has been devoted to the wellbeing of children and families for over 100 years, including during its time as part of Wayne State University since 1981 to the present day. Faculty and students at the Institute conduct innovative interdisciplinary research that contributes to the scientific knowledge base about developmental processes, which translate into practices and policies to benefit families. The Institute also has a long history of training parents, students, researchers, and other professionals, both locally and nationally, and maintains an international reputation in early childhood development. Since its founding in 1920, the Institute has engaged with the Detroit community through the provision of early childhood education, parenting support, and health services, as well as through outreach and collaborative partnerships. The Institute has been located continuously in the historic Charles Lang Freer House and is deeply committed to its preservation as a local and national historic landmark.

Since the last strategic plan was developed in 2017, MPSI has increased the number of both “core” and “affiliate” faculty drawing from diverse academic departments across Wayne State University, and it has seen a 39% increase in external research funding. Both graduate-level interdisciplinary training programs have grown, supporting the professional preparation of both research scholars and clinical practitioners. A new Director of the Institute began in 2023, and shortly thereafter, faculty and staff engaged in a lengthy collaborative strategic planning process that resulted in the current Strategic Plan. Specific measurable action steps have been developed by MPSI working groups to support the Goals and Objectives described herein. The Institute recognizes that this Strategic Plan is a working document and may be revised, if appropriate, through ongoing review and evaluation of its activities according to its mission, vision, and values, which follow on the next page.

Mission, Vision, & Values

Mission

The Merrill Palmer Skillman Institute (MPSI) advances the development, health, and well-being of children and their families through research, education, and community engagement. MPSI honors the lived expertise of families and communities in Detroit and beyond in all its work. MPSI embraces its role in advocating for the preservation and restoration of the Freer House as a Wayne State University and Detroit historical landmark with international significance.

Vision

We envision MPSI as an integrated hub that collaborates with families, children, and community partners to promote the healthy development and well-being of individuals and society.

Values

We value collaboration and relationships. We are committed to exemplifying diversity, equity, inclusion, and anti-racism in all we do. We strive to act with integrity and to honor community voices.

Directions, Goals, & Objectives

Strategic Direction 1: Research Excellence

Goal: Ensure capacity for and excellence in the implementation of research at MPSI, including research related to the Freer House

Objectives

- I. Support the successful development, submission, and management of research grants and projects.
- II. Diversify MPSI's research portfolio.
- III. Increase research funding.
- IV. Enhance visibility of MPSI research within and beyond the university.
- V. Build networks for community and institutional engagement in research.

Strategic Direction 2: High Quality Education

Goal: Provide interdisciplinary education and training to students at all levels across campus

Objectives

- I. Ensure that students in MPSI training programs represent diverse identities and disciplines.
- II. Increase visibility across campus of MPSI education and training opportunities.
- III. Continue to incorporate an anti-racist stance in education and training.
- IV. Ensure high quality education and training across programs.
- V. Increase students' experiential learning opportunities.

Strategic Direction 3: Community Engagement and Service

Goal: Support and foster opportunities for children, families, and caregivers to reach their full potential and thrive in their communities

Objectives

- I. Provide high quality affordable early childhood education.
- II. Develop and deliver research-informed, culturally appropriate knowledge and resources to families and the professionals who serve them.

- III. Nurture the development of the child-family workforce, including the next generation of community-engaged professionals.
- IV. Engage diverse community voices to inform programming and services.
- V. Maintain and build collaborative partnerships with local, state, and national organizations, including those with connections to the Freer House.

Strategic Direction 4: Sustainability

Goal: Grow and diversify awareness and support for MPSI and the Freer House

Objectives

- I. Secure more financial support from diverse sources for operations, research, programming, and Freer House restoration projects.
- II. Partner with more academic units and disciplines within the university.
- III. Increase awareness, recognition, and involvement by key external entities, both locally and nationally.
- IV. Raise awareness of the historical significance of the Freer House and elevate Wayne State University's commitment to its restoration and preservation.



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