
Report of CLAS Self-Study Committee, 2003 Executive Summary

The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences is the heart of The University of Iowa. More than two-thirds of all University students are enrolled in the CLAS or in graduate programs offered by our departments. All other undergraduate colleges rely on instruction provided by the CLAS in foundational, cognate, and/or General Education courses. We offer 60% of the University's credit hours with one-third of the University's tenure-track and clinical faculty. Our faculty's work forms the core of international and interdisciplinary research at the University, and we are leaders in recruiting a diverse faculty and graduate student body. The CLAS is essential and fundamental to The University of Iowa's mission, and the standing of this College determines in large part the University's national reputation.

The stresses that the College has undergone in recent years from increasing student numbers and decreasing institutional budgets cannot be sustained without negative consequences for our students, the stature of the University, and the value of the Iowa degree. Through this review process, we wish to increase the awareness of the University administration that the CLAS is unique in its importance to the University's mission and reputation, and we urge that rebuilding and investment in the College be the highest academic priority of the University's strategic plan for 2005–10.

The College has identified the following actions as avenues for making the most of our scarce resources, particularly in terms of the efficient use of faculty and staff time:

- Establishing more effective processes for developing and approving new programs and for sunset review of existing programs.
- Reviewing our General Education requirements and course structure to identify ways of more effectively fulfilling the mission of General Education and meeting our responsibility to our students.
- Administrative restructuring that will protect our broad teaching mission and offer appropriate support for faculty and student interests without deflecting faculty time and energy needlessly into administrative detail.
- Restructuring faculty governance to ensure effective faculty input on decisions facing the College.

The College has identified the following as areas that require greater coordination with other University offices so that we can maximize the efficiency of our teaching and research efforts:

- Centralized review, by the Provost's Office and/or other University offices, of decisions that shift costs to the College or place new teaching demands on the College without new resources.
- Collaboration with the Graduate College on allocations of resources to CLAS graduate programs and on more stringent admissions standards to these programs.

The College has identified the following issues that must be addressed in concert with the University and/or the UI Foundation in order to enhance external support for our mission:

- Support for faculty in their efforts to acquire external research funding, and encouragement of further grant-seeking.
- Access to potential donors of major gifts in support of the College's work to improve its fundraising profile.
- Priority for CLAS needs in solicitations of CLAS alumni.

Finally, and most importantly, the College has identified the following urgent needs for University and State support. These needs must be addressed in order to safeguard our intertwined teaching and research missions, which are central to the University's mission and reputation:

- Support for rebuilding faculty size from 640 FTE to 710 FTE, consistent with the University's 2001 Plan for Revitalization of the College.
- Increased support for science start-up costs and for our degraded infrastructure, consistent with the University's 2001 Plan for Revitalization of the College.
- Competitive salary increases for current faculty, to increase our average salaries with respect to averages at other CIC institutions.
- Increased support for instructional technology, in particular through a college-specific student computing fee.
- Renovation and expansion of the College's physical plant, including the remodeling of the Chemistry Building, the replacement of Seashore Hall, and the construction of a Performing Arts Building and an Interdisciplinary Humanities/Social Sciences Building.

The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences aspires to excellence and, in many areas of the College, excellence is within reach. But we can hope to reach it only if the foundation on which we build—currently underfunded and overtaxed—is restored. Our most pressing concern is our ability to support our research and teaching mission in ways that will build and sustain distinction, in spite of the reductions in the University's budget.

The College and its departments have been resourceful in dealing with the cumulative effects of decreasing state funds, increasing undergraduate enrollments, and decreasing faculty size over the past three years. This review is an opportunity to re-examine processes and practices within the College and the University to find ways of fostering distinguished programs within an economy of stringency.