

Office of the Dean

COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS & SCIENCES AT ILLINOIS

LAS Strategic Plan Development

Strategic Plan Working Group Report

College Goal: Strengthening Resources, Visibility, and Impact

- A) **Brief summary of working group recommendations:** Our recommendations for strengthening resources include enhancements to budgeting processes, encouragement of innovation, supporting courses and programs with positive financial impact which are consistent with college values, and additional support for external funding. Our recommendations for strengthening visibility and impact include the development of a shared vision of the college, along with promoting the efforts of LAS research, instruction, and engagement through increased visibility and awareness to both internal and external audiences.
- B) **Working group process:** We began by consulting Robert Kessler regarding the IVCB budget model, reviewed the report of the LAS Budget Task Force, and began to answer the questions in the white paper which the college prepared for our group. We also researched materials produced by other colleges on our campus, and in Colleges of Liberal Arts and Sciences at other institutions, within the areas of our charge. We next consulted with Brad Petersen regarding LAS Marketing and Communications. Finally, after obtaining input at the roundtables, we then proceeded to identify the most important themes from our discussions and investigations, and focused them into the recommendations given below.
- C) **Recommendations**
- 1) **Strategic Objective:** Develop a shared vision of a great college of liberal arts and sciences at a flagship public university in the 21st century. Increase visibility by promoting this vision in communications and marketing college-wide, along with activities and achievements of our units which support this vision.
 - a) **Rationale:** A shared vision will help to build bridges within the college and will help the college to promote itself.
 - b) **Actions:**
 1. Continue a college-wide visioning process, led by a skilled facilitator, involving a broad cross-section of college stakeholders.
 - a. Articulate the core values of a liberal education for our students.

- b. Define what is unique about the LAS experience, including gender, racial, and ethnic diversity, global perspectives/cultural literacy, interdisciplinarity, etc., as summarized in the LAS Budget Task Force report of May 2019.
 - c. Refine the LAS brand to which students and alumni feel a connection.
 - d. Develop a brief phrase that captures LAS's identity such as "The Heart of the University" or "We are the Quad".
 - e. Underscore how the LAS approach prepares students to meet the challenges and complexities of today (and especially tomorrow's) world.
 - f. Connect LAS vision with the ability of students to not only understand but actively shape the world that they will inhabit.
2. Develop a communications and marketing strategy based on the college's shared vision. Expand initiatives with strengthen connections between students and LAS from first contact.
 3. Expand the portfolio of college communicators in key units, and more generally expand support for publicity for all college units.
 4. Continue the standardization of departmental websites and consider standardizing Facebook and other social media in order to give LAS visibility as a collective.
- c) **Assessments:**
1. Measure that the vision is consistently represented on websites and communications. It can appear in various forms, such as a vision statement or concise descriptive words.
- 2) **Strategic Objective:** Promote the efforts and impact of LAS research, instruction, and engagement through increased visibility and awareness to both internal and external audiences.
- a) **Rationale:** Increase visibility, impact and engagement in order to enhance our reputation (e.g., rankings), increase external funding opportunities, and attract a strong and diverse student body.
- b) **Actions:**
1. Enhance infrastructure supporting industry and foundation engagement. In particular, it is insufficient to have just one position for corporate engagement, which is often unfilled.
 2. Cultivate and support faculty who are excellent at communicating in a broader arena regarding their area of expertise.
 3. Increase the level of media exposure. For example, consider providing a budget for engaging outside expertise in areas such as research, branding, media pitching, and development of key marketing pieces. Additionally, consider identifying someone in each unit to be tasked with communications and marketing.
 4. Leverage existing campus and LAS events to establish a "Celebrate LAS" week with events that showcase the college. Develop opportunities for engagement for a variety of constituencies, internal and external.

5. Support development of advancement/engagement strategy at unit level to provide engagement opportunities for alumni at all stages of their lifespans. Involvement leads to investment, resulting in increased resources through private giving.
 - a. Identify and market existing events that promote visibility and increase current offerings.
 - b. Identify someone to be tasked with alumni engagement in each unit. In addition, consider adding staff at the college level to support and help further develop engagement opportunities at the unit level.
6. Develop short-term faculty-led travel experiences for alumni to raise visibility of faculty excellence and encourage lifelong engagement with alumni, leading to increase in resources through private giving.
7. Explore the development of a center/institute/initiative for Policy, Community, and Public Engagement.
 - a. Trains faculty to promote their research to the public.
 - b. Develops and provides support for university projects engaging the local community.
 - c. Helps translate faculty research into policy and practice.

c) **Assessments:**

1. Maintain database of companies and foundations that the college and its units are engaged with. Assess whether or not the lists are growing over time.
2. Keep track of the number of media appearances of the college, its units, and its personnel. Measure the relationship between the number of media appearances and relevant initiatives and investments made by the unit and the college.
3. Measure the relationship between giving at the unit level with engagement initiatives and investments made by the unit and the college.

3) **Strategic Objective:** Increase understanding of college resource administrative processes, improve clarity on budget and allocations, invest in systems to improve financial and human resource management efficiencies, and provide transparency on resources and protocols through engaged faculty governance.

a) **Rationale:** Units have indicated that historically there has been little transparency between College processes and expectations in regard to resource management. It is difficult to make informed decisions that will propel the unit forward without this information. This point was stressed repeatedly in our discussions as well as in the focus groups.

b) **Actions:**

1. Establish annual strategic budget reporting process for academic units (aligns strategic thought process/considerations and clarifies funding cycles).
2. Create college-level committees to review budget reports, along with hiring and funding requests, in the college's three primary areas.
3. Promote operational excellence: align business, HR, and research administration processes across all units. Improve guidance, systems, tools, and knowledge base. Consider targeted surveys to identify areas most in need of improvement.

4. Develop a human capital program that focuses on full life-cycle of employees in all groups: Onboarding ->Professional Development ->Wellness ->Mentoring ->Promotion -> Recognition ->Retention ->Community ->Retirement.
 5. Clarify cost-sharing and cost recovery processes related to external funding.
- c) **Assessments:**
1. Set a timeline for implementing these actions and assess whether or not that goal has been met.
 2. Feedback from EO's as to whether strategic budgeting has helped their unit.
- 4) **Strategic Objective:** Strengthen our resource base by encouraging high-quality value-centered courses and programs which impact college and unit finances most positively.
- a) **Rationale:** The primary criterion for our courses and curricula has been their educational quality and value, and this should not change. However, quality can be best maintained for the long term when there is a financial benefit as well. While we expect that the main focus in pursuing this objective will be on new courses and programs, it can also be reached by adjusting or eliminating existing courses and programs based on college values and an IVCB analysis.
- b) **Actions:**
1. Review LAS policies and procedures regarding revenue sharing with units for online and self-supporting activities, along with other incentives. Update these policies and procedures as appropriate to better incentivize unit-level efforts for creating new courses and programs, or adapting existing ones. The model should take into consideration the year-to-year fluctuation in IU's.
 2. Conduct marketing studies at the college level to identify promising areas for growth in the college's units which are consistent with the college's values, and incentivize growth in these areas.
 3. Provide IVCB training materials for EO's and other unit-level educational decision-makers, for example one-page information sheets about the impact of IU's on budgets.
- c) **Assessments:**
1. Analyze and project tuition revenue for each LAS unit on an annual basis.
 2. Track the financial impact of new courses and curricula based on the IVCB model over a five-year period.
 3. After 3-5 years, assess consistency of curricular changes with college values.
- 5) **Strategic Objective:** Promote a culture that fosters creative and innovative pedagogy as a means to increase impact and resources.
- a) **Rationale:** One way the College and units can increase/enhance resources, visibility, and impact is to create/adopt programs that are innovative. Innovation is understood to be inventive in nature, unique to either the unit, College, or campus, and practical. We want to ensure that reasonable financial risks associated with developing new initiatives do not impede their development.

b) Actions:

1. Work with units to create a shared goal.
 - a. Articulate the College's goal.
 - b. Highlight the commonalities between the College and the unit's goals.
2. Work with units to determine and overcome obstacles (both shared and unique) to foster innovative initiatives that enhance resources and impact.
3. Establish a comprehensive process for designing and implementing innovative ideas particularly for units with less experience with creating initiatives. The process would include examples of successful programs, a "hold harmless" clause in the event the initiative does not result in a positive impact, a reward system for successful strategies, along with College support throughout each step.

c) Assessments:

1. After 3-5 years, assess whether creativity and innovation objectives have been achieved, and assess alignment of curricular changes with college values.
2. Analyze and project tuition revenue for each LAS unit on an annual basis.
3. Track the financial impact of new courses and curricula based on the IVCB model over a five-year period.

6) **Strategic Objective:** Support and facilitate processes for smaller units to secure and utilize external funding of all types.

a) **Rationale:** In recent years, the College increasingly depends on external funding sources to support the curricular, research, and public engagement components of our units. Under the current structures and procedures, however, it is significantly more difficult for smaller units to secure and implement certain types of grants/funds due to limited financial resources and limited personnel.

b) Actions:

1. Provide continuity of support for corporate and foundation relations, and grants, to mitigate the effect of changes in staff.
2. Provide funds to cover costs associated with grant proposal and management.

c) Assessments:

1. Track external funding for small and interdisciplinary units and measure the relationship between changes in funding and investments at the college and unit level.