

CLAS STRATEGIC PLAN FOR 2016-21

Mission

The College of Liberal Arts & Sciences at the University of Iowa prepares students to be knowledgeable, engaged citizens who respond creatively and flexibly to the challenges of a diverse and changing world. The College advances scholarly and creative endeavors through the study of all aspects of human experience and behavior, as well as the properties and behavior of the world around us. Faculty and staff use this research and creative activity to enhance undergraduate, graduate, and professional education, and to engage with the people of Iowa, the nation, and the world. The College conducts its activities in, and serves as a model for, a culturally diverse, technologically advanced, and globally conscious community.

Vision

Our world is becoming increasingly connected. More than at any time in the past, it is clear that our individual actions are connected to the well-being of the world; that knowledge is complex and multi-dimensional; and that networks of people and technology are key to our future. To address this increasing complexity, the CLAS strategic plan fosters interdisciplinarity and connectivity, enhancing the development of innovative perspectives and approaches.

In addition to fostering lifelong learning and critical thinking, a liberal arts education enhances skills needed for future employment, including an ability to work with others, to analyze and solve complex problems, to plan and to prioritize activities, and to communicate effectively.

The Strategic Plan focuses on strengthening connections within CLAS and between CLAS and other communities to address the grand challenges facing society. This focus includes strengthening **connections**:

- Across disciplines within CLAS;
- Among faculty, staff, and students;
- Between CLAS and other UI colleges, and Iowa campuses;
- Between teaching and research;
- Between the College and its Alumni;
- Across diverse cultures;
- Throughout the state, nation, and world.

The College of Liberal Arts & Sciences is distinguished among its peers by the broad spectrum of disciplines it houses. This broad scope well positions CLAS to address challenges that require multiple perspectives, heterogeneous methodologies, and creative

approaches to problem solving. Another salient feature of CLAS is that our academic units are small when compared to those of our peers. Therefore, it is vital for us to build strength by solving problems collaboratively, with cross-disciplinary teams that combine assets from multiple units and bring our collective force to bear on the grand challenges facing society.

The College also recognizes that disciplinary focused scholarship must be supported, and that to sustain it we must increase our efforts to deploy resources in common directions of strategic importance. This will require new ways to coordinate planning across units and broader discussions of our objectives and ways to align them.

Goals

The Strategic Plan is organized under four overarching goals. Within each goal we identify objectives to achieve these goals. Achieving our goals will require contributions from administrators, faculty, staff, and students from both academic and administrative units across the College.

- Goal 1: Advance Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activity.
- Goal 2: Enrich Undergraduate and Graduate Education.
- Goal 3: Promote Outreach and Public Engagement.
- Goal 4: Create a Culturally Diverse and Globally Conscious Community.

Goal 1: Advance Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activity

The College of Liberal Arts & Sciences is committed to advancing research, scholarship, and creative activity in areas of strategic importance. The strategic plan reaffirms the essential role of faculty in discovery, invention, and artistic creation and the necessity of attracting, developing, and supporting outstanding faculty to achieve this goal.

Objectives

Coordinate hiring decisions and reward faculty efforts to strengthen connections across departments and colleges in areas of strategic importance by building on current and emerging areas of excellence.

Strengthen ties with researchers in the health sciences through cross-disciplinary appointments and cooperative research endeavors.

Enhance collaborative research and creative work, especially by supporting research and scholarship centers in order to create vibrant cross-disciplinary intellectual communities.

Develop stable core facilities that provide shared instrumentation and technical support required for cutting-edge research and creative activity.

Improve our physical infrastructure by addressing deferred maintenance including a renewed commitment to improving energy efficiency in older buildings and replacement of Seashore Hall.

Increase support for grant development and career advancement in all areas of the College by:

- Mentoring faculty,
- Sustaining career development programs,
- Providing financial support to fellowship awardees,
- Assisting faculty to compete for prestigious awards, and
- Strengthening pre- and post-award support.

Leverage clusters by building connections among cluster hires and strengthening links between cluster hires and faculty and staff in allied areas.

Capitalize on our new buildings to strengthen connections across the College and University.

Goal 2: Enrich Undergraduate and Graduate Education

CLAS is strongly committed to providing a rich and challenging undergraduate and graduate student experience that develops a foundation for lifelong learning and contributes to rewarding personal lives, satisfying and productive work, and informed participation in a diverse, multi-cultural society.

Objectives

Increase retention and four-year graduation rates by providing professional, individualized advising for all CLAS undergraduates.

Explore ways to help students to find courses that align with their interests and academic goals within the General Education program by encouraging the use of tags on course descriptions to highlight topical emphases and thematic foci.

Strengthen connections between interdisciplinary research initiatives and student learning by expanding curricula and programs of study by developing, for example, courses, certificates, and majors related to faculty cluster hiring areas.

Foster computational and data-informed thinking as a central component of student learning by adopting course curricula and student-learning practices that include algorithmic approaches to problem solving and understanding of information technology.

Infuse writing and other forms of composition throughout the curricula building on the foundational skills of General Education by increasing the focus on writing and composition skills in more advanced disciplinary studies.

Incorporate new literacies, especially visual and media literacy, in the curriculum to provide students with important tools for informed, inquiry-based participation in civic culture.

Support and advance teaching and learning based on current best practices including big idea courses, active learning, experiential learning, and collaborative teaching.

Enhance undergraduate professional development and increase opportunities for career exploration by working with the Career Center, CLAS departments, and UI colleges to prepare our students for life after college including development of additional combined undergraduate + graduate/professional degree programs.

Increase opportunities for undergraduate research experiences with curricular innovation, grant development, and support for faculty involvement.

Foster new models of graduate education that provide graduate students with opportunities to pursue rewarding professional careers in non-traditional areas of higher education and the non-profit and private sectors as well as in traditional academic careers.

Identify and expand best practices in graduate education to improve placement, graduation rates, and time to completion, as well as to create more opportunities to engage in leadership activities and interdisciplinary learning and inclusion.

Goal 3: Promote Outreach and Public Engagement

The College works in collaboration with faculty, staff, and students to partner with communities in outreach and engagement activities. Community engagement results in mutual benefit to the College and to partner communities.

Objectives

Clarify the role of engagement in assessing department and faculty productivity, and in providing incentives and rewards.

Increase opportunities for community-engaged teaching and research by strengthening our connections with off-campus communities and explicitly valuing faculty participation during evaluations.

Coordinate and promote STEM outreach activities through the combined efforts of collegiate departments as well as collaborations with other units, colleges, and off-campus communities.

Develop better methods and assemble more accurate data to assess, track, and connect with alumni.

Strengthen connections to our alumni by engaging alumni in the life of the College through student mentorship programs, departmental advisory committees, and stronger communication networks.

Expand connections to Iowa communities through the arts by exploring new ways to bring performances, workshops, demonstrations, and exhibits of student and faculty creative work to more Iowa communities.

Expand and improve online offerings, certificates, and degree programs to connect with off-campus students and provide place-bound Iowans with opportunities to pursue advanced education.

Goal 4: Foster a culturally diverse and globally conscious community

CLAS regards a diverse student body, faculty, and staff as a competitive advantage in a globally conscious world. The College is committed to promoting understanding of other cultures and diverse identities to prepare students to be informed global citizens. CLAS plays a unique role as the home to majors and programs integral to accomplishing this work.

Objectives

Increase the diversity of faculty and staff with strategic hires, targeted recruiting, and focused retention strategies.

Recruit and retain a diverse student body at all levels by partnering with the Office of Admission, the Center for Diversity and Enrichment, and the Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management, and by investing in academic opportunities and post-graduate preparation.

Implement the GE requirement in Diversity and Inclusion to expose students to diverse cultural perspectives and the problems confronting members of disadvantaged communities.

Promote student global consciousness by encouraging study abroad and curricular opportunities for studying world cultures.

Increase international connections by working with Alumni, International Programs, and the UI Foundation.

Improve campus climate by committing to special programming promoting diversity and inclusion such as lecture series by prominent scholars, artists, and leaders.

Conclusion

The CLAS Strategic Plan presents an ambitious set of objectives to connect with its constituencies; to provide a springboard for pioneering faculty research, scholarship, and creative activity; to expand options and opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students; to engage the public and the university in outreach activities; and to participate in the education of a global community. It is intended to be used as a roadmap to guide decision making and resource allocation to achieve its objectives and in doing so, to advance our historic areas of strength as well as to cultivate new areas of excellence.