

August 16, 2019

Bruce Rhoads, Geography and Geographic Information Science

James Brennan, History
Janice Harrington, English
Vera Hur, Mathematics
Leanne Knobloch, Communication
Thomas Kwapil, Psychology
Ripan Malhi, Anthropology
Catherine Murphy, Chemistry
Nicole Riemer, Atmospheric Science
Robert Rushing, French & Italian

Dear Colleagues:

Thank you for agreeing to serve on the college's strategic planning working group on **excelling in research and creative activity**. Your group is one of four; the others are working on **enhancing the student experience, promoting diversity and inclusion, and strengthening our resources, visibility, and impact**. **Professor Bruce Rhoads** has agreed to act as the chair of your working group. The strategic plan to which you will contribute is the first strategic plan created for our college since 2006. It will play an important role in setting the college on a strong course for the next five years.

Our strategic planning process began last fall. We consulted with experts about how a large multifaceted college like LAS might conduct strategic planning, and refined our ideas in consultation with the LAS Executive Committee, the STAR committee, the Dean's cabinet, and others. We then asked each department to submit a brief description of their strategic plans, and developed four overarching goals for the college. In the late spring and early summer, the college leadership used those raw materials to draft white papers for each overarching goal.

We have formed one working group for each goal, and with this letter we are asking you to develop a report about one of the goals. Included with this letter are two additional documents: a white paper focused on your group's strategic goal, authored by the leadership team in LAS, and a template for your group's final report. There will also be a Box folder for each group that will include some reference materials related to the group's charge. If your group desires additional materials or other background information as you deliberate, please contact Rayme Ackerman (rayme@illinois.edu).

In developing a new strategic plan, we hope to engage the college in a dialogue about the question: *What is our shared vision of a great college of liberal arts and sciences at a flagship public university in the 21st century?* A related question is: *On what initiatives should LAS focus in order to offer its students a unique Illinois experience in the liberal arts and sciences, and promote scholarly excellence, diversity, and public engagement?*

Please submit your report by **October 31**. Later this fall, we will circulate the reports and gather feedback on them through a variety of channels in an iterative process of consultation in order to develop a unified strategic plan for the college.

Please consider the following points as you prepare your report:

- While you may deviate in some measure from the attached template, it conveys an idea of the information that we need, helps future readers to comprehend information from multiple sources, and assists us in using the report as input to the final strategic plan. So we ask that you adhere to it as closely as possible in your final report.
- The white papers convey some of our ideas, suggestions, and questions related to the listed goals. We encourage you to build on the ideas in the white paper; you may find that some of the ideas in the paper are ones the group would not prioritize, and instead choose to introduce new ideas and suggestions. We do ask that you respond to our questions and suggestions; your feedback will be helpful to us.
- For each of the objectives you identify, consider the ways the college can assess progress. How will we know we have achieved an objective? What should be the timeline, over a five-year period, for conducting these assessments?
- As you draft your report and consider how its stated objectives will be assessed, also consider where nationwide best practices at our peer universities fit in. Are there any that we should respond to and/or model as part of our own vision for LAS at Illinois?
- There is substantial and inevitable overlap between the goals the working groups are asked to study. Don't avoid a topic because it may be partially in the purview of another working group. To enhance communication among the working groups, we are organizing regular meetings of the chairs of the working groups. We will also ask the working group chairs to present the draft reports at our LAS faculty meeting in November, which will facilitate further dialogue.

Thank you for agreeing to help us with this important initiative. Your working group will have a substantial influence on the future of the college. I look forward to reading your report and incorporating its recommendations into our plans for the future of LAS.

Sincerely,

Feng Sheng Hu
Harry E. Preble Dean

