

The Essential College

College of Letters & Science Strategic Plan, 2016-2019

Mission

As the intellectual foundation of Montana State University, the College of Letters and Science (CLS) is the largest and most academically diverse of the University's colleges. It is the critical teaching and research unit in Montana's land-grant institution. Our mission is to prepare students to think analytically and creatively in a liberal arts tradition, to engage in research of the highest caliber, and to make meaningful contributions to our local community, the state of Montana, and national and global society.

Vision

We are the *essential* college. CLS faculty are internationally known scholars and teachers at the confluence of diverse intellectual traditions and cutting-edge research. Students benefit from a broad-based liberal arts and sciences education guided by distinguished scholars and teachers. The fifteen departments and three interdisciplinary programs in our College offer over 100 undergraduate majors, minors and options and our thirty-nine graduate programs generated 22 percent of master's degrees and 54 percent of doctoral degrees granted by MSU during the 2014-2015 academic year.

CLS encompasses the Humanities, the Social Sciences and the STEM fields (science, technology, engineering and mathematics), preparing our students to be independent thinkers and bold visionary leaders. At the forefront of MSU's external research funding, CLS faculty and students address the most pressing and complex issues facing our society, from the nature of the universe to the workings of the brain, from the roots of social inequality to the challenges of global sustainability. In the College of Letters and Science, we believe in a transformational education inspiring students to live responsibly, seek original answers, and effectively communicate practical solutions back to our local, national and global communities.

Goals: IDE²ALS (Integration, Discovery, Expertise, Engagement, Access, Learning, Stewardship)

Expertise

CLS fulfills its mission of combining broad intellectual scope and scholarly depth through the contributions of its many distinct academic departments. Each department includes faculty widely recognized for excellence in their own sub-disciplines and purposely assembled to meet the needs particular to the department's unique academic area. This enables the department to develop and teach courses, and to design and execute research programs to best benefit its students and the broader community. The excellence of the College as a whole depends on the

excellence of its constituent departments. **It is a goal of CLS to support and strengthen each distinct department, and to assist the department in meeting and exceeding its own disciplinary goals.**

CLS benefits from the individual strengths of its diverse departments, but also from their coordinated effort. The College's position astride fields ranging from the humanities to the sciences enables CLS to provide education and discovery of unique breadth. When a course or research project manages to bridge traditional departmental boundaries, it can offer novel insight into a question or challenge. **It is a goal of CLS to promote and facilitate interdisciplinary teaching and research between the college's departments.**

Objectives

CLS will support each department in performing the functions it is best suited to undertake independently.

CLS will increase the opportunities for teaching, co-teaching, and collaborating between departments.

CLS will adopt processes which enable faculty to work effectively across departmental and disciplinary boundaries.

Learning

CLS uses a student-centered approach to learning. Taking advantage of a diversity of majors, we engage students at the highest level, facilitating discovery of their future paths. Students benefit from a wealth of disciplinary options that allow them to pursue their unique interests. The liberal arts and sciences education, at the core of the College's educational philosophy, provides an interdisciplinary foundation for critical thinking that prepares students to be active, informed citizens and leaders of Montana and the world. However, that in and of itself is not enough. Our measures of success go beyond teaching and generating well-trained graduates. In CLS we strive to help students realize their passion and formulate their goals. **It is a goal of CLS to prepare students who are excited about the future, and ready to take charge of where they go and how they will get there. It is a goal of CLS to inspire graduates who are well-rounded individuals.**

Objectives

CLS faculty will continue to offer a diversity of courses.

CLS will broaden our students' learning experience by delivering high quality advising and mentoring so students discover their own interests and passions.

CLS will support innovation and professional development focused on improving faculty instruction.

CLS faculty will offer students hands-on learning opportunities through research and creative projects, working closely with scholars in and beyond their disciplines.

CLS will, where possible, reduce the enrollments of lower- and upper-level undergraduate courses to allow for lower student-to-faculty ratios, to promote in-class discussion, and to provide a more interactive learning environment.

CLS will expand the use of student success coordinators, study groups, and tutoring, in large introductory classes.

CLS will expand graduate student education.

Discovery

Knowledge creation through creative inquiry, scholarship, and discovery is a key component of the CLS mission. Only through continuous engagement in the discovery process can faculty members maintain mastery of their research fields, while advancing their broader disciplines. Actively involving students in the discovery process provides them the best possible education by developing expertise in a field of study, and in the process of analysis and critical thinking. **It is a goal of CLS to ensure that all of its faculty and students are actively engaged in creative inquiry, scholarship, and discovery appropriate to their disciplines, and of the highest quality and impact.**

The process of discovery yields benefits directly, but also garners recognition by national and international communities and scholars. The nation's best universities are compared according to the reputation and prominence of the scholarship and research its members produce. Such recognition provides a clear path to attracting students, both graduate and undergraduate, of the highest caliber. It also the route to recruiting and retaining the top-quality faculty necessary for advancing the College's multifaceted mission. **It is a goal of CLS to support research and scholarship, to assist in its broadest dissemination, and to promote its widest recognition.**

Objectives

CLS will invest in MSU's research, scholarly, and creative contributions.

CLS will focus research and creative inquiry to generate new ideas and knowledge.

CLS will create and develop new technologies and innovate new ways of knowing the world around us.

CLS will build upon MSU's core strengths and leverage collaboration to increase local and global impact.

CLS will enrich students with research and discovery opportunities that cross traditional academic disciplines.

CLS will engage strategic partners to accelerate innovation and discovery.

CLS will continue to be the foundation for MSUs standing as one of the nation's leading public research universities.

Engagement

CLS faculty and students will engage directly with regional, national, and global communities, sharing expertise, time, and personnel to enhance cultural life and economic opportunities. CLS faculty will connect their research to critical topics, make it accessible across communities, and create programs that foster creative and productive relationships with non-campus based organizations. CLS faculty will integrate service-learning into their teaching, fostering in its students and faculty an ethic of sharing talents and time in support of projects and people beyond the University. Outreach to communities will focus on developing local leaders, understanding

challenges of community members, and increasing resources and knowledge in order to address those challenges. **It is a goal of CLS to support engagement between the University and local, national and global communities.**

Objectives

CLS will connect research with regional, national, and global challenges.

CLS will make research accessible to a broad range of stakeholders.

CLS will work within and for particular communities to address challenges community members have identified.

CLS will engage students in service-learning projects and support them in developing sustainable long-term service commitments.

CLS will engage with our local, state, national, and global communities as leaders, scholars, and citizens, working with community partners for betterment of our world.

Integration

CLS will support faculty as scholars whose expertise is evident in their research, their teaching, and their service and outreach. We recognize that scholarship is work done by scholars, using expertise in their fields to solve a variety of problems that require specialized knowledge. Often these problems are formulated as research questions, but they are also present in questions about teaching or the curriculum, and in opportunities to serve our discipline or provide outreach to our community. **It is a goal of CLS to create synergies between research, learning, and engagement.**

Objectives

CLS will provide research opportunities for undergraduates.

CLS will provide service-learning opportunities for students.

CLS will support faculty in situating their scholarship in the community, from the local to the global.

Access

CLS is committed to maintaining and expanding access to higher education consistent with the original land-grant mission that established Montana State University. As the College with the most diverse set of majors and degree areas, we provide expanded opportunities in multiple learning contexts. We also strive to improve the diversity of the faculty and student body in our College by supporting and creating initiatives that attract and serve the needs of under-served and under-represented populations. **It is a goal of CLS to continue to improve access to higher education by expanding opportunities for low income, first-generation, minority and non-traditional students.**

CLS is uniquely positioned to serve the non-traditional students through online degree programs like Liberal Studies and masters programs designed for professionals. By enhancing opportunities to return to complete a degree, or complete a degree remotely through online

offerings, our College can address a pressing need that is consistent with the land-grant mission of MSU, that of reaching the remotest corners of the state by providing online programs. Finally, the College is committed to providing access to the resources necessary to complete a College degree. **It is a goal of CLS to maintain online degree programs for access to all.**

Objectives

CLS will support efforts to recruit and diversify its student body.

CLS will support efforts to recruit, retain, and diversify its faculty.

CLS will continue to support the American Indian/Alaska Native student success services.

CLS will continue its support of the Writing Center.

CLS will continue its support of the Math Learning Center.

CLS will continue to support its veterans.

CLS will commit to support distance learning for undergraduate and graduate degree completion programs.

Stewardship

CLS will make careful and strategic use of state and external investments by maximizing its human, physical, economic, and environmental resources. The College will seek to strengthen its human capital—the faculty and staff who are the drivers of our research, teaching, and outreach goals—through nationally competitive salaries and professional development opportunities. CLS will identify space to provide our students and faculty with modern learning and research environments to facilitate interdisciplinary collaborations. Economic investments in human capital and new learning spaces will be made in a manner that is strategic, efficient, and transparent. Finally, our administrators, faculty, staff, and students will collaborate to ensure the conscientious stewardship of Montana’s natural resources and environment through green building technologies, energy conservation, and the expansion of recycling programs. **It is a goal of CLS to support the responsible stewardship of human, capital, economic, and natural resources.**

Objectives

CLS is committed to using resources wisely and aligning them with strategic goals of the land-grant institution.

CLS is committed to supporting and retaining quality faculty.

CLS is committed to renewable energies and sustainable buildings.