College of Arts and Science

Strategic Plan

Academic Affairs Committee

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Executive Summary

After articulating the Mission and Vision of the College, the following document reports the results of an effort to establish benchmark institutions for the College of Arts and Sciences. The Academic Affairs Committee of the Faculty Council of the College of Arts and Sciences invited all the departments and programs in the College to identify four or five departments or programs that they emulated and to determine a specific set of features that those departments and programs would like to seek characterizing their own departments and programs. The features widely emulated by departments and programs, which can also be described as outputs, included such things as the promotion of the mission (especially in Jesuit schools the Jesuit, Catholic mission), increased higher-level research, and interdisciplinary collaboration. The Academic Affairs Committee chose these three, widely mentioned features as priorities for identifying benchmark colleges. Insofar as all three of these outputs were found clustered in certain colleges, the Academic Affairs Committee considered these colleges our benchmark colleges. These outputs are the kinds of outputs that the Dean’s office can help realize in collaboration with the departments and programs—and hence they are college-level features to be sought after. Of course, the departments and programs in their own creative ways are also already seeking to realize these outputs. Once the Committee benchmarked these colleges, it found itself in a position to compare further these Colleges with Saint Louis University’s College of Arts and Sciences to inquire what inputs they have that enable them to realize these outputs. Inputs can include such things as lower teaching loads or increased travel funding for research, or the development of structures that will promote interdisciplinary collaboration and mission. The three features constitute Critical Success Factors, which need to be better defined in order to be more measurable. The Academic Affairs Committee developed a bridge strategy to achieve these performance goals and it suggested a performance assessment method and the resources required to achieve them.

Mission

The College of Arts and Sciences strives to be a preeminent Catholic academic institution with a focus on student academic formation, research, and service. The College forms students through a modern, value-centered curriculum and aims at producing graduates who will contribute to society and be effective leaders of social change, based on the values and principles of the Jesuit tradition. The challenges of the 21st century are great and varied and the College develops students who are competent to respond to current and unforeseen challenges. Development of the “whole person,” through curricular and co-curricular experiences, gives students disciplinary depth and educational breadth. This drives education in the College of Arts and Sciences and sets Saint Louis University apart from non-Jesuit institutions. The College provides resources for faculty and students addressing multidimensional problems, stressing responsibility to humanity and God.

Vision Statement

The three academic clusters of the College (Humanities, Science and Mathematics, and Social and Behavioral Sciences) are united in a common vision that expresses itself through different types of rationality and distinctive habits of mind. Society looks to them for answers to questions pertaining to the past, present, and future. The faculty in these clusters: provide an understanding
of the processes and products of the struggles of men and women to create meaning out of their experiences and teach an appreciation of humanity’s major milestones and accomplishments; provide answers to the historical and contemporary problems facing our society and provide an understanding of the psychological, social, economic, political, and cultural processes that affect them; and provide answers to fundamental questions about the physical and biological worlds and the complicated ways that humans interact with them so that the human condition may improve in a sustainable way.

In line with the University strategic planning framing document, many education and research initiatives consider 21st century challenges. These include: shortages in sustainable energy, minerals and materials, climate change, population growth, urbanization, military threats, emerging diseases, aging populations, hyper-incarceration, economic inequality, power differentials, social inequalities, understanding of difference and diversity, and globalization and development. Working on a united front, the College offers a deeper and more authentic understanding of the historical and cultural context of these challenges and a contemporary analysis of their causes and effects.

The College envisions five approaches: (1) Promote the integrity and importance of traditional disciplines; (2) Develop interdisciplinary research units; (3) Retain and hire talented and cutting edge faculty; (4) Assist students in the pursuit of wisdom and promote creative imagination, critical thinking skills, and the evidence-based reasoning necessary to sift through, evaluate, and apply information ethically; and (5) Train graduate and undergraduate students to meet 21st century challenges so that they may become "men and women for others."

**Benchmark Institutions**

The criterion for choosing a peer college for benchmarks was that the peer college had to be listed in all three of the prioritized aspirational themes: promotion of the College mission, increased higher-level research, and interdisciplinary collaboration. Five universities met this criterion: (1) Notre Dame, (2) Fordham University, (3) Boston College, (4) Baylor University, and (5) Loyola University Chicago.

**Critical Success Factors (College Benchmark Themes)**

**Theme 1 - Identity (Catholic Mission)**

1. Ensure that students receive a holistic education that engages them on a personal level.
2. Seek to imbue students with an inclination to serve humanity and the community so that they might truly become men and women for others.
3. Ensure that students are competent in their disciplines and capable of finding rewarding careers or pursuing higher level education.
4. Graduate students who are aware that their religious and ethical beliefs are open to rational reflection and considered argumentation.
5. Produce top-line research addressing issues surrounding the deepest religious and ethical values of the College and impacting the intellectual culture of the United States.
**Theme 2 - Research**

1. To increase research output and its quality, measured in the form of articles, books, patents, and creative works.
2. To increase the number and amount of external grants and awards won.
3. To improve the quality of graduate research.
4. To improve the quality of those graduating, their placement, their post-graduate productivity.

**Theme 3 - Interdisciplinary Research, Teaching, and Service**

1. To increase the amount of interdisciplinary scholarship, teaching, and service.
2. To increase the amount, novelty, and creativity of faculty productivity through interdisciplinary collaborations.
3. To produce research that will be able to address complex problems that require interdisciplinary solutions.
4. To make the College of Arts and Sciences distinctive and able to better recruit students by the unique kinds of collaboration that can be created among its faculty.
5. To enhance the possibility of grant-winning through interdisciplinary collaborations.

**Bridge Strategy (What work should we be doing?)**

We will examine more carefully the benchmark institutions to see how well they realize the critical success factors listed above (the goals) and how well we do by comparison. This will illuminate our strengths and the strengths we desire in the three critical success factors. This will require that we interview deans from the five colleges we have benchmarked to determine exactly what their critical success factors are, how we succeed (and so need to continue what we are doing or increase it) at these critical success factors or how we fall short. We will then try to establish performance metrics for their areas in which we fall short. We will try to determine via interviews and study of other institutions what resources and best practices of these other institutions are the inputs that produce the outputs they possess and that we aim at. We can ask departments and programs to do the same for the outputs they seek with reference to benchmarked institutions. We will try to implement those inputs and after a year measure whether we have improved.

At this point, we would like to suggest possible inputs that might make possible realizing the critical success factors that we have identified. More careful study of the benchmarked institutions, though, is needed to determine exactly what inputs are to be linked with the sought after critical success factors:

1. **Promoting Mission**

   1. Maintain the focus on individual students by maintaining class sizes to those which allow students to interact with faculty on an individual, personal level.
   2. Increase the opportunities for service through the development of centers related to mission and service, for example Religion and Culture or Religion and Poverty.
3. Build strong undergraduate and graduate programs allowing for the acquisition and dissemination of new knowledge throughout society.
4. Increase community outreach in the tradition of men and women in service to others in all areas of the College including sciences, humanities, and the arts.
5. Building research centers particularly linked to the central values of the mission of the College and the University.

2. Improving Research

1. Creating Research Centers and increasing internal grant support to faculty.
2. Reducing teaching loads to 2-2 (or departmental equivalent) so that more time may be spent on research activities.
3. Adding physical space, including laboratories, studios, performance areas, and classrooms, to meet the needs of a growing faculty and student body.
4. Amending the travel policy and providing support for research purposes.
5. Offering more competitive salaries to aid in the retention of current faculty and attract high quality new hires.
6. Adding administrative support staff at the departmental level.
7. Offering more graduate teaching assistantships (for example, the number of graduate students in a scientific research lab directly increases its productivity)
8. Restructuring of the graduate curriculum and contracts with the university to allow for discipline-specific optimization of graduate student time. This will attract and retain high quality graduate students.

3. Encouraging Interdisciplinary Collaborations

1. Creation of Interdisciplinary Research Centers
2. Creation of Interdisciplinary Postdoctoral Fellowships
3. Creation of an Interdisciplinary Colloquium
4. Creating financial/teaching incentives for Interdisciplinary Teaching Initiatives
5. Creating awards for Interdisciplinary Outreach
6. Recognition of Cutting Edge Interdisciplinary Research
7. Facilitating Interdisciplinary work that is connected to service for disadvantaged communities
8. Assemble an interdisciplinary committee to develop a fall/spring colloquium that promotes interdisciplinary work.

Performance Assessment Method

After a year of implementing those inputs that we think will lead to the outputs to which we aspire, we will consider how well we have done in realizing those outputs. At this point, if we have not reached the outputs we strive, we will ask whether we have not taken advantage of the inputs put in place or whether the inputs we have put in place might not be so closely connected with the outputs, or whether other inputs might be needed.
**Resource Requirements**

1. **Promoting Mission**
   - Reduce class sizes (more faculty hiring? more efficient scheduling?)
   - Build centers for service (additional staff?)
   - Provide opportunities for outreach/community service (time-investments, coordination with community agencies, and staff for organizing?)
   - Establish research centers focusing on central values of the College (time investments in planning?)

2. **Improving Research**
   - Provide more internal grants? Staff assistance for external grants?
   - Reduce class size (faculty hiring, more efficient scheduling)
   - Increase space (STEM+ building, grant applications)
   - Streamline a presently burdensome travel policy
   - Increase faculty salaries
   - Add departmental staff
   - Increase the number of graduate assistantships
   - Restructure the graduate curricula and contracts (time investment, collaboration)

3. **Fostering Interdisciplinary Collaborations**
   - Establish new interdisciplinary centers (time-investment, faculty collaboration and meeting, staff to coordinate?)
   - Post-docs, funding
   - Interdisciplinary colloquia—staff organizing, faculty collaboration
   - Financial, teaching incentives for interdisciplinary collaboration (e.g. reduced teaching load, increased faculty or adjunct hiring; money for awards; organizing existing funds, e.g. Presidential Research Funding directed to cross-college projects)
   - Awards for outreach (funding)
<table>
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<th>Catholic Mission</th>
<th>Interdisciplinary</th>
<th>high-level research</th>
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| Notre Dame  | Notre Dame requires each student to take two courses in theology and two courses in theology. Students have also the option to cultivate some dimension of the Catholic intellectual tradition by taking courses strongly related to Catholicism, or by participating in activities equally thought to be connected to it. Notre Dame ensures the fulfillment of its mission by following hiring policies that ensure that 50% of its faculty are Catholic. The College of Arts and Letters has some grants to develop interdisciplinary projects and courses. In the last five years the College has developed collaboration with other colleges, creating, for instance, a program in digital computing and an international economics program. Finally, Notre Dame tries to excel at areas of interest with Catholic resonance, such as sacred music, sociology of religion, Dante, and medieval philosophy. | The College of Arts and Letters has some grants to develop interdisciplinary projects and courses. In the last five years the College has developed collaboration with other colleges, creating, for instance, a program in digital computing and an international economics program. | a. Rigorous and demanding tenure promotion standards  
b. Generous economic support for research.  
c. Generous leave policy.  
d. Faculty are encouraged to seek outside funding.  
e. The university gives greater support to faculty who conduct research. Faculty who do not do much research are asked to teach more courses. |
| Baylor      | Identity formed with the core. The core is being reexamined to make it more outcomes based, and more international connections are being explored. Prehealth majors are involved in medical humanities and those values reflect the Identity More interdisciplinary teaching and collaborative efforts are needed, but there are no real plans in place to support that. Teaching loads need to be reduced and faculty held to account for new increased time. Lab and startup support needed for sciences. More clerical support for grant seeking is needed, and external funding is more important than publications. |                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                       |
| Loyola      | A&S contributes through the core  
Core has been re-designed to provide a                                                                                                                                                    | The Center for Interdisciplinary Thinking was established with funding from the A&S gift fund                                                                                                                  | No special role of A&S, as funding and incentives are from the Graduate School.  |
| **Boston College** | The College builds identity and mission in students and faculty. For students, the Core Curriculum works in conjunction with programs coming from Departments, Centers, and Institutes within the College to advance the Mission and create identity. For example, the Center for Religion and American Live and the History of Religion program in Theology both reinforce Catholic identity and mission.

For faculty, there is a significant effort in formation and mentoring including a midpoint retreat in the 3-4 years, speakers, and service and mission activities for faculty. Faculty are asked about mission as part of hiring process.

Historically there has not been a lot of interdisciplinary support. In the past few years, this has changed. There have been 15 joint hires and the establishment of a number of centers including the Institute for Liberal Arts. There is funding supporting interdisciplinary programs and 19 interdisciplinary minors and 3 interdisciplinary majors.

Researchers are encouraged by adjusting teaching loads, with 3-2 for undergraduate faculty and 2-2 for graduate faculty becoming the norm. Some active researchers have lighter loads.

Research is encouraged to keep travel funds, lab funds, and startup packages competitive. |
| **Fordham** | Mission and identity are reinforced by activities organized by Campus Ministry and Student Affairs. In addition, the Core Curriculum focuses on identity and mission through Theology and Philosophy requirements. There is a conscious integration of ethics with coursework outside of philosophy.

There are several integrated learning experiences. Students complete a required interdisciplinary capstone which must include one of the following areas: History, Literature, Social Sciences.

Team teaching is encouraged in all programs. Some programs are 

Faculty fellowships are available to all faculty every 4 years. 1 semester at full salary, 1 year at ½ salary. There is a concentrated effort to find outside funding to match making one year leaves more possible. |
The Manresa program has a faculty member teach a freshman seminar, serve as advisor, and helps lead other programming and lectures for a cohort of students.

Service learning programs try to integrate classes with reflection and service to local neighborhoods.

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<th>SLU</th>
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