



LiDA Center Strategic Plan (2020-2025)

Mission Statement:

Transforming education by leveraging digital technologies

Vision Statement:

Digital technologies have the potential to increase access to education, enable powerful learning experiences, foster interest-driven learning, and make new educational models possible – thus helping to level the playing field and transform teaching and learning for all. The LiDA Center will contribute to realize this potential by influencing how learners and educators make use of digital technologies.

Strategic Goals:

1. Increase the number of successful transformative LiDA initiatives – with a focus on:

- a. Providing support to specific innovative uses of technology for teaching and learning
- b. Preparing high-quality online and blended instructors
- c. Influencing educational leaders' decision-making about digitally-rich innovations

2. Advance LiDA scholarship – with a focus on:

- a. Studying transformative uses of technology for teaching and learning
- b. Leveraging digital technologies to more effectively disseminate new knowledge
- c. Developing research methodologies to effectively and ethically make use of digital data

3. Achieve visibility for LiDA Center's work

4. Create a vibrant and collaborative "LiDA Community"

5. Assure the resources needed to sustain and expand the Center's work and its impact

Strategic Initiatives:

A. Creating a robust LiDA website, along with a comprehensive communication plan

B. Promoting online learning at the University of Rochester

C. "Incubating" the K-12 Digital Consortium

D. Developing capacity in applying selected promising technologies

E. Developing Warner doctoral students' capacity to engage in LiDA initiatives

STRATEGIC GOAL #1: Increase the number of successful transformative LiDA initiatives

The ultimate goal of the LiDA Center is to make a difference in our communities (with an initial focus on the Rochester region, but looking for opportunities at the national and international level as well), by empowering individual learners, as well as educators and organizations, to make the best use of digital technologies. So it is important that we contribute not only to the development, but also to the success, of specific technology-rich educational innovations – either directly or indirectly. Because of our limited resources, we need to be strategic about how we do this; therefore, our focus will be on:

a. Providing support to selected innovative uses of technology for teaching and learning.

Consistent with our mission and vision, we will thoughtfully select the specific LiDA initiatives we are going to directly support by assessing both (a) their transformational potential, and (b) our capacity to add value to the initiative based on our comparative advantages. We will also proactively seek to support uses of digital technologies in informal and non-traditional settings – not only to capitalize on the power of digital technologies for learning beyond K-12 and higher education, but also to take inspiration from these experiences to envision new solutions for formal education.

b. Preparing high-quality online and blended instructors.

We also believe we can support LiDA initiatives in a few indirect, yet powerful ways. First of all, since the quality of technology-rich learning experiences is highly dependent on the quality of the instructor, we want to improve the preparation of online and blended teachers at all levels. Building on the strong programs we have already developed at Warner, we want to serve an increasing number of pre-service and in-service instructors in our current Warner programs as well as through new more flexible and affordable professional development offerings. We also envision collaborating with other K-12 schools and colleges to support their efforts to prepare their online/ blended instructors.

c. Influencing educational leaders' decision-making about digitally-rich innovations.

Similarly, we recognize that educational leaders (such as principals, superintendents, chairs, deans, CIOs, etc.) are the ones making key decisions that will affect technology-rich innovations for their organization. Therefore, to inform and influence those decisions, we want to increase these leaders' awareness of the potential of digital technologies, as well as what it takes to introduce successful instructional technology innovations.

STRATEGIC GOAL #2: Advance LiDA scholarship

We are committed to contribute to the development and dissemination of new knowledge related to learning in the digital age in three complementary ways:

- a. **Studying transformative uses of technology for teaching and learning** – as a way to “multiply the effect” of specific innovative LiDA initiatives.
- b. **Leveraging digital technologies to more effectively disseminate new knowledge** – as social media, websites, podcasts and other online venues open up new ways to identify and communicate lessons learned among practitioners, we want to leverage this potential to disseminate our work, as well as help others do the same.
- c. **Developing research methodologies to effectively and ethically make use of digital data** – by offering new ways to generate, collect and analyze data (in education as well as other domains), digital technologies have created the need for new research methodologies and also raised new ethical issues about how to access and use that data; the LiDA Center wants to contribute to these new developments and the professional dialogues around them.

STRATEGIC GOAL #3: Achieving visibility for LiDA Center's work

Establishing the credibility and reputation of the LiDA Center is a necessary condition to achieve the impact we desire. If we want to influence uses of digital technology in education and become a “convener” of individuals working in this area so as to create new synergies, other educators first need to recognize our expertise and potential contributions. Awareness and recognition of the value of our work is also critical for securing the resources needed to do our work - including donations, students enrolling in our programs, and organizations seeking our services.

While we want first of all to make an impact in the Rochester region (because of the University commitment to our local community as well as for logistical reasons), we believe the Center has the potential to also engage people interested in LiDA both nationally and internationally – and in turn attract more talent and resources to Warner more generally.

STRATEGIC GOAL #4: Create a vibrant and collaborative “LiDA Community”

A Center essentially IS the community of individuals brought together by common interests, and what that community achieves – both individually and collectively. And this does not “just happen”, but rather it is something that needs to be proactively pursued and nurtured.

In addition to continuing to grow the LiDA Community associated with our Center, we also aim to create new opportunities and vehicles for sharing and collaborating within it, leveraging digital technologies as most appropriate – so as to realize new synergies that will make it “more than the sum of the parts.”

STRATEGIC GOAL #5: Assure the resources needed to sustain and expand the Center’s work and its impact

The LiDA Center will not be able to fiscally sustain itself (and, thus, continue to exist) if we do not develop sufficient revenues to support its basic operations after Year 4. We have estimated that continuing to perform critical unfunded functions (including acting as a catalyst for the LiDA Community, conducting unfunded research projects, participating in conferences, maintaining our website and social media, developing doctoral students’ capacity, and providing selected pro-bono services) at the current level will require at least \$200,000 per year – to be covered mostly by philanthropy. The direct costs associated to offering Warner courses and programs will be covered by the Warner School, with the associated tuition revenues going to the Warner School (to also cover for other overhead and indirect costs associated with the LiDA Center). Additional initiatives will need to be sustained through external funding secured through specific grants, contracts or restricted gifts.

It is also important to recognize that the impact of the LiDA Center will be proportional to the number and scope of the projects and initiatives we will be able to carry out, which in turn is constrained by the available human resources. Therefore, realizing our vision will also require securing, preparing and funding a growing cadre of qualified individuals that can perform these services.

Proposed metrics to measure progress

GOAL #1

- # of LiDA initiatives directly supported, along with a narrative description of what contributes to the potential of each initiative to transform teaching and/or learning
- # of educators trained through Warner courses or professional development programs
- # credits of enrollment in LiDA Courses
- # hours of professional development (PD) offered (# hours x # participants for each PD)
- # new online courses created

GOAL #2

- # LiDA research publications/presentations generated by the LiDA Center – i.e., by LiDA staff members and/or resulting from collaboration with or supported by LiDA Center
- # of innovative dissemination products by LiDA Center (+ narrative explanation of what makes each of these products innovative)

GOAL #3

- # publications recognizing affiliation with or support from the LiDA Center
- # presentations recognizing affiliation with or support from the LiDA Center
- # LiDA conferences/events attended by LiDA Center staff
- # visits to LiDA website
- # of followers on social media (Twitter+LinkedIn+...)
- # K-12 Digital Consortium members
- # new grant awards/ # new contracts
- Awards and other public recognitions (with explanation about their significance)

GOAL #4

- # current LiDA Community members/# new LiDA Community members
- # LiDA events held
- # working groups (including Mastermind groups)/ total #people involved
- # of “shared resources” posted on LiDA Center website
- # of current active collaborations/# new collaborations established

GOAL #5

- LiDA Center staff working on infrastructure & unfunded core initiatives (FTEs per year)
- Personnel employed in LiDA funded projects (FTEs per year)
- RAs (total # hours per year)
- # free lancers employed (per year)
- \$ cash gifts received (total/per year)
- \$ grant funds awarded (total/per year)
- \$ contracts awarded (total/per year)
- # grant proposals submitted (total/per year)



Strategic Initiatives' Brief Description

A. Creating a robust LiDA website along with a comprehensive communication plan

Our goals of growing a collaborative LiDA Community (Goal #4), exploring new digitally-enhanced ways to disseminate lessons learned (Goal #2), and increasing the LiDA Center's visibility (Goal #3), all require the development and implementation of a robust communication plan for the LiDA Center. At the core of this plan is the development of an interactive and vibrant website that will provide online spaces to exchange information, lessons learned, opportunities and resources. To be effective, though, this website needs to be accompanied by a thoughtful and comprehensive plan about how to leverage social media and other communication vehicles so as to reach the widest possible audience.

B. Promoting online learning at the University of Rochester

Perhaps the most important context where we want to enrich students' digitally-rich learning experiences (Goal #1) is our own University. Taking on an active leadership role in UR online teaching initiatives will increase awareness of the LiDA Center within the University community (Goal #3), and has also the potential to develop a strong UR "sub-community" within the larger LiDA Community (Goal #4).

C. "Incubating" the K-12 Digital Consortium

The LiDA Center has committed to "incubate" the K-12 Digital Consortium (a collaboration among over 20 school districts and BOCES in the region committed to technology-rich innovations) by providing expertise, resources and leadership to support its start-up phase. This presents a unique opportunity for the LiDA Center to influence K-12 digitally-rich learning experiences (Goal #1), increase visibility in the region (Goal #3), and reach out to K-12 educators to become part of the LiDA Community (Goal #4).

D. Developing capacity in applying selected promising technologies

As new promising applications to education of specific technologies emerge, supporting those applications will require some basic understanding of the technology involved and its potential implications. Given our limited staff and rapid advances in technology, we will need to continue to strategically evaluate which technologies we want to focus on, and what it would take to develop sufficient internal capacity to support their use. At the moment, we have identified the greatest opportunity (and need for developing internal capacity) in Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Data Science – although we expect that new priorities will continue to emerge overtime.

E. Developing Warner doctoral students' capacity to engage in LiDA initiatives

As a way to multiply our future impact, we want to prepare the next generation of education researchers and innovative leaders working on LiDA-related topics; our doctoral students are uniquely positioned to play these roles – but will require specialized training in order to develop the needed skills and mindsets. Developing interested Warner doctoral students' interest and capacity to do work in LiDA will also increase our internal capacity to undertake LiDA projects (Goals #1 and #5), enrich our LiDA Community (Goal #4), and increase our visibility once they graduate, as they can become our ambassadors on their new positions (Goal #3).