



TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY
College of Liberal Arts

▶ SHAPE THE FUTURE ▶

2021 - 2026



The title of our new strategic plan, “Shape the Future,” deliberately focuses on our collective agency—and responsibility—to craft our identity and practice to ensure that Liberal Arts and its people continue to thrive.

A complex backlash against the idea of privileged information or authoritative knowledge, both of which are associated with universities and other centers of learning, has caused higher education to think hard about its role in educating students for life and conducting influential research. Calls for practical skills and workforce readiness for graduates, and for applied knowledge and rapid response to global emergencies in research, have made it especially difficult for the liberal arts, based as they are on contextualized and historicized modes of thinking and slow, deliberate processes of discovery. It is no longer possible for us to argue that our value is self-evident. We must communicate about our contributions clearly and passionately to our students, our research peers, and the public that invests in us.

The need for the values and methods of liberal arts has never seemed more urgent to me, and the many faculty, staff, and students who helped to create “Shape the Future” clearly agree. Based on the input from summit participants, survey respondents, focus group members, and a wide variety of other meeting attendants, several consistent keywords or identifying phrases emerged: collaboration, community, engagement, inclusiveness, interdisciplinarity, teaching excellence, research impact, and a climate that makes us all want to come to work every day. In the following pages, you’ll see our five strategic priorities and the three cross-cutting themes woven into them, one to three goals to help us strengthen those priorities, and a few specific objectives by which we will measure our progress. I am proud of our accomplishments so far, and excited to see what happens next.

pmatthews
Dean Pamela R. Matthews '81



MISSION STATEMENT

SHAPING A BETTER TOMORROW

OUR VISION

A liberal arts education exists to open minds, and shaping a better tomorrow starts with a hard and unflinching look at our past and present in order to create the future. The word “liberal” shares a root meaning with “freedom,” and it has been associated since ancient times with a well-rounded education that prepares citizens for a thoughtful life and continued learning.

Liberal arts faculty and students put human beings at the center of our inquiry and seek to learn about all aspects of the human condition. We study how the human past affects the present; how humans across the world and across time behave; how their brains work; how they express themselves creatively in literature, language, and performance; how they make decisions; how they organize and conduct themselves; and how they view themselves in relation to others. On the foundations of this broad knowledge, we build the ability to listen and talk to one another, ask hard questions of ourselves and other people, tolerate ambiguity, and communicate deeply in many formats. We learn to read and think critically and to distinguish opinion from fact, and—always—to ask how any action will affect the human beings involved.

Shaping a promising future for all takes a willingness to think outside of received knowledge, to imagine worlds beyond the boundaries of the familiar, to question what is perceived to be unquestionable, and to act on bold ideas that sometimes make us uncomfortable. Contributing knowledge that’s useful for individual and collective human life—and not just for making a living—is the goal of the College of Liberal Arts.

CROSS-CUTTING THEMES



**Solidify our identity
as a college**



**Embrace diversity
and inclusiveness**



**Foster
collaboration**

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

1

Enhance Teaching and Student Success

- Recruit, support, and retain students
- Adopt teaching innovations
- Help students prepare for career and life

2

Build Community

- Integrate diverse disciplinary perspectives
- Build infrastructure to support collaboration

3

Champion Influential Research

- Foster knowledge creation
- Elevate interdisciplinary research
- Promote external research funding

4

Reach Out

- Create strategic communications and messaging
- Inform and lead collaborative discourse on social challenges
- Attract investment in the Liberal Arts mission from a broad variety of stakeholders

5

Create a Thriving Workplace

- Recruit, retain, and develop exceptional and diverse faculty and staff



STRATEGIC PLAN PRIORITIES, GOALS, AND OBJECTIVES

Enhance Teaching & Student Success

Goal 1: Recruit, support, and retain students

- Use data to inform student enrollment and retention strategies
- Create a welcoming and supportive climate for all graduate and undergraduate students
- Make the value of a liberal arts education tangible

Goal 2: Adopt teaching innovations

- Focus on interdisciplinarity
- Invest in innovation
- Employ active, participatory learning

Goal 3: Help students prepare for career and life

- Teach practical skills for college success
- Prepare for post-college life
- Demonstrate career readiness

Build Community

Goal 1: Integrate diverse disciplinary perspectives

- Incorporate collaborative teaching and learning opportunities
- Determine and fill curriculum gaps
- Foster interdisciplinary research collaborations

Goal 2: Build infrastructure to support collaboration

- Expand IT resources
- Host collaborative events
- Invite shared use of available spaces



STRATEGIC PLAN PRIORITIES, GOALS, AND OBJECTIVES

Champion Influential Research

Goal 1: Foster knowledge creation

- Recruit excellent faculty and graduate students
- Establish consistent evaluation practices
- Engage undergraduates in research

Goal 2: Elevate interdisciplinary research

- Bring interdisciplinary researchers together
- Incentivize interdisciplinary research collaborations

Goal 3: Promote external research funding

- Connect faculty to funding opportunities
- Support proof-of-concept projects tied to specific funding opportunities
- Articulate clear expectations for external funding in tenure and promotion decisions

Reach Out

Goal 1: Enhance strategic communications/messaging

- Refine our college brand
- Expand communications capacity
- Chart a leadership role for our college

Goal 2: Inform and lead discourse on social challenges

- Collaborate with communities
- Support informed dialogue
- Raise awareness

Goal 3: Attract investment in the liberal arts mission

- Communicate our college vision
- Engage donors
- Launch strategically targeted capital campaigns



STRATEGIC PLAN PRIORITIES, GOALS, AND OBJECTIVES

Create a Thriving Workplace

Goal: Recruit, retain, and develop exceptional and diverse faculty and staff

- Recruit diverse and inclusive faculty, staff, and administrators
- Make our college a coveted employer on campus
- Create professional development plans and opportunities





TIMELINE



August 19, 2019

SPSC Convened

Dean Matthews assembles the Strategic Planning Steering Committee (SPSC). Dr. Mary Lea McAnally of the Mays Business School is retained to lead the process.



September 18, 2019 – January 10, 2020

Preparation for Summit

The SPSC plans the Strategic Planning Summit including Fact Sheets to inform thinking about the future of the College.



January 16 – 17 and February 4, 2020

Strategic Planning Summits Held

Faculty and staff from across the college take part in the Strategic Planning Summit.



January 28, 2020

Strategic Initiatives Developed

SPSC members organize Summit results into 5 Strategic Initiatives. A plan is developed to gather more broad-based input from departments in the College.



March 6, 2020

COVID-19

Campus is shut down. Strategic planning is put on hold.



November 5, 2020

College-Wide Survey

Strategic planning resumes. A college-wide survey is launched to conclude the information-gathering phase and recruit Workgroup volunteers.





TIMELINE



January 2021

Workgroups Convened

Volunteer Workgroups representing diverse constituencies across the CLA meet to review Summit and Survey results and identify strategies, goals, and objectives related to each Strategic Initiative.



April 1, 2021

Workgroup Presentations

Workgroup teams present their recommendations to the SPSC.



April – May, 2021

SPSC Finalizes Strategic Plan Draft

SPSC members meet to review Workgroup recommendations, review new input, and make final adjustments to strategic plan elements.



June 14 – July 7, 2021

SPSC Document Design

The CLA communications team organizes and designs a document summarizing the plan.



July 28, 2021

Strategic Plan Document Released



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Steering Committee

Dottie Carmichael (Chair)	Public Policy Research Institute
Andrew Millar	Development
Catherine Eckel	ECON
Alain Lawo-Sukam	HISP + AFST
Side Emre	HIST
Arthur Sakamoto	SOCI
John Edens	PBSI
Manuel Teodoro	POLS
James Francis	ENGL
Pamela Matthews	Dean's Office
Mandy Stark	Dean's Office
Mary Lea McAnally	Facilitator

Workgroups

Strategic Priority One: Enhance Teaching and Learning

Liaison: James Francis
Claire Carly-Miles
Christopher Hemmig
James Howell
Hyeran Jo
Shweta Kailani
Kristy Kulhanek-Stockmoe
Ziena Miller

Strategic Priority Two: Build Community

Liaison: Alain Lawo-Sukam
Grace Adinku
Jonathan Coopersmith
Jocelyn Frelier
Verity McInnis
Sandra Maldonado
Terri Pantuso



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Workgroups

Strategic Priority Three: Champion Research Impact

Liaison: Arthur Sakamoto

Kevin Barge

José Bermúdez

William Clark

Sergio Lemus

Heather Thakar

Strategic Priority Four: Reach Out

Liaison: Andrew Millar

Jessica Dangott

Marian Eide

Sherecce Fields

Ted Goebel

Dorothy Todd

Strategic Priority Five: Create a Thriving Workplace

Liaison: Side Emre

Heidi Campbell

Zuleika Carrasco-Martinez

Sarah Franke

Chaitanya Lakkimsetti

Pamela Luckenbill

Allison Rivera

Special Thanks to:

Mary Lea McAnally

Dottie Carmichael