

Updated January 14, 2026

STRATEGIC PLAN 2025-2030



M MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Introduction

As Director of the University of Michigan Museum of Natural History (UMMNH), I'm very excited to present the future of our organization. Our 2025-2030 strategic plan has been developed in consultation with multiple stakeholder groups of the museum, including the museum staff, advisory board, faculty, staff, students, museum visitors, community partner organizations, and K12 educators who visit the museum or take part in our programs. This document is an executive summary of a detailed strategic plan that has been the culmination of retreats, deep dives, and focus groups with each of those stakeholder groups.

At its core, this plan is based on the idea that everyone is a scientist. Everyone is curious, everyone has questions and ideas, and we want to unleash those. Developing and delivering on this plan has been and will be an ongoing collaborative effort that leans into the curiosity and innovation of all our stakeholders. This is a living document, which will grow and adapt as the UMMNH team refines our implementation approaches, realizes our focused objectives, and learns from our evaluations. This executive summary will be our North Star as we embark on the next stretch of our journey, and we promise to highlight our progress along the way.



Lucie Howell
Director, University of Michigan Museum of Natural History
January 2026

2024

- AUG**
New Director (LH) joins UMMNH
- SEP**
Deep dives with UMMNH staff
- OCT**
Strategic planning sub-team retreats
- NOV**
Strategic planning leadership retreats & focus groups
- DEC**
UMMNH full team strategic planning

2025

- JAN-MAR**
Strategic Plan (SP) full draft
- APR**
Share SP draft with partners
- MAY**
Final SP & sub-team tactics/goals alignment
- JUN-JUL**
LSA UGED financial ask development
- AUG**
Align budgets
- SEP**
Launch SP

2026

- MAY-AUG**
Evaluate progress on SP targets

Guiding Lights

MISSION

Transforming hearts and minds by promoting understanding of the natural world, our place in it, and our impact on it.

VISION

A world in which people understand the interconnectedness of all life, and the responsibility we have to sustain it.

VALUES



CORE PURPOSE

To be a trusted and inclusive STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math, and Medicine) resource which connects our diverse communities of life-long learners to historical, current, and future research. We seek to deepen our audiences' scientific literacy through our accessible exhibits and programs, and to inspire them to protect the natural world and our place in it.

GUIDING STATEMENT

Connecting Our Past to Our Future Through STEM Storytelling

FOCUSED APPROACHES

P.U.M.A.S.: Portal to the University of Michigan's Achievements in STEM

I.D.E.A.S.: Inquiry-Driven Education Applying Science

DRIVING GOALS

- Elevate the **P.U.M.A.S.** brand
- Gain **AAM accreditation**
- Be a **"Key Trusted Front Door"** for the MI public to U-M STEM learning & research
- Establish & lead **Great Lakes SciComm STEM Ecosystem**



Strategic Focus 1: Our Place

5-YEAR GOAL

Gain AAM certification and become an institutionally recognized ‘trusted front door’ to the University of Michigan for the general public, which maximizes the impact of UMMNH spaces and showcases world-renowned STEMM research and learning by activating strategically aligned exhibitions and hands-on, minds-on engagement experiences.

OBJECTIVES

- **Maximize activation of permanent exhibit galleries & collections spaces, including 5-year Changing Gallery plan**
- **Create & implement events & space rentals strategy**
- Elevate forums to hybrid learning spaces
- Activate & optimize offices & outdoor spaces
- Engage audiences with temporary exhibits, research labs/stations, & “Investigate Learning Labs”

Strategic Focus 2: Our Outreach

5-YEAR GOAL

Become a **STEMM ecosystems leader focused on Science Communications** and increase UMMNH's impact by expanding our STEM learning outreach to include informal and formal K12 curriculum resources and aligned educator professional development.

OBJECTIVES

- **Initiate portal & portfolio of K12 student engagement experiences aligned with museum content**
- **Pilot K12 educator professional learning experiences**
- Activate nationally recognized SciComm hub
- Become lead organization of nationally recognized STEMM ecosystem with SciComm focus
- Activate upgraded Science Forum to offer hybrid engagement experiences





Strategic Focus 3: Our People

5-YEAR GOAL

Develop a **'best in class' professional learning and enrichment program** for UMMNH student employees to enhance the 6Ps (problem, place, project, phenomena, profession and pursuit) learning approach to UMMNH audience engagement portfolio.

OBJECTIVES

- **Formalize & elevate undergrad/intern enrichment with professional learning & enrichment certification**
- Optimize visitor & community partner engagement
- Formalize & activate core staff team development plan
- Formalize & elevate K12 educator & student engagement
- Enhance U-M faculty & postgrad researcher engagement

Conclusion

The U-M Museum of Natural History is a very special organization which is dear to the hearts of its audiences. We see ourselves as a 'Portal to the University of Michigan's Achievements in STEMM' (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math, and Medicine), or 'PUMAS,' and our audiences trust us to be a reliable, expert source of information about science research, communication, and learning.

We are known locally as "the dinosaur museum," and we are proud of that! As you know, though, we highlight so much more than dinosaur stories, and I believe we can nurture and grow our unique strengths to become a leading voice in the practices and pathways of science in our state, our region, our country, and even our world.



PHOTO CREDITS

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