Blueprint for Success / Building for the Future COAS 2021-26

Preamble
The College of Arts and Sciences Strategic Plan is anchored in our vision and mission:

COAS Vision
To be a nationally recognized leader in future-facing liberal arts education and transformative research. We unite tradition with innovation as we foster student success across the academic journey and enrich communities local and global through our research and creative activity.

COAS Mission
The College of Arts and Sciences fortifies the scientific, ethical, and cultural foundation of the university and society through education, research, creative activity and community engagement. Our faculty, staff and students discover and share knowledge; understand and appreciate diverse perspectives; create and analyze art; and engage and enrich our local and global communities.

In alignment with our Vision and Mission, we engaged in the following collaborative process:

Development and Implementation
To ensure that our strategic plan represents a wide range of voices, all members of the College of Arts and Sciences were invited to share ideas through a series of open listening sessions and two survey mechanisms. For those interested in more in-depth participation, the Dean issued an open call for participation in a
set of Strategic Planning Working Groups that align with the university’s strategic goals.

The COAS strategic plan represents a synthesis of materials created by three main sources: 1) the COAS working groups, 2) the college-wide listening sessions and survey data, and 3) the projects and goals the Dean set for the college over the last three and a half years. The full draft of the plan was vetted and approved by the COAS Working Groups. As each group designed metrics in the spring of 2022, they found places where the plan could be clarified or revised, and those changes are reflected in bold in this version of the document.

For each university goal listed below, we offer a brief description of the commitments we are making, followed by the list of tactics we will use to advance those commitments.

**Improve Educational Access and Student Success**

**G1.S1 Create and enact a comprehensive strategic enrollment and student success plan, including components related to supporting the whole student, recruitment, retention/graduation, and addressing equity gaps**

One of the first steps of our implementation process will be the development of a Strategic Enrollment and Retention Plan (SERP). Several tactics in our strategic plan intersect with the SERP. For example, as we enhance advising support across the college, we will align resources and tactics with our SERP. In addition, as we consider workload allocation and compensation, we will prioritize efforts that advance the goals of the SERP. Overall, the COAS SERP will function as a touchstone and tool for decision-making across the college. New project ideas and funding requests will be considered alongside the SERP (i.e., does this idea
serve our target student populations; does this request advance our recruitment and retention goals?).

- **Create and enact a college-level strategic enrollment and retention plan (SERP) for undergraduate and graduate students.**
  - Gather and analyze data to understand our student populations and their needs.
  - Identify and prioritize equity gap targets for COAS.
  - Set specific, achievable retention targets for each year (1st to 2nd, 2nd to 3rd, etc.) and for specific, historically underserved populations within COAS. For example: Pell-eligible Idaho students, rural students.
  - Set specific, achievable enrollment targets for each department and/or program, and align faculty effort and financial resources to support attainment of these goals.
  - Organize/synthesize/combine the above approaches into a consistent and multi-partnered student success plan.

- **Create and enact a college-level recruitment initiative for undergraduate and graduate students.**
  - Inventory and analyze current best practices across COAS programs/departments and across the University.
  - Analyze and link recruitment practices to enrollment and retention strategies as defined in the SERP.
  - Set specific, achievable TBD recruitment targets for each recruitment type: first-time, full-time; transfer; MA/MS/MFA; PhD.
  - Set specific, achievable recruitment targets for each department and/or program, and align faculty effort and financial resources to support attainment of these goals.
○ Organize/synthesize/combine the approaches above into an adaptable COAS recruitment plan supported by a COAS recruitment support infrastructure

● Design and implement a collaborative and coordinated COAS system of advising for undergraduate and graduate students.
  ○ Audit advising practices, including student experiences and resources across COAS programs and departments, looking for both patterns and unique features.
  ○ Ensure that advising practices align with the college’s philosophy and outcomes, while maintaining area-specific nuance.
  ○ Develop and integrate advising resources (training, COAS-level orientations) to strengthen collaboration between CASS and departments, and between departments.

G1.S2 Integrate career education and experiential learning opportunities into the curriculum and the student experience to improve career readiness and post-graduation outcomes

From the SERP process, we will gain a better sense of our students’ needs and the barriers that they experience. Working from that knowledge, we will implement tactics that embed career readiness and experiential learning into programs and curricula, ensuring equal access to opportunities. As we implement tactics, we will prioritize existing resources and partnerships (e.g. GEC, Career Services, IFITS) with the goal of organic integration rather than additional workload for faculty and students.

● Review existing career readiness generally and its inclusion in courses across COAS programs/departments and disseminate best practices.
● Embed Career readiness and reflection at key milestones within the COAS undergraduate and graduate student experience.
- Provide widely accessible (in times, locations, modalities, etc) COAS sponsored career-focused educational opportunities and workshops for undergraduate and graduate students
- Seek funding to establish embedded career advising within COAS departments and schools.

[Note that the COAS Strategic Plan does not explicitly speak to each strategy in the “Blueprint for Success” document. For example, the COAS plan does not include a reference to G1.S3 in the university plan.]

G1.S4 Cultivate a commitment to high-quality, new, and innovative learning experiences in all courses, curricula, and co-curricula.

In the COAS commitment to innovation, we approach the concept of “innovation” as a spectrum of inventive theories, practices, and experiences. We envision “innovation” as an expansive space of individual and collective creativity. We support innovation in both new and existing pedagogies, technologies, programs and projects, research and creative activities, and student support methodologies. Our tactics will support and connect existing innovations, as well as create space for new ideas to thrive.

- Scale VIP, internship, and other experiential learning opportunities to be available for all COAS undergraduate and graduate students.
  - Recognize and reward faculty effort in support of these programs.
  - Develop support positions within schools as numbers of participating students grow.
- Empower undergraduate and graduate student leaders to build an outstanding college community in collaboration with faculty and staff.
  - Create peer mentoring opportunities at the departmental level by providing an easy-to-implement framework.
Create COAS undergraduate and graduate student working groups to study and test important COAS initiatives from a student perspective.

- Sustain and advance Bronco Gap Year programming.
- Engage with rural communities to help students see that they belong and can thrive in college and graduate school.

Innovation for Institutional Impact

**G2.S2** Build scalable university structures and align philanthropic and strategic investments that support innovation

Based on the unique opportunities and needs in the College of Arts and Sciences, we will customize our budget model, increase visibility of budget systems, and provide new forms of training and support to COAS leaders.

- Invent a COAS Budget Model aligned to the full scope of the COAS vision, mission objectives, and values.
  - Identify and define COAS values and align the budget model with those values.
  - Incentivize and reward progress towards SERP goals.
  - Reward research and creative activity innovation and productivity, especially transdisciplinary and community engaged activities.
  - Incentivize collaboration across units.
  - Account for carryforward, summer revenue, online fee programs, F&A and other revenue.
  - Provide opportunities for training in budgetary systems and share data within the college so anyone who wants to be informed/understand the system and related decision-making has access to information.
Establish individual and collective opportunity and accountability for innovation.

Through a coordinated effort, aligned with the COAS and university SERPs, we will provide a distinct system for submitting and vetting innovative ideas in the college. This process will offer a clear path for sharing innovative ideas, as well as an archive of ideas from which new collaborations can emerge.

- Launch the COAS Improvement and Innovation Lab.
  - Create tangible evidence of innovation emerging from and supported by COAS.
  - Provide faculty with a venue for seeking support as they incubate new ideas in curriculum and academic programming.
  - Provide funds to faculty to study and solve problems/challenges/opportunities in the college and acknowledge and reward their work in a manner equivalent to scholarship.
  - Support the development of new interdisciplinary programming within emerging schools.
  - Incentivize and reward progress towards SERP goals and other COAS objectives.

**Advance Research and Creative Activity**

Provide the physical space, policies, information systems, technology, budgetary and human resources to sustain and grow research and creative activities.

To enhance and sustain the innovative work and vital contributions that emerge from research and creative activity across the college, we will intentionally build
our research infrastructure through a process of auditing needs, synthesizing resources, and developing solutions. Our research infrastructure must be stable but malleable so that we provide consistent support along with adaptable support that can meet new needs and opportunities.

- Conduct space, safety, and support personnel audits to ensure a) existing infrastructure can support the activities conducted, b) space infrastructure can support the equipment resource needs required for the work being performed, and c) safety and functionality of all spaces.
- Conduct RCA human resource audits to ensure equitable policies (compensation, promotion, workload, etc.) exist across the College for all RCA faculty and staff.

**G3.S2 Develop an integrated, transdisciplinary, and accessible research ecosystem dedicated to student excellence and success.**

The COAS schools, designed to function as “ecosystems,” offer an example of our commitment to transdisciplinary learning experiences. To expand the reach of our research ecosystems, we will launch the **COAS Research and Creative Activity Support Hub**. A primary outcome of The Hub is to alleviate the burden of research/creative activity (RCA) administrative work that limit faculty productivity and potential, permitting more time for creativity, innovation, knowledge generation and transfer, and partnership building. This Hub will serve as a resource to promote the unique types of RCA that occurs within COAS from the unidisciplinary to the transdisciplinary. Scholars in the humanities and the arts alongside those in the sciences will find resources, support, and advocacy for their research and creative activities. Our schools and the new Hub encourage faculty and students to actively learn, teach, and research together.
● Establish the COAS Research and Creative Activity Support Hub
  ○ imagine, solicit, design, and advocate for activities and metrics that promote the healthy, meaningful, sustainable and inclusive growth of RCA within COAS.
  ○ provide the necessary administrative, proposal development, project management, and reporting/dissemination support to facilitate growth of the COAS research and creative activity mission.
  ○ Create programming to support graduate student research and creative activity.
  ○ Bridge to and support Grand Challenges (G3S3) and the new Center for Advancing Research and Creative Activity in development in the Division of Research and Economic Development.
  ○ Intentionally coordinated with other related/parallel efforts on campus to avoid unnecessary duplication and maximize needed capacity.

● Pilot an Interdisciplinary GA Program
  ○ A key input to accomplish this strategy are the resources necessary to support an Interdisciplinary GA Program. Therefore, COAS will evaluate piloting this program after completion of G4S1 (“Conduct a GA/TA/RA Support and Equity Study, and then seek or create opportunities to make meaningful change at scales ranging from individual graduate programs to the college-wide portfolio of GAs.”)
  ○ Assuming resources are available for this program after addressing the outcomes of our G4S1 strategy then an Interdisciplinary GA program will be established.
  ○ This program will improve recruiting/retention of graduate students interested in interdisciplinary research topics.
○ Improved partnership between COAS and Graduate College for collaborative investment of student support resources.
○ Existing graduate programs will be encouraged to allow and provide support for interdisciplinary work.

**Thriving Community**

**G4.S1** Advance a learning and working environment dedicated to the flourishing, sense of belonging, and freedom of expression among all students, faculty, staff, alumni, and friends of the university.

To ensure the health of our communities, and to maintain a steadfast focus on ethical hiring practices and workload distribution, we will launch a new process that involves three key elements: listening, documenting, and tracking. More specifically, we will evaluate faculty, staff and graduate student workload and compensation across the college. We will centralize feedback so that we can more easily see and assess patterns in workload issues and imbalances. From the information we gather, we will develop creative solutions, such as equitable and easily traceable distribution of workload releases.

- Conduct a Faculty Workload Study (inclusive of all full-time faculty categories), and then seek or create opportunities to make meaningful change at scales ranging from individual faculty, to faculty disciplinary groups/departments, to the college-wide faculty.
  - Prepare a set of recommendations on concrete changes that can be made to alleviate stressors and avoid overload.
  - Acknowledge increasing time commitments devoted to tasks that do not currently align well with the traditional tripartite (teaching, research/creative activity, service) criteria, such as assessment,
program prioritization, student recruitment and retention, pursuing and developing outreach/community partnerships, etc.

- Clearly and equitably address the role and weight of graduate program teaching and mentoring for all faculty contributing to graduate education.
- Revise policies to align with Boise State’s role as an R2.

- Conduct a Faculty (inclusive of all full-time faculty categories) and Staff Compensation Study, and then seek or create opportunities to make meaningful change at scales ranging from individual faculty, to faculty disciplinary groups/departments, to the college-wide faculty.
  - Align hiring and compensation with market valuation to remain competitive for recruitment, hiring, and retention of talent.
  - Tie faculty and staff salaries to CUPA data and faculty and staff performance expectations.

- Conduct a GA/TA/RA Support and Equity Study, and then seek or create opportunities to make meaningful change at scales ranging from individual graduate programs to the college-wide portfolio of GAs.
  - Collect, centralize, and analyze data from all programs on funding sources, compensation, and workload.
  - Utilize information from Faculty Workload Study to assess time commitment of faculty advisors fairly.
  - Review and update program manuals as needed.
  - Investigate best practices for community building and student support within and across programs.
  - Reinvest unused program funds swept to the college annually to address equity issues revealed in this study; improve access; and incentivize interdisciplinary activity.
  - Seek additional funding to create competitive stipends for graduate students.
G4.S2 Create a comprehensive, whole-employee experience that aligns university resources and is designed to enhance employee well-being and career growth at the university.

Moving forward, we will center wellness as a key element of COAS culture. In doing so, we will build resources and support into existing structures so that wellness is an integral part of programs and departments, rather than a peripheral element. In addition to wellness-based support, we will also increase professional development and leadership opportunities across the college to help faculty and staff name career aspirations and actively engage in personal and professional growth.

- Introduce college-based wellness support for faculty, staff, and students.
  - Survey the existing best practices for mitigating stressors and balancing workload.
    - Incentivize the utilization of existing resources at both the personal and departmental levels.
    - Establish working relationships with campus wellness initiatives as well as those offered by the state.
- Present professional development opportunities for chairs, faculty, staff
  - In collaboration with the GEC, create a faculty seminar or workshop on student learning and retention, aimed at COAS faculty teaching general education classes.
  - Create college-level chair development and inclusive leadership training.
  - Create graduate advisor and inclusive mentorship training.
  - In partnership with BUILD, expand use of Equity Advocates in COAS searches and maintain training to support inclusive hiring and onboarding practices.
○ Create “milestone mentorship program” to support faculty at crucial moments of career progression.

● Sustain the Thriving Community grants program.

**G4.S3** Create a transparent, centralized business operations model that responsibly uses university resources, supports collaboration, and promotes consistency across individual campus units.

By adopting a shared staffing model, we will design innovative ways to use resources and distribute workload across units as a way to increase efficiencies, while also bolstering connectivity across departments and programs.

- Model and implement COAS Shared Staffing.
- *After reviewing needs assessment and job analysis data, identify priority tasks that could be streamlined or grouped together.*
- Increase support in crucial areas by sharing human and financial resources across units.
- Utilizing the results of the COAS workload and compensation study, assess new staffing roles for pay equity.

**Trailblaze Programs and Partnerships**

**G5.S1** Leverage existing partnerships and programs and develop new opportunities with Idaho employers and private partnerships to address workforce, research, educational, and service needs.

We will launch a phased approach, beginning with the COAS schools, that strategically and sustainably embed external partnerships into academic units. The partnerships that we establish in the schools will serve as a model for department and program-based collaborations.
- Activate COAS Advisory Groups in schools to network industry partners,
  community partners, donors, and alumni with students, staff, and faculty.

**G5.S2** Expand partnerships across Idaho to ensure rural communities have access to high-quality educational programming that fits their needs.

Through both the university and COAS SERP processes, we will refine what we mean by “rural communities” and gain a better sense of the specific student populations we want to better serve and support. Since we believe that we can best serve rural communities by collaborating with colleges and units across the university, we will continue to invest in partnerships. To increase the scope and depth of our rural outreach, we will also invest new resources through our COAS Improvement and Innovation Lab.

- **Explore partnership between the Community Impact Program and Bronco Gap Year.**
- Allocate seed funds and project support for new programming ideas to serve rural communities through the COAS Improvement and Innovation Lab.

**G5.S3** Create interdisciplinary structures to facilitate meaningful connections and experiences for students, faculty, and staff.

By creating a unique set of “schools,” the College of Arts and Sciences offers a new kind of academic unit that embeds interdisciplinarity into the structure of the college. The schools anchor faculty and students in shared research interests, while also allowing movement across departments and programs. With a job market that demands range and adaptability, and large-scale problems that
require cross-disciplinary solutions, the COAS schools serve a wide range of students, faculty, and communities.

- Launch and sustain COAS Schools.
- Reward teaching, research and creative activity, and community organization partnerships that engage multiple disciplines.
  - Include weighting in workload, annual evaluation, and promotion and tenure.
  - Institute new COAS and School awards.
  - Align to funding decisions including in the new COAS budget model/process.
- Expand the activity of the Stein Luminary by adding partners from a variety of campus units to the Interdisciplinary Committee; designing high-impact programming for public visitors; and facilitating interdisciplinary partnerships through use of the space and its technology.