



WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

College of Arts and Sciences

Strategic Plan

2024 - 2028



I am very pleased to share our College of Arts and Sciences 2024-2028 Strategic Plan. We launched the planning process in the summer of 2023 at a chairs and directors retreat. We assessed progress on our last college strategic plan and began to identify opportunities for our new strategic plan. In fall 2023, we formed a strategic planning committee comprised of students, staff, and faculty representing the breadth of our college, who participated in a series of facilitated planning sessions with strategic planning expert Peter Dams of Dams & Associates. We reaffirmed our mission and vision for the college, updated a few of our core values, updated our DEI statement in consultation with the college's DEI committee, and developed a new set of goals, objectives, and strategies intended to align with the Western Michigan University 2022-32 Strategic Plan that was launched last year. Our draft plan was then shared with the college community for comment. The strategic planning committee carefully considered each submitted comment and used these to refine our plan further. I am grateful for the dedicated efforts of our planning committee members; if you have the opportunity, please thank them for their creativity, positivity, intentionality, and the many hours of thoughtful work they contributed to developing a robust plan that will help ensure an outstanding future for our college.

The College of Arts and Sciences 2024-2028 Strategic Plan goals focus on four key areas: Academic Excellence; Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging; Research and Creative Scholarship; and Community Engagement. Each goal includes clear objectives and strategies that we will implement together over the next four years. As I wrote when we crafted our last strategic plan, these are perilous times in the higher education community, particularly for colleges of arts and sciences. The trends of stagnant or declining state support for public education, increasing costs of attendance for students, declining numbers of high school graduates, and negative perceptions regarding the value of a “liberal education” continue to challenge all of us. Indeed, since our last strategic plan was launched, we have weathered a global pandemic, an unprecedented permanent budget reduction, and a sharply divided nation. Nonetheless, I remain confident in our talented, creative, collaborative, and dedicated community. Together, we will achieve our vision of excellence in all aspects of learning and discovery across the humanities, social sciences, and sciences while fostering a climate of intellectual freedom, diversity, and inclusion.

Sincerely,

Dr. Carla M. Koretsky
Dean, College of Arts and Sciences

Strategic Planning Committee

We gratefully acknowledge the time, expertise and insight provided by the planning committee

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Not pictured: Thomas Kostrzewa

Guiding Principles

Our Mission Our mission in the College of Arts and Sciences at Western Michigan University is to ignite and sustain a passion for learning and discovery in the humanities, social sciences and sciences, to help students, staff and faculty succeed in life and contribute to the betterment of our communities, from local to global.

Our Vision Our vision is to achieve excellence in all aspects of learning and discovery across the humanities, social sciences, and sciences while fostering a climate of intellectual freedom, diversity, and inclusion.

Our Core Values

Collaboration We promote an atmosphere in which staff, faculty, students and community collaborate in their discovery, learning, and engagement.

Creativity We cherish intellectual vitality and innovation, driven by curiosity and critical thinking.

Equity We are committed to an inclusive and equitable community comprised of diverse faculty, staff and students.

Integrity We actively work to uphold an honest, transparent, and respectful environment.

Intellectual Freedom We advance intellectual freedom by promoting an open, civil exchange of diverse ideas in our inquiry, discovery, and learning.

Student Success We center students' needs in our academic planning, policies, and programs to enable learners to meet their educational goals.

DEI Statement The College of Arts and Sciences is dedicated to fostering diversity, equity, and inclusion that positively impacts the experiences and retention of students, faculty, and staff. We create a welcoming environment that allows everyone to be successful.

Goal Summary

This goal summary shows that our vision can be achieved if the College of Arts and Sciences executes each strategic goal and its objectives.



Goal One

Through outstanding teaching, learning, and discovery experiences, we empower one another to develop the skills and knowledge to make a positive difference in the world.

Objective 1.1: *Empower faculty and staff to provide learning experiences that equip students with the skills and knowledge to succeed in life*

Strategies:

- a. Complete a feasibility study regarding the development of a peer mentorship program for instructors focused on enhancing student success
- b. Encourage departments to develop courses and certificates that provide formal pedagogical training for graduate students
- c. Expand faculty-led, course-based internship models

Objective 1.2: *Provide comprehensive support to retain and graduate a diverse student body while steadily eliminating disparities in graduation rates*

Strategies:

- a. Collaborate with Merze Tate College to tailor Peer2Peer mentorship and transition program for CAS new beginner and transfer students
- b. Create a student advisory board with College-affiliated Registered Student Organization, Western Student Association and Graduate Student Association representation to increase student engagement and strengthen college-wide communication with students
- c. Organize a college-wide social event for students each semester and encourage academic units to organize social events for their students
- d. Determine whether to develop a College of Arts and Sciences First Year Experience course
- e. Consider developing a program to provide faculty, alumni, and/or emeriti mentors for undergraduate cohorts and/or living-learning communities

Objective 1.3: *Engage every College of Arts and Sciences student in experiential education*

Strategies:

- a. Launch a campaign to communicate experiential learning opportunities to prospective students, current students, alumni, and community partners
- b. Develop a cohorted undergraduate research program
- c. Integrate experiential learning (course-embedded undergraduate research; thesis or dissertation research; service-learning; practicums; clinicals; and/or internships) into every College of Arts and Sciences undergraduate and graduate program
- d. Develop interdisciplinary courses focused on grant and technical writing

- e. Develop courses focused on research methods, especially interdisciplinary courses and course-embedded undergraduate research experiences

Objective 1.4: *Restructure administration and programs within and across academic units to promote enrollment, increase administrative efficiencies, and deepen areas of excellence, especially those that are innovative, interdisciplinary, and collaborative*

Strategies:

- a. Create a faculty-led task force to provide recommendations regarding potential restructuring of academic units and to re-envision existing programs to promote innovation, interdisciplinarity, cross-cutting activities, and other mutually beneficial collaborations
- b. Grow the interdisciplinary doctoral program and evaluate the demand for an interdisciplinary master's program
- c. Develop and advertise WES clusters
- d. Propose and launch new programs, especially those aligned with existing and emerging areas of excellence, with the capacity to draw new students to the College of Arts and Sciences and consider eliminating unsustainable programs
- e. Increase shared program partnerships with other four-year institutions

Goal Two

We create and sustain a community that nurtures a sense of belonging, embraces diversity in all of its dimensions, and is welcoming and accessible to all.

Objective 2.1: *Develop a shared understanding of a diverse, inclusive, equitable, and compassionate culture*

Strategies:

- a. Expand the "Advocates and Allies" program
- b. Develop and disseminate information related to and organize events/workshops focused on developing and supporting a diverse, inclusive, equitable, and compassionate culture
- c. Provide ongoing professional development opportunities for chairs and directors focused on developing and supporting workload equity and a diverse, inclusive, equitable, and compassionate culture

Objective 2.2: *Recruit and hire outstanding faculty and staff who reflect and support the diversity of our student community*

Strategies:

- a. Disseminate the College of Arts and Sciences inclusive faculty hiring guide and provide ongoing training and proactive support for faculty searches
- b. Explore the development of a diversity advocates program
- c. Hire faculty in clusters aligned with areas of excellence

Objective 2.3: *Retain and support the equitable success of a flourishing faculty and staff*

Strategies:

- a. Provide ongoing support for a writing circles program for faculty
- b. Develop a peer network for technical staff
- c. Provide best practices training for tenure and promotion committees
- d. Develop a new faculty cohort program, including cross-institutional mentorship/mentoring clusters
- e. Provide and communicate opportunities for ongoing training and professional development for administrative staff

Objective 2.4: *Recruit and enroll a diverse student body while steadily eliminating disparities in access*

Strategies:

- a. Develop and provide coordinated unit-specific messaging for all admitted undergraduate students
- b. Develop an outreach and communication plan targeting high school counselors
- c. Conduct an outreach campaign and determine the feasibility of creating a degree completion program to enroll students who have stopped out of college
- d. Strengthen relationships with community colleges
- e. Expand dual enrollment programs

Goal Three

Working within and across traditional disciplinary boundaries, we cultivate a thriving environment of inquiry, research and creative activity.

Objective 3.1: *Communicate and support a culture of research and creative scholarship*

Strategies:

- a. Communicate and celebrate the accomplishments of College of Arts and Sciences student and faculty scholars through college participation in the WMU Research and Creative Activities Week
- b. Create a communication campaign to highlight faculty/student research and creative activities

Objective 3.2: *Enhance interdisciplinary research and creative scholarship*

Strategies:

- a. Host networking events to identify and build collaborations and capacity in areas of excellence

- b. Create and highlight an annual, college-wide research and creative activities theme
- c. Create and disseminate a searchable database of faculty research interests and expertise

Objective 3.3: *Increase gifts, grants, and contracts to support equitable access to resources needed to participate in outstanding research and creative scholarship*

Strategies:

- a. Develop a mentored proposal-writing program for faculty and staff
- b. Enhance pre- and post-award support, especially for new investigators
- c. Provide professional development opportunities for graduate students to target external funding in support of graduate student and postdoctoral fellowships
- d. Collaborate with the Office of Research and Innovation to assemble interdisciplinary, multi-college and multi-institutional teams to target very large external grant opportunities
- e. Collaborate with the Office of Advancement to identify and nominate faculty for fellowship opportunities

Goal Four

Through strategic partnership and mutual engagement, we share knowledge and expertise with and learn from our communities, from local to global.

Objective 4.1: *Increase alumni engagement and giving to support student and faculty success*

Strategies:

- a. Establish young alumni and college-level alumni achievement awards
- b. Facilitate the development of academic unit alumni advisory councils
- c. Solicit major gifts in support of experiential learning, completion scholarships, and endowed faculty chairs

Objective 4.2: *Develop strategic international partnerships to increase student exchange, shared academic programs, and globally-engaged research*

Strategies:

- a. Host an annual college event focused on College of Arts and Sciences study abroad opportunities

- b. Collaborate with the Haenicke Institute for Global Education to identify and develop opportunities for international program partnerships (e.g., 2+2, 3+1) aligned with areas of excellence
- c. Collaborate with the Office of Research and Innovation and the Office of Advancement to identify and target external funding opportunities (grants, fellowships) in support of globally-engaged research

Objective 4.3: *Foster mutually beneficial corporate, government, and nonprofit partnerships to increase engagement in and funding for research, creative activities, and experiential learning opportunities*

Strategies:

- a. Determine the feasibility of continuing a faculty externship program
- b. Collaborate with the Office of Government Affairs and the Office of Advancement to identify and develop partnerships with corporate, government and non-profit groups in support of experiential learning opportunities
- c. Collaborate with the Office of Government Affairs and WMUx to provide workshops for corporate, government and non-profit groups aligned with areas of excellence
- d. Collaborate with the Graduate College, WMUx and the Office of Government Affairs to identify opportunities to partner with corporate, government and non-profit groups to provide programs for sponsored graduate cohorts
- e. Collaborate with the Office of Research and Innovation to identify and strengthen opportunities for contract work with corporate, government and non-profit groups



Measures of Success

Goal 1: Academic Excellence

6-year graduation rate*

2nd-year retention rate*

3rd and 4th- year persistence rates*

Student participation in experiential learning*

Goal 2: Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging

2nd-year retention rate of first-generation and historically underrepresented students*

3rd and 4th-year persistence rates of first-generation and historically underrepresented students*

6-year graduation rates of first-generation and historically underrepresented students*

Percentage of faculty at each rank, staff and administrators from historically underrepresented populations*

Yield of admitted undergraduate students

Sense of wellbeing and safety of faculty, staff, and students as measured through the American College Health Association – National College Health Assessment and National Faculty and Staff Health Assessment*

Positive responses across all themes outlined in the Employee Engagement Survey*

Goal 3: Research and Creative Scholarship

Annual research expenditures*

Number of creative performances or exhibitions, publications, and presentations directed and curated by faculty, and undergraduate and graduate students*

National and international prizes, awards, honors, and fellowships earned by faculty and students

Goal 4: Community Engagement

Student participation in experiential learning (service learning, co-curricular learning, volunteerism)*

Positive responses across all themes outlined in the Employee Engagement Survey*

Amount of annual new gifts and pledges

Student and faculty participation in Study Abroad*

**These metrics are also included in the WMU Strategic plan. We anticipate that these metrics will be measured centrally and available at the college-level.*