

**Western Carolina University  
College of Arts and Sciences  
Strategic Plan  
18 December 2013**

**Mission**

The College of Arts and Sciences provides students with a liberal arts foundation where they are taught to think critically, grow academically, and communicate effectively. We prepare our students to be intellectually, socially, culturally, and professionally engaged citizens and leaders who contribute to and promote the sustainability of local and global communities.

**Vision**

The College of Arts and Sciences will be a national model among colleges of arts and sciences for student-centered teaching and learning, engagement, and collaboration.

**Core Values**

The faculty, staff, and administration of the College of Arts and Sciences value:

- An intellectually stimulating environment
- Academic excellence
- Interdisciplinary collaboration
- Committed and effective teacher-scholars
- Diversity of ideas, perspectives, and cultures
- Engagement
- Our communities
- Sense of place
- Student success

**Strategic Direction #1: Fulfill the Educational Needs of Our State and Region**

Western Carolina University is committed, first and foremost, to fulfilling its academic mission of providing each student a rigorous and relevant curriculum with learning experiences that emphasize knowledge and skills that are durable, flexible, and transferable. WCU is committed to providing an education grounded in a strong set of foundational knowledge and skills combined with specific practical knowledge in content degree areas, the outcome of which is personal, intellectual, and economic enrichment for each student. WCU seeks to ensure educational opportunities that result in graduates who are prepared for success, who are ready to compete in a challenging, changing, and global environment, and who are committed to contributing to the intellectual, cultural, and economic development of our region and state.

The College of Arts and Sciences will support Strategic Direction #1 of the 2020 Vision through the following goals and initiatives:

**Goal 1.1** By 2020, the College of Arts and Sciences will increase educational and research opportunities for faculty and students that will enhance our current programs and offer avenues

for exploration into new courses, programs, and degree offerings that are consistent with the needs of our state and region.

**Initiative 1.1.1** Seek outside funding opportunities for educational and research programs that support students, collaborative ventures between students and faculty, and multidisciplinary research opportunities for faculty and students across the College and University.

**Initiative 1.1.2** Increase the use of the Biltmore Park campus by providing additional courses in A&S disciplines at that location.

**Initiative 1.1.3** Increase internal funding of faculty research projects that include heavy involvement of students through the use of a portion of the indirect costs returned to A&S.

**Initiative 1.1.4** Encourage programs to integrate student research and inquiry into all levels of the curriculum.

**Initiative 1.1.5** Seek competitive grant funding for course improvement to improve student success, especially in major and gateway courses.

**Initiative 1.1.6** Recognize and reward faculty who excel in advising and mentoring students and seek ways to improve advising and mentoring in all departments.

**Initiative 1.1.7** Increase online program and course offerings, where appropriate, to meet the needs of the state and region.

**Initiative 1.1.8** Continue to foster the development of courses, curricula, and programming that explores the history, culture, socioeconomic conditions, and environment of southern Appalachia.

**Goal 1.2** Increase graduation and retention rates for students in all College undergraduate and graduate programs.

**Initiative 1.2.1:** Enhance and expand College efforts to develop effective and focused advising and mentorship opportunities.

**Initiative 1.2.2** By 2014, develop a strategic plan to enhance College recruiting and retention efforts.

**Initiative 1.2.3** Develop plans and initiatives to increase and enhance student access through coordinated endeavors with Birth-16 and community college partners.

**Goal 1.3** Ensure that each WCU student receives a strong foundation in liberal studies by maintaining a strong general education program.

**Initiative 1.3.1** The College will advocate for a liberal arts foundation for all WCU students and will remain at the core of the general education program.

**Initiative 1.3.2** Encourage departments to regularly review general education course offerings and ensure that they are meeting the current needs of students in state, regional, and global communities.

## **Strategic Direction #2: Enrich the Total Student Experience**

WCU is committed to working toward the best interests of all students by deliberately and consciously considering what it means to educate citizens, a pursuit that encompasses both curricular and co-curricular elements that serve to prepare students to participate in and help create a vibrant, intellectually, culturally, and economically thriving region, state, nation, and world.

The College of Arts and Sciences will support Strategic Direction #2 of the 2020 Vision through the following goals and initiatives:

**Goal 2.1** Provide all students a rigorous, well-rounded educational experience that emphasizes the liberal arts and sciences, essential skills, and disciplinary expertise.

**Initiative 2.1.1** Because students learn in a variety of different ways, the College will provide a secure environment for faculty to explore pedagogies that foster student success.

**Initiative 2.1.2** Encourage programs to integrate student research and inquiry into all levels of the curriculum.

**Initiative 2.1.3** Appoint a liaison in each department to report to the College on current student involvement in undergraduate and graduate research and to meet with counterparts in other departments to develop best practices for encouraging meaningful student research and collaborative opportunities to be distributed college wide.

**Initiative 2.1.4** Ensure that all programs include cross-curricular, experiential, applied, state, regional, and global learning opportunities.

**Goal 2.2** The College of Arts and Sciences will increase student engagement opportunities that prepare them more fully for their future endeavors.

**Initiative 2.2.1** By 2020, College of Arts and Sciences students will increase participation in local, state, national, and international internships by 15% from 2013 levels.

**Initiative 2.2.2** Working with campus partners in Academic Affairs and Student Affairs, develop and implement focused departmental professional development experiences for students to provide information on careers, the job search process, graduate and professional schools, and related topics by 2015.

**Initiative 2.2.3** Integrate engagement, where appropriate, into each department's QEP.

**Goal 2.3** Foster active citizenship among students in the College of Arts and Sciences.

**Initiative 2.3.1** By 2020, each department in the College will have an active, locally engaged student organization.

**Initiative 2.3.2** In order to promote diversity and global citizenship, the College of Arts and Sciences will increase opportunities for study abroad and exchange programs.

**Initiative 2.3.3** Increase opportunities to engage in meaningful service learning that extends beyond community service, is clearly connected to respective curricula, and assessed for its academic value.

**Goal 2.4** Encourage the development of College and departmental identities and traditions.

**Initiative 2.4.1** Review and expand avenues for recognition of academic achievement of A&S students

**Initiative 2.4.2** Enhance and reinforce the intellectual climate for A&S students, faculty, and staff, as well as other members of the university and the local community, through lectures, symposia, and other academic programming.

### **Strategic Direction #3: Enhance Our External Partnerships**

Partnerships with regional businesses and industries, nonprofits, civic organizations, government agencies, communities, and cities are an integral part of WCU's core mission as a recognized, regionally engaged university. The University's emphasis on integrated learning experiences, its commitment to engaged scholarship, and its embrace of the institution's role as both a steward of this unique and special place and a catalyst for economic and community development all demonstrate and reinforce WCU's commitment to enhancing engagement with external partners.

The College of Arts and Sciences will support Strategic Direction #3 of the 2020 Vision through the following goals and initiatives:

**Goal 3.1** By 2020, the College of Arts and Sciences will increase our partnerships with local, state, national, and international entities that support our mission and values.

**Initiative 3.1.1:** By 2020, increase faculty and student exchange programs, especially in the international arena, by 20% over 2013 levels.

**Initiative 3.1.2:** The College of Arts and Sciences administration, faculty, and students will provide professional support for community organizations and businesses (e.g., offer professional development training or courses that are business specific or open community forums).

**Initiative 3.1.3** Establish an administrative structure within the College to identify possible external partners, coordinate, and assess engagement activities.

**Initiative 3.1.4** Encourage each department to develop an engagement strategy that includes current and potential community partners.

**Initiative 3.1.5** Provide open house opportunities for regional partners and residents to show the work of our students, faculty, and staff, and to make the region more aware of our quality and capabilities.

**Initiative 3.1.6** Increase ties with regional and national external entities by hosting more multidisciplinary, regional, and national events, such as conferences, meetings, professional development activities, and workshops.

**Goal 3.2** Align internal processes and reward system to foster external engagement.

**Initiative 3.2.1** Establish a mechanism by which members of the College of Arts and Sciences are rewarded for work with external partners.

**Initiative 3.2.2** Establish a small competitive grant program to encourage faculty to develop coursework that includes interaction with the community.

#### **Strategic Direction #4: Invest in Our People**

Excellent faculty and staff are prerequisites for the fulfillment of Western Carolina University's mission. Western Carolina University must therefore advocate for competitive compensation for its employees and facilitate professional development; leadership development, succession, and stability; and, as appropriate, support for issues related to quality of life, all of which will enhance the recruitment, development, and retention of qualified and satisfied faculty and staff.

The College of Arts and Sciences will support Strategic Direction #4 of the 2020 Vision through the following goals and initiatives:

**Goal 4.1.** The College of Arts and Sciences will value and reward those professors who are highly committed, and effective, in enhancing student success.

**Initiative 4.1.1** Provide resources to professors to attend professional development opportunities aimed at enhancing effective teaching and learning opportunities.

**Initiative 4.1.2** Identify new ways to recognize, reward, and encourage innovative and highly successful teaching.

**Initiative 4.1.3** By the 2014-2015 academic year, develop and implement a grants program to support faculty research.

**Initiative 4.1.4** Organize formal venues for teachers and scholars to discuss their best practices.

**Goal 4.2** Recruit, retain, and develop outstanding faculty and staff who are committed to our mission.

**Initiative 4.2.1** Develop and implement effective mechanisms for retaining high-performing employees with competitive salaries within existing policies and in accordance with national salary data.

**Initiative 4.2.2** Assist faculty and staff in securing employment for spouses, and support efforts for WCU to offer cost effective child-care for employees.

**Initiative 4.2.3** Promote diversity in hiring throughout the College.

**Initiative 4.2.4** Examine ways to address salary inequity, compression, and inversion at the department and college levels.

**Initiative 4.2.5** Support and appropriately compensate faculty for curriculum development, especially in the area of online courses and programs.

**Initiative 4.2.6** Support a professional and expert faculty and advocate for tenured and tenure-track positions to match the growing enrollment at WCU and in the College.

**Initiative 4.2.7** Link program growth to tenure-track faculty requests, operating budget increases, and other budget request in the College budget process.

**Goal 4.3** Create an environment in which the primary role of faculty as teacher-scholar is recognized and valued.

**Initiative 4.3.1** Create an environment in which teaching and scholarship can be balanced ensuring both can be effectively pursued and rewarded.

**Initiative 4.3.2** Ensure that faculty receiving grant support can present evidence regarding the prestige of the funding in their Collegial Review Document.

**Initiative 4.3.3** Encourage departments to review and clarify expectations for teaching, scholarship, and service in their Collegial Review Documents.

**Initiative 4.3.4** Review committee commitments at the department and college levels to identify opportunities for consolidation and/or elimination.

**Initiative 4.3.5** Ensure that all faculty members are aware of college-level committee openings to ensure full faculty representation and balanced workloads.

**Initiative 4.3.6** By 2020, increase the number of sponsored research submissions by 25% and the number of successful awards by 15% through college incentive programs.

**Initiative 4.3.7** Identify and implement a system of best practices for class size that is based on discipline-specific student learning concerns, resource limitations, and retention and graduation rates.

**Goal 4.4** Recognize and reward achievements by faculty and staff.

**Initiative 4.4.1** Review and enhance non-monetary recognition, rewards, and incentives for outstanding teaching, research, and service for the faculty and for exceptional job performance for staff.

**Goal 4.5** Provide professional development, mentoring, and advocacy for staff members.

**Initiative 4.5.1** Advocate for salary increases for college staff members to recognize and reward them for their contributions to student success.

**Initiative 4.5.2** Support staff members taking courses through WCU's tuition remission program.

**Initiative 4.5.3** The Dean's Office will develop and implement a program of regular professional development for College staff members and an orientation program for new staff members.

### **Strategic Direction #5: Invest in Our Core Resources**

Western Carolina University will ensure a consistently updated infrastructure in support of its mission and vision. Infrastructure is interpreted broadly to include facilities, technology, fiscal practices, and business processes and procedures.

The College of Arts and Sciences will support Strategic Direction #5 of the 2020 Vision through the following goals and initiatives:

**Goal 5.1** Sustain and increase instruction and research technology capabilities and capacity required to meet the goals of the College of Arts and Sciences.

**Initiative 5.1.1** Develop plans to invest in instrumentation, updating older existing equipment and acquiring new capabilities in order to meet the advancing technological and scientific demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**Initiative 5.1.2** Continue to invest in outdoor labs and classrooms in order to take advantage of our unique geographic setting and provide engagement opportunities for students.

**Initiative 5.1.3** Review service contract expenditures and develop a plan for cyclical replacement of some equipment where economically feasible, and reinvest the savings in equipment purchases, replacement, and sustainment.

**Goal 5.2** Develop a comprehensive College of Arts and Sciences master plan.

**Initiative 5.2.1** Coordinate all science departments in the design of the new science building.

**Initiative 5.2.2** Develop an interim plan to maximize effective space utilization for classrooms, labs, and offices in order to better accomplish our instructional mission.

**Initiative 5.2.3** Advocate for space allocation and renovation to better accomplish our instructional and research missions.

**Initiative 5.2.4** Identify classrooms and labs for renovation to better address issues of pedagogy and class size.

## **Strategic Direction # 6: Garner Support for the Vision**

WCU's continued emergence as an ambitious institution of higher education dedicated to the economic and community development of Western North Carolina depends on the development and cultivation of consistent and robust funding sources and an ongoing communications strategy designed to ensure that internal and external stakeholders are consistently informed about the University and its progress in achieving strategic goals.

The College of Arts and Sciences will support Strategic Direction #6 of the 2020 Vision through the following goals and initiatives:

**Goal 6.1** Promote and celebrate the accomplishments of its students, faculty, and staff.

**Initiative 6.1.1** During the 2014-15 academic year, the College will develop and implement an effective communications strategy that will include traditional media and social media.

**Initiative 6.1.2** The College will develop and publish a semi-annual media package to highlight the achievements of our students, faculty, and staff.

**Goal 6.2** Strengthen and expand connections with College alumni, friends, and community partners.

**Initiative 6.2.1** Foster relationships with A&S alumni and encourage their continued involvement in the College through strategic communications that highlight each of the College's departments and their accomplishments with students

**Initiative 6.2.2** By 2020, increase alumni annual donation rates by 25% from current 2013 levels.

**Goal 6.3** Strengthen and expand development initiatives within the College.

**Initiative 6.3.1** By 2020, establish at least one endowed scholarship in all departments and programs.

**Initiative 6.3.2** By 2020, increase the amount of departmental scholarship donations by 20% annually over 2013 levels.

**Initiative 6.3.3** Establish an endowed fund to support student engagement activities.

**Initiative 6.3.4** Establish an endowed scholarship to support student international experiences.

**Initiative 6.3.5** Establish an endowed fund to support faculty scholarship.