

Discussion Draft for Naturescape Vision Statement

UCI's "Naturescape" is the interconnected open space system that serves the campus. This outdoor system uniquely serves key campus functions including recreation, wellness, campus life & community activities, art & culture, habitat & watershed management, and especially interdisciplinary teaching and research supporting the concept of the campus as a living laboratory. Naturescape includes several elements, including parks, greenbelts, community & botanical gardens, trail systems, field research sites, upland and wetland habitat areas, and urban outdoor spaces. Naturescape is a valuable campus asset that should be approached in the same fashion as buildings and other core facilities. Naturescape should be actively and collaboratively planned, managed, and preserved to fully serve UCI's mission.

Overarching Goal: Optimize UCI's Naturescape to serve campus research, teaching, community engagement, wellness, and sustainability needs through program, physical planning, and land management improvements.

This goal will be attained through the following strategies:

Strategy I. Provide locations for place-based research, teaching and community engagement to improve opportunities for interdisciplinary scholarship and active learning.

- a. General approach
 - i. Identify a portfolio of sites throughout campus to include a variety of habitats, environmental conditions, patch sizes, and human use patterns ranging from interstitial spaces (e.g. planters, walkway margins, etc.) up to entire ecosystems (e.g. San Joaquin Marsh, Ecological Preserve).
 - ii. Provide accessibility and interpretation to faculty, staff, and students, and the public.
 - iii. Include secure sites for controlled experiments and equipment.
 - iv. Provide certainty through long term commitment to the dedicated uses of such sites.
- b. Specific approaches for core sites
 - i. Transform Aldrich Park to function as a campus botanical garden serving research, teaching, community engagement, and wellness needs.
 1. Establish themed plant collections such as historic regional plant communities, native peoples, selected geographic ecosystems, sustainability, and wellness.
 2. Provide interpretive trail system and public art program linked to IMCA to support learning and wellness
 3. Enhance traditional use of the park for campus and community outdoor functions, and new-uses that promote a positive campus culture
 - ii. Integrate UCI-owned protected habitats into the built campus to encourage research, teaching and community engagement without jeopardizing the ecological integrity of these sites.
 1. Ecological Preserve

2. San Joaquin Marsh Reserve
3. Other campus lands enrolled in regional conservation plan

Strategy II. Establish access points, activity nodes, and linkages to facilitate entry, community engagement, and long-term functioning of Naturescape activities.

- a. Public access points for pedestrians, bikes, and vehicles
- b. Support and staging areas for engagement and academic programs
- c. Improved trail systems to link programs and activities
- d. Thematic regions to facilitate interdisciplinary connections

Strategy III. Leverage and engage with UCI's community partnerships and neighbors to facilitate connectivity between UCI's Naturescape and the surrounding human and natural landscapes.

- a. Build on existing relationships with community partners including University Hills, University Town Center, NCC, IRWD, and Shadetree Partnership.
- b. Cultivate new relationship with other public and private partners engaged in environmental and art & cultural interests.

Strategy IV. Integrate the management of UCI's Naturescape into other dimensions of campus management, including programming, implementation, and stewardship in a way that considers academic needs, sustainability, wellness, and conservation.

- a. UCI's Naturescape should be viewed and managed as an integrated whole
- b. Establish a structure for campuswide coordination and stewardship of UCI's Naturescape
- c. Promote interdisciplinary academic programs engaging UCI's Naturescape including student internship programs