CAS Strategic Plan
February 2024

Objectives

- The success of Oklahoma State University depends on a thriving College of Arts and Sciences (CAS). CAS instruction, scholarship, research, and outreach will lead OSU in addressing the four Priority Areas identified by the University's Strategic Initiatives.
- This document was developed to bring the College of Arts and Sciences' strategic focus in line with OSU's new strategic initiatives presented by President Shrum in the fall of 2022, including the four priority areas and eight strategic imperatives.
- CAS has a fundamental role in the success of the initiatives and in meeting the imperatives. The College is the heart of the University; the vast majority of Oklahoma State University students take classes in the College of Arts and Sciences. The experiences offered by the College prepare students with the knowledge and skills to be productive and informed citizens of a free and just society and to be leaders in their chosen professions and communities[1].
- Research, scholarship, and creative activities conducted in CAS create fundamental knowledge that underlies societal advances in critical areas, including nourishing the world, aerospace innovation, animal and human health, and energy. Research, scholarship, and creative activities in CAS broaden our understanding of the social, cultural, physical, and natural world and are essential to human progress. CAS faculty also integrate their research into applications and technological advances that directly impact the state of Oklahoma and the world and that provide authentic learning opportunities for our students and prepare them for the job market.
- The outreach activities of CAS enrich the lives of the citizens of the state and beyond by investing in resources for K-12 and continuing education in a wide range of areas, including STEM, the arts, humanities, social sciences, and health. One focus of CAS outreach combines instruction and research to enhance STEM education for OSU students and K-12 students aspiring to become future leaders. CAS provides cutting-edge professional development courses to propel career growth and build industry leaders.

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[1] This objective is in the spirit of the 1862 Morrill Act - Section 4." …where the leading object shall be, without excluding other scientific and classical studies, and including military tactics, to teach such branches of learning as are related to agriculture and the mechanic arts, in such manner as the legislatures of the States may respectively prescribe, in order to promote the liberal and practical education of the industrial classes in the several pursuits and professions in life."

Process

Following the announcement of OSU's strategic initiatives, CAS organized four focus groups on aspects of the strategic plan. These focus groups, which included faculty representation for all units in the College of Arts and Sciences, took place in the fall of 2022 and spring of 2023. The extensive input from these groups was synthesized and used to create an initial document. This document was reviewed and modified by members of CAS leadership team, and CAS Unit Heads. The resulting document was shared with the Arts and Sciences Faculty Council for feedback and input, before being finalized in its current form.

Mission

The College of Arts and Sciences, consistent with the University's land grant mission, is committed to promoting distinction in teaching and student learning; fostering research, scholarship, and creative activities by faculty and students; and supporting the community through outreach and extension activities. This is achieved in an environment of academic responsibility that embraces a diversity of expression, experience, and culture.

Vision

As the heart of the preeminent land grant institution, the College of Arts and Sciences will be recognized for collaborative, impactful, and groundbreaking research, and scholarship, fostering engaged and innovative teaching and inclusive learning, while translating our discoveries into accessible knowledge to the public. Our graduates will flourish both professionally and personally and will be prepared to be leaders in the growing demands of a sustainable and resilient d society.

Guiding Principles

- As a critical part of OSU's land-grant mission, CAS is committed to generating and disseminating knowledge to improve the lives of the people of Oklahoma, the nation, and the world.
- CAS enhances students' academic and personal growth by exposing them to a wide variety of perspectives, encouraging curiosity and critical thinking, and a commitment to life-long learning.
- CAS values the well-being, engagement, and respect of all its members.
- CAS prepares students with knowledge and skills, including quantitative skills, critical thinking, communication, and interpersonal skills, to be productive and informed citizens by collaborating effectively with people with various perspectives and backgrounds and to be leaders in their chosen professions and communities.

Strategic initiatives, tactics, and actions developed in response to the University's strategic initiatives.

1. *Enroll a minimum of 5,000 new first-year students at the Stillwater campus by the fall of 2026.* CAS will increase its enrollment in line with the targets of the University as a whole. To achieve this increase in enrollment, the College will provide students with clear pathways to graduation across our majors and clearly articulate the 21st century skills that are embedded throughout all the degree paths within the college.

   a. Outside some career preparation tracks, such as pre-med and pre-law, there is a myth that degrees from CAS do not lead to employment after graduation. This false narrative reduces the number of students attracted to degree offerings in the college. To meet the workforce demands, each department in CAS will prepare a recruitment document that lays out clearly and concisely common employment types for students going straight into the workforce and, in addition, produce a road map through the degree semester by semester indicating why it is necessary to take particular courses, gain specific experiences, and their applicability to the student's future career success. This document will be used by recruiters and faculty who meet with prospective students and their families to emphasize the value of a CAS degree.
      i. Deliverable: A career preparation and pathways document for every major
      ii. Responsible: Academic Units, College recruitment staff, Associate Dean of Academic Programs (ADAP)

   b. As demographic changes impact the number of students leaving high school, it is vital to meet the needs of nontraditional students. The College will work with the Tulsa and OKC Campuses to design and offer new profession-focused degrees appropriate for local and regional demands. In addition, the College will work with the 2-yar degree and technical colleges on transfer agreements to create pipelines of suitable students into our degree programs. The College will create at least three new online degrees in the next five years.
      i. Deliverable: Three online degrees
      ii. Responsible: Relevant Academic Units/ADAP and Assistant Dean Academic Services (ADSS), Associate Dean for Outreach Communications/Online Learning (ADOC)

   c. Students who have positive interactions with an institution, whether through traditional visits or by taking concurrent courses provided by the university while in high school, have a much higher probability of attending the university. We will work to increase the number of students participating in the Cowboy Concurrent program, increasing that critical pipeline for the entire university.
      i. Deliverable: 20% increase in Cowboy Concurrent enrollment
      ii. Responsible: Relevant Academic Units in conjunction with ADOC

d. As part of the increased level of community engagement (strategic initiative seven), departments will be encouraged to develop annual K-12 programs that reach out to the communities to help provide educational enrichment. Some of these programs will bring students to campus so they can envision themselves at OSU, whereas others will provide educational opportunities to students where they live, especially for rural and underserved communities. In addition to the intended purpose as service to the community, such programs will also act as significant recruiting tools for the institution.
    i. Deliverable: New K-12 programs
    ii. Responsible: ADAP, Academic Units supported initially by College seed funds and in the long-term by OSU Foundation funds.

e. In line with the university's development priorities, CAS is aggressively working to increase the number of endowed scholarships available for incoming and continuing students, and scholarships to enhance student experiences while at OSU, such as travel to conferences or study abroad.
    i. Deliverable: New scholarships
    ii. Responsible: College Foundation Development team

f. The College will encourage CAS faculty to share their research passions with K-12 teachers and collaborate with K-12 teachers to incorporate these research topics into their classrooms across the state to meet their curricular goals and generate student excitement for their future at OSU (also, in section 7 Extension).
    i. Deliverable: New resources for K-12 educators
    ii. Responsible: CAS faculty supported by College incentive funds and external grant funding coordinated by ADAP

2. *Increase the six-year graduation rate 10% by 2027 through a comprehensive retention strategy.* Increasing the graduation rate has been a focus of CAS for some time now. Barriers to graduation come in many forms and need to continue to be addressed as part of this plan.

a. Students should be supported in moving efficiently toward graduation by reducing bureaucratic inefficiencies. The college will review course offerings to minimize such problems. For example, there should be communication across departments to prevent required courses from being offered simultaneously, particularly for upper-division courses necessary for graduation. There also needs to be communication when course schedules are changed, especially for courses required by many majors.
    i. Deliverable: Rationalization of paths to graduation
    ii. Responsible: College working group on retention; Academic Units; ADSS; ADAP

b. The College will review degree requirements to ensure that they serve an explicit educational outcome and do not impede graduation.
    i. Deliverable: Rationalization of paths to graduation

     ii.   Responsible: College working group on retention; Academic Units

c. The College will review scheduling patterns that allow students who must work or have other obligations (which is most of our students) to have clear blocks of time when they can be available for employment, childcare, etc. For example, offering a variety of course modalities (online, hybrid, and in-person) could accommodate more student schedules.
    i.   Deliverable: Rationalization of paths to graduation
    ii. Responsible: College working group on retention; Academic Units; ADAP

d. One of the major causes of slow progress to graduation in many STEM disciplines is student performance in introductory level required classes. To address this, the College will, over three years, reform how introductory courses are presented and provide support for students who need more preparation for their major. A summer bridge program will support students with lower math skills upon entry to OSU to develop the knowledge, skills, confidence, and community to succeed at OSU.
    i.   Deliverable: Summer Bridge Program, STEM curricular reform, and enhanced support for students
    ii. Metrics: Participant scores (pre and post) on math placement tests; tracking of participant and control group progress, retention
    iii. Responsible: ADAP; ADSS; Academic Units

e. Student feedback is essential in understanding the issues confronting students regarding their ability to graduate in four years. The College will encourage the Student Council to become a conduit of student concerns to the College.
    i.   Deliverable: Student Council committee or bylaw specific to relay broad student concerns to the College
    ii. Responsible: ADSS

f. Experiential learning experiences such as field-based courses internships, study abroad, and undergraduate research experiences are crucial to any well-developed student's portfolio. The College will assess how experiential learning can be better integrated into the curriculum and allow students to get appropriate credit for these experiences.
    i.   Deliverable: Significant increase in students involved in experiential learning and provide grant funding and scholarship support for these activities.
    ii. Responsible: ADAP; ADSS; CAS Research Support Services Program Foundation Team Manager; Working Group on Experiential Learning

g. Quality of instruction can significantly impact students' ability to succeed in courses. The University provides Institute for Teaching and Learning Excellence (ITLE) training to incoming faculty. The College has mandated that all departments institute some form of peer review of instructor teaching. It is essential that these reviews are considered to be formative.

        i.   Deliverable: Peer-review policies in all units
       ii.   Responsible: Academic Units, ADAP, ADP

h. The college will recommend departments support and recognize the importance of instructors' continual education in classroom methods and online learning. The college will continue to partner with the ITLE to provide professional development for pedagogy and instructional design.
        i.   Deliverable: Evidence of continuing education in pedagogy recognized as part of A&D.
       ii.   Responsible: Academic Units, ADAP, ADOC, Instructional Designer, ADP

i. The College will review the workloads of all academic advisors and ensure that they are being used effectively and not asked to perform departmental tasks that are not directly related to academic advising. All advisor loads will, as far as possible, be 250 or fewer total advisees.
        i.   Deliverable: Advisor loads of total advisees at or below 250
       ii.   Responsible: ADSS, Academic Units

j. Evaluate student needs each semester to identify and address (as much as possible) students in financial crisis, those facing circumstances that will drop them to part time or take a leave of absence from college, to aid students in being able to stay in college or return to college as smoothly and seamlessly as possible.
        i.   Deliverable: Increased retention of students at risk for financial reasons
       ii.   Responsible: Office of Financial Aid working with ADSS

3. *Compete with integrity and excellence.* CAS produces many students who win national and international scholarships. An essential part of developing students who are competitive for these scholarships is their early identification.

a. Incentives will be designed to reward faculty who identify and mentor students who become institutional nominees for any national or international scholarship.
        i.   Deliverable: Increased qualified applicants for internal selection nominees.
       ii.   Responsible: College (incentives) and individual faculty (mentors)

4. *Create graduates who exhibit the four competencies of 1) Professional Preparedness, 2) Engaged Citizenship, 3) Ethical Leadership and 4) Personal Responsibility.* The competencies of the ideal graduate are essentially the outcomes from the classical liberal education (literally "education of free men"). CAS is the center of all students' liberal education irrespective of their major. Therefore, a strong and intentional curriculum around the competencies is a vital part of the college's mission.

a. The development of competencies expected of the ideal graduate are all found in classes offered within the College of Arts and Sciences. The College will review courses to identify those that are particularly suited to the development of these competencies and ensure they are clearly stated as course learning outcomes and assessed.

      i. Deliverables: Mapping of courses to competencies. Refinement of syllabi to reflect competencies in the course learning outcomes. Exemplars of syllabi language to highlight competency development in courses across the pillars.

      ii. Approaches: Competencies and aspects of student success are closely related, so that the same College committee can address both.

      iii. Responsible: ADSS, ADAP, College Committee, Departmental curriculum committees

b. The college will increase curricular recognition of experiential learning (2.f above). This will support the development of engaged citizenship and ethical leadership.

      i. Deliverables: The college will catalog types of experiential learning across the departments and programs.

      ii. Deliverables: Increased Experiential Learning opportunities for students. Exemplars of experiential learning will be identified from the catalog and used to aid in developing the experiential learning opportunities.

      iii. Approaches: Academic units will be asked to identify all experiential learning opportunities in their courses, and a college committee (also dealing with student success and competencies) will collate

      iv. Responsible: ADAP, College committee, Academic Units.

c. The College will actively identify and market opportunities for students to engage in leadership development.

      i. Deliverables: A list of leadership opportunities for students that is accessible and navigable

      ii. Approaches: Have departments provide leadership opportunities in their fields, contact the Leadership Institute, and consider how to grow involvement in the Student Council

      iii. Responsible: ADSS, Academic Units

5. *Align curriculum and programming to support the generation of Ideal Graduates.* The general education curriculum is the pivotal point for all majors. With the proposed changes to the general education curriculum, CAS will be crucial to the appropriate alignment of experiences that underlie the education of the ideal graduate.

a. To ensure consistency across courses and disciplines, CAS will develop clear definitions of the diverse aspects of student success and guide appropriate evaluation methods.

      i. Deliverables: A categorized list of aspects of student success and appropriate evaluation methods for each

      ii. Approaches: College committee to collate student success metrics and generate guidance for evaluation from information provided by departments.

      iii. Responsible: ADAP; faculty committee; Academic Units

b. Implement appropriate strategies for student success across the University within the newly restructured general education program.
    i. Deliverables: A list of nominations of appropriate trails
    ii. Approaches: working groups/brainstorming sessions within and across pillars and colleges
    iii. Responsible: ADAP, ADSS, Faculty Working Group

c. To understand the degree of complexity involved in the issues confronting the world in the 21st century, students must be able to deal with ambiguity and uncertainty and be able to think and act transdisciplinary. Considering this, the college will encourage transdisciplinary education:
    i. Programs that are already transdisciplinary will be organized in a department of interdisciplinary programs to leverage the skills across those programs and provide an attractive home for faculty in transdisciplinary disciplines.
        1. Deliverables: Interdisciplinary Degree program plans will be submitted for approval. RPT and other appropriate policy documents will be created.
        2. Approach: A formal request will be made to Academic Affairs from the Dean, with input from ADAP, Associate Dean for Personnel (ADP), and interdisciplinary program directors to form a new Department of Interdisciplinary Studies.
        Responsible: ADAP/ADP in consultation with Interdisciplinary Program Directors and other interested parties.
    ii. The College will support and encourage the development of transdisciplinary courses, particularly those in line with transdisciplinary research initiatives, by developing policies that reward faculty for team teaching and cross-departmental collaborations.
        1. Deliverables: Transdisciplinary courses, Changes to workload policy so that creating and teaching a team-taught course is appropriately rewarded.
        2. Approaches: As a first step, plan thematic working groups, with members from multiple departments and/or other colleges, that are subject driven. Examples would be "The Geosciences", "Climate Change", "Social Justice", etc.
        3. Responsible: ADAP with input from Associate Dean for Research (ADR)
    iii. The College will actively engage in discussions throughout the University to encourage students to interact with faculty, students, and concepts from various disciplines outside of their chosen major to prepare them to think and act transdisciplinary.
        1. Deliverables: Transdisciplinary public lectures, discussion groups, etc.
        2. Approaches: To be effective, these need to be woven into the fabric of courses, requiring cooperation and collaboration across disciplines

3. Responsible: Outreach, ADAP

    d. The College will investigate using micro-credentials and certificates to encourage students to obtain skills across disciplines.
        i. Deliverables: Increase in SCH with a diverse student body earning micro-credentials and certificates.
        ii. Approach: Consider planning professional certificates and master's degrees as a sequence of micro-credentials. Also, plan to ask each department to nominate one area where a micro-credential might be popular.
        iii. Responsible: Outreach, Academic Units

    e. The College will evaluate current graduate programs for improvements and realignments, explicitly looking for opportunities to add 4+1 programs or professional master's programs.
        i. Deliverables: Additional 4+1 or Accelerated Master's programs where an extra year of study will materially improve career prospects. Programs would preferably be comprised of a sequence of micro credentials.
        ii. Approaches: Ask departments to identify programs where an additional year of study to gain a master's degree will materially benefit students after graduation
        iii. Responsible: ADSS (4+1 programs only), ADAP, ADR, Grad College

6. *Elevate OSU among the ranks of R1 institutions.* The R1 status of the University is strongly supported by the research and scholarship in the College of Arts and Sciences. Research and scholarly activity also contribute to student recruitment and experiences while at OSU, including the opportunity to take classes from world-class researchers. The externally funded research that is conducted in the STEM and social sciences disciplines is an important component of the required research expenditure for an institution to be given R1 status. Most of the units in CAS have doctoral programs, the number of doctoral degrees produced in all areas are important in the calculations of the research activity index (a crucial statistic) calculated as part of the Carnegie process. Strong and active College of Arts and Sciences research and scholarship programs are vital to elevating the R1 status of the university.

    a. Increase funding from external sources to support and expand research and scholarly activities. CAS will increase both submitted proposals and awards from external sources by at least 4% a year.
        i. Metrics: number and dollar amount of proposals and awards; time to first grant for new faculty
        ii. Approaches: College and University-level workshops on proposal writing; activities to facilitate the formation of teams around proposal topics (e.g., OSU strategic research pillars); distribution of funding opportunities, including directly contacting relevant faculty.
        iii. Responsible: ADR, Unit Heads, Mentors

b. Increase the number of faculty receiving prestigious fellowships and early career faculty awards. Increase the number of graduate students receiving prestigious graduate fellowships.
   i. Metrics: number of submissions and awards
   ii. Approaches: workshops and/or panels of previous recipients; increase awareness of Faculty Fellowship Top-Offs program (support for when salary and benefits would not be fully covered by the fellowship); continue to coordinate with Grad College on support for graduate students (and undergraduates) applying for NSF GRFP and other prestigious fellowships; fellowship applications encouraged by mentors; recognize recipients for their accomplishments through press releases, which will also increase awareness of opportunities
   iii. Responsible: ADR, ADOC, Unit Heads, Mentors

c. Increase the impact of our research through communicating results to the public.
   i. Metrics: media mentions; Experts Directory reports of public directed scholarship, national rankings of graduate programs.
   ii. Approaches: More funding added to the Community Engagement Grant Program; distribution of opportunities and faculty panel about writing for The Conversation; workshops on writing for the public
   iii. Responsible: ADR, ADOC, Unit Heads, Mentors

d. Recruit and retain high-quality faculty, which is also critical for the success of teaching and recruiting students, by:
   i. Improve and extend the current faculty mentoring program.
   ii. Train faculty volunteers from all departments to develop a culture to attract and retain a diverse faculty body.
   iii. Provide workshops for faculty development to promote career advancement, irrespective of rank.
   iv. Encourage appropriate work-life balance. The College and its departments will review their practices, policies, and procedures to identify, modify, or remove those that are incompatible with work-life balance.
   v. Leverage our institutional membership in the National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity (NCFDD) to support the above activities.
   vi. Conduct exit surveys/interviews to identify barriers to retention.
   vii. Responsible: AD/SIO, ADR, Unit Heads, Mentors

e. Transdisciplinary research is essential if we are to address in any meaningful way the large-scale global challenges that currently confront current and future generations. CAS will:
   i. Identify and promote current transdisciplinary projects.
   ii. Develop at least two new transdisciplinary foci to meet the OSU strategy.
   iii. Provide seed funds for transdisciplinary projects.
   iv. Create regular opportunities for Faculty across disciplines to build networks that become the basis of transdisciplinary programs.

v. Ensure that transdisciplinary activities are valued as part of the A&D and RPT process.
vi. Provide support in the form of graduate research assistants to assist with developing transdisciplinary projects.
vii. Responsible: ADR, AD/SIO, ADP, Unit Heads, Mentors

7. *Elevate and amplify Extension.*

   While Extension has, in the past, been essentially viewed as the activities of the Cooperative Extension Service primarily out of the Ferguson College of Agriculture, a wide array of CAS programs (e.g., Audiology, Speech and Psychology Clinics, community music programs, NGWAU) reach out to the local and state communities. These programs provide services and expertise to assist with local problems. The outreach division of CAS Deans office is the focus of many, but not all, of these activities.

   a. Assess best practices in extension/outreach for colleges of Arts and Sciences nationwide and, as appropriate, apply those practices to the activities of CAS Outreach.
      i. Deliverable: The College will produce a list of best practices and implement relevant best practices
      ii. Approaches: Review available research literature and professional guidelines on best practices
      iii. Responsible: ADOC

   b. Rebrand CAS outreach and produce an inventory of all the current outreach programs within the college.
      i. Deliverable: Rename CAS Outreach to CAS Extension and develop an online list of activities with links to more information.
      ii. Approaches: Rebrand printed and online materials, create a comprehensive list of all outreach programs Responsible: ADOC

   c. Through the outreach office's activities, the College will increase access through its online presence including expanding Cowboy Concurrent online and developing new online degree programs (see 1.b.)
      i. Deliverables: Double the number of fully online degree programs by 2030. Double the number of students taking Cowboy Concurrent classes by 2028.
      ii. Approaches: Encourage departments to evaluate the possibility of online degrees and propose programs. Increase seat availability in Cowboy Concurrent by hiring additional faculty, increase marketing, and identify other concurrent course needs through discussions with Oklahoma high schools.
      iii. Responsible: ADOC, AD/SIO, Departments

d. Outreach will work with faculty with federally funded grants to leverage the broader impacts requirements to extend the impact of these activities to the community.
   i. Deliverables: CAS will provide exemplars and best practices for broader impacts across the pillars for areas that Outreach can provide value added services
   ii. Approaches: Outreach will provide a list of services and costs for areas where they can add value to broader impact activities
   iii. Responsible: ADOC, ADR

e. Partnering with the Cooperative Extension Service, the College will identify issues of local importance that can be addressed by the skills and resources within the college. As these connections are made, a clear mechanism will be created to obtain stakeholder input and feedback.
   i. Deliverables: Create a CAS Liaison with Cooperative Extension Service to have regular communication about community needs. Create a new College level award for people or programs that leverage CAS expertise to address community problems.
   ii. Approaches: Consult with cooperative extension professionals to explore feasibility, identify initial focus areas that make sense for leveraging extension connections for broader distribution of CAS expertise and resources to Oklahoma communities
   iii. Responsible: ADOC, ADR

f. Work with all CAS departments to develop K-12 outreach programs that are available regularly and in an ongoing manner (See 1.d.).
   i. Deliverables: Catalog of current K-12 extension programs within the College and identify exemplars.
   ii. Approaches: Survey departments for examples
   iii. Responsible: ADOC, Departments

g. Encourage CAS faculty to share their research passions with K-12 teachers and collaborate with K-12 teachers to incorporate these research topics into their classrooms across the state using video lessons (or other methods) to meet their curricular goals and generate student excitement for their future at OSU. (See section 1.).
   i. Deliverables: Create a viable partnership between a selected group of faculty and K-12 teachers within the state.
   ii. Approaches: The identified department will produce materials (research demos, brief lectures, lab experiments) as teaching resources for K-12 teachers in the classroom.
   iii. Responsible: ADOC, Faculty Group

h. Using the collaboration with the National Groundwater Association as a model, the college will develop short courses and materials to support business and industry needs both within the state and nationally.

      i. Deliverable: Identify at least one other industry that could create a viable training partnership with CAS Outreach
      ii. Approaches: Survey departments about relevant industries, trade groups, or professional associations that may be approached for such partnerships and for which CAS faculty expertise exists
      iii. Responsible: ADOC

i. Revisit A&D and RPT guidelines to ensure that outreach activities are valued and rewarded as a significant part of faculty workload. These updates will include a flexible workload model to recognize and reward each faculty member's strengths while maintaining a balance in responsibilities (teaching, research, scholarly activities, extension activities, etc.).
      i. Deliverable: Updated College RPT guidelines that describe how extension activities are to be treated in unit RPT guidelines and begin to update department RPT
      ii. Approach: Evaluate the current document and make changes and additions as necessary
      iii. Responsible: ADP, Faculty Working Group