

# **COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES BLUEPRINT FOR ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**April 13, 2007 Revision**

## **I. VISION STATEMENT**

The College of Arts and Sciences aspires to transform the lives of our students and improve the world they will inhabit by creating and sharing knowledge at the frontiers of inquiry.

## **II. MISSION STATEMENT**

Since 1805, the College has been the intellectual core of the University, entrusted to provide superb teaching in the arts and sciences to all students. The College is a richly diverse community dedicated to the discovery, dissemination and application of knowledge about the natural and human world. The College is committed to enriching the academic experience of every student through a wide and innovative array of courses, programs, and opportunities in the arts, humanities, and sciences, and to excelling in research, scholarship, and creative activity. With its broad coverage of academic disciplines, the College is uniquely situated to promote opportunities for student research and interdisciplinary and international learning. As the heart of a major research university, the College is a catalyst for positive change in the local community, the state, the nation, and the world.

## **III. GOALS**

**Goal 1: To enrich the educational experience for all undergraduate students in the University of South Carolina.**

### **DESCRIPTION**

The College of Arts and Sciences is the intellectual core of the University, uniquely situated to transform the lives not just of its own students, but of all students at the University. This goal mirrors the University's mission to provide all students with the highest-quality education; that is the knowledge, skills, and values necessary for success in life and responsible citizenship.

### **ACHIEVEMENTS**

During 2005-2006, the College made progress on several fronts toward the enrichment of undergraduate education at the University. In a transitional time of increasing freshman enrollments, we worked to ensure continued access to introductory courses for all incoming freshman. The College provided strong impetus to reenergize the General Education reform discussion, and has actively supported the Provost's Task Force in establishing structures and procedures to move forward with the reform. The College formulated a plan for providing funding of up to \$100,000 to solicit innovative proposals

from faculty for improving the first year experience. These initiatives are expected to have a significant impact on the retention of first year students across the University.

### **FUTURE PLANS**

The College funded seven of the proposals submitted for the 2005-2006 “Improving the First Year Experience” initiative. We will be carefully monitoring the backlog of upperclassmen in introductory courses in order to reduce it by ten percent. We are building upon and improving the out of classroom learning experiences offered in the College. The General Education reform process is entering a more active phase in which all faculty will have an opportunity to help shape the nature of undergraduate education. We will continue to keep General Education reform and the enrichment of undergraduate education at the top of our agenda in College faculty and staff discussions and decision making in the coming year.

### **INDICATORS**

The College has compiled data from major University databases, and Arts & Sciences (A&S) sources, to establish benchmarks against which to measure progress over time. Not all facets of a large and complex College can be measured. Included in this section are College-level measures of student access to and performance in courses and programs; student satisfaction with teaching and advising; student independent and international learning and research; and student recruitment, retention, and graduation.

#### **Short-Term Initiative 1.1: Improve the quality of general education delivered to all USC undergraduates**

Whether USC students decide to take a major in one of the arts and science disciplines or to pursue professional studies in business, engineering, education or other fields, College faculty and staff provide all students core educational and research programs that are foundational to their future success. Our increasingly competitive world requires that we constantly review and enhance our curriculum, so that all USC students emerge with the knowledge and skills they will need to be effective citizens and leaders in their communities and the global society.

#### **Short-Term Initiative 1.2: Enhance the undergraduate educational experience for all majors in the College of Arts and Sciences**

In addition to fostering intellectual breadth through general education courses, the College enriches the academic experience of its majors by affording them a wide and diverse array of in-depth courses in all disciplines. Increasingly, such enrichment takes place both within and outside the classroom.

#### **Short-Term Initiative 1.3: Attract, retain, and graduate a diverse and high quality population of undergraduates in the College of Arts and Sciences**

Improving general education for all undergraduates, and enhancing the undergraduate experience for all our majors, will enable us to entice a more diverse and higher caliber group of students to the University and the College.

**Goal 2: To foster research, scholarship and creative activity by recruiting, retaining, and supporting faculty members who are or will become nationally and internationally known as leaders in their fields.**

**DESCRIPTION**

The transformation of the lives of our students begins with those who create and share knowledge at the frontiers of their disciplines, the faculty, instructional and research staff of the College. The excellence, breadth, and diversity of our faculty is vital to the University as a whole.

**ACHIEVEMENTS**

The College pledged salary support for faculty awarded prestigious fellowships, to the benefit of three faculty in 2005-2006. We funded 34 sabbaticals for the current year, six of which are for two semesters. During the past year we formulated an initiative to support associate professors as they prepare for promotion to full professor. Plans were also laid to hold workshops on funding opportunities for assistant professors. Our faculty FEI proposals garnered twelve new positions for the College, yielding \$444,208 in additional funding. Over 60 faculty searches were authorized, a record number at any College in the country. The massive hiring effort launched from last year's strategic hiring plan exercise will place substantial pressures on all faculty and staff in the College as we navigate this exciting but exhausting process.

**FUTURE PLANS**

This Goal in its present form will continue to guide the College in the foreseeable future. We will evaluate the success of both the associate and assistant professor initiatives to determine whether and how they will be perpetuated. Applications for the Associate Professor Professional Development Award were solicited in December 2006, and winners will be named in Spring 2007. We anticipate that the pace of hiring will abate somewhat next year.

**INDICATORS**

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**Short-Term Initiative 2.1: Identify, attract and recruit a diverse, highly qualified faculty in specific areas of high need.**

Carolina students deserve to have as role models faculty who are accomplished in their fields as teachers and scholars. The faculty of the College are the heart and

soul of the enterprise. Recruited nationally and internationally, faculty bring unique expertise and multicultural experience to the state and to the students. College faculty are active participants in FEI and other University hiring initiatives.

### **Short-Term Initiative 2.2: Improve faculty retention within the College**

The quality of the faculty in Arts and Sciences, and their dedication to excellence in research, scholarship and creative activity, is regularly demonstrated by the outside offers from prestigious universities. The ability of the College to place outstanding teachers in the classroom, and to provide unparalleled opportunities for student research, is enhanced by its success in retention efforts.

### **Short-Term Initiative 2.3: Protect and enhance the research/creative activity infrastructure**

Scholarly discovery and dissemination of knowledge about the natural and human world necessitates up-to-date laboratories, equipment, and technology. Dynamism in research informs excellence in teaching, and the flexibility afforded faculty with course buyouts for research redounds to the benefit of students in their classes.

## **Goal 3: To develop the next generation of intellectual leadership through its excellent graduate programs in the arts and humanities, and in the social, physical, biological, and mathematical sciences.**

### **DESCRIPTION**

Integral to the College's vision of creating and sharing knowledge at the frontiers of inquiry, graduate students are active participants in the University's pursuit of a vibrant research and scholarship program. These students directly contribute to the discovery, critical examination, integration, preservation and communication of knowledge, wisdom and values. During their graduate careers, students learn to frame questions in order to extend human knowledge, build new understandings of nature, develop new ideas, and create new images, as well as shape methods and procedures that further these efforts.

### **ACHIEVEMENTS**

A concentrated effort was made during 2005-2006 to increase support for our graduate students. Stipend levels were established based on an analysis of levels at peer institutions. We increased graduate stipends in a number of programs, and the level of tuition abatement was raised. An initiative was developed to provide travel stipends in support of students presenting papers at national and international professional conferences. In the Academic Planning Council of the College we have created a system of peer reviews of graduate programs which allows us to gauge program quality and standing in the disciplines.

## **FUTURE PLANS**

The College will expand the scope of its recruitment of graduate students and advocate for central administrative assistance on graduate student health care costs. Progress at our University in this regard would increase our competitiveness. Enhancing training workshops for graduate students on academic publishing, grant funding, and teaching is under discussion.

## **INDICATORS**

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### **Short-Term Initiative 3.1: Improve the national standing of College graduate programs through increased faculty productivity**

In the past decade, the College has graduated over 4,100 master's and doctoral students who have taken positions of leadership in institutions of higher learning as well as in government, schools, foundations and corporations in this country and abroad. The quality of the graduate programs in the College is integral to the national and international standing of the University.

## **Goal 4: To be a catalyst for ongoing positive change in the broader society.**

### **DESCRIPTION**

As the largest unit at the heart of South Carolina's flagship institution, the College has a special obligation to the broader community in which we are situated. The College is uniquely positioned to assist the University in advancing the State's agenda in improving K-12 education, fostering economic development, and improving government. The reach of the College also extends beyond the borders of South Carolina to encompass a national and international focus.

### **ACHIEVEMENTS**

Through our research institutes and centers, the College continues to provide expertise in a variety of services to the community. Grant activity in support of education and projects oriented for the public good has been thriving. We have strengthened substantially the relationship between the South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology and affiliated academic programs through the successful hire of a permanent director who is also a tenured faculty member in Anthropology.

### **FUTURE PLANS**

A plan to establish undergraduate teaching certification programs in French, Spanish, German and Latin is in the final stages. We are developing indicators that will help us determine the economic impact of the arts in the state. In the immediate future, the new SCIAA Director will assume his duties in 2007, and we look forward to new

interdisciplinary and outreach initiatives emanating from that quarter of the College. Although its manifestations will shift from year to year with public needs, serving as a catalyst for positive change will remain a long-term goal for the College into the future.

## **INDICATORS**

The College has compiled data from major University databases, and Arts & Sciences sources, to establish benchmarks against which to measure progress over time. Not all facets of a large and complex College can be measured. Included in this section are College-level measures of support for K-12 education, economic development, and the improvement of state and local government.

### **Short-Term Initiative 4.1:** Promote and actively engage in initiatives that foster improvements in K-12 education

Connecting with K-12 teachers and students offers the College especially significant opportunities to effect ongoing positive change in South Carolina.

### **Short-Term Initiative 4.2:** Actively participate in efforts to cultivate economic development for the State of South Carolina

As the heart of a state institution of higher education, the College is proud that its faculty and staff expertise are applied in service to the state and its economy.

### **Short-Term Initiative 4.3:** Encourage improvements in state and local government infrastructure

Academic programs such as the Masters in Public Administration are natural laboratories in which future leaders in state and local governments learn problem solving skills. These programs help bridge “town-gown” distinctions and link the College to the broader community.

## **Goal 5: To enhance College identity among members, supporters, affiliates, and the public.**

### **DESCRIPTION**

Establishing a strong identity for the College and its programs is an ongoing project not only with regard to its immediate students, faculty members, and staff, but also to College alumni, friends, and the general public. A vibrant University presupposes a vibrant College of Arts and Sciences.

### **ACHIEVEMENTS**

Through regularized meetings and training workshops, chairs, program directors, faculty and staff have developed new cross-College linkages. The College Board of Visitors has established a regular pattern of meetings, and its Alumni Council has become proactive in connecting with past, present and future students. Ten College Partnership Boards have continued to flourish.

## **FUTURE PLANS**

These achievements all undergird the next and most challenging phase in strengthening the College identity, namely the Capital Campaign. We are engaged in developing a comprehensive Capital Campaign statement and plan for the future. The College development staff is being rebuilt to allow us to expand the scope of our philanthropic work.

## **INDICATORS**

The College has compiled data from major University databases, and Arts & Sciences sources, to establish benchmarks against which to measure progress over time. Not all facets of a large and complex College can be measured. Included in this section are College-level measures of team-building, outreach, and promotional activity.

### **Short-Term Initiative 5.1:** Strengthen the sense of common purpose among members of the College

The size, diversity, and complexity of the College and its many units require a comprehensive, well-structured and ongoing effort at team building.

### **Short-Term Initiative 5.2:** Strengthen the bonds between the College community, its constituents and supporters

The College is a large community of learners, along with the students whose lives we seek to enrich and inform. Each member of the community, each constituent and supporter, has a respected role to play in contributing to the achievement of the College mission.