

**College of Arts and Sciences  
University of Nebraska Omaha  
Vision and Priorities for 2020**

The College of Arts and Sciences is a liberal arts college within a metropolitan university. The college serves as UNO's standard-bearer for the tradition of liberal education, which emphasizes the importance of breadth of knowing and ways of knowing as central to a student's education, and defending this view of education from critics who see the tradition as outdated, impractical, and unable to prepare students for the 21st century workforce. Courses of instruction are offered in the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences/mathematics to support a liberal education for the students of the college and to provide a significant portion of the general education requirements of the university. We offer disciplinary and interdisciplinary majors and minors at the bachelor's, master's, and doctoral levels. The college is committed to outstanding teaching and to significant scholarship and research activities of its faculty and students and encourages involvement with our metropolitan community and the world at large.

The college endorses the goals articulated by the Strategic Plan of the University of Nebraska Omaha to (1) achieve academic excellence, (2) place students at the center of our academic enterprise, and (3) actively engage our community.

In this context, the College of Arts and Sciences strategic plan for 2020 begins with the following commitment: Our decisions on future investment in human, financial, and physical capital must be based on accurate analysis of relevant data and information within the context of evolving opportunities and challenges that continue to change over time.

Comprising 13 departments and 7 interdisciplinary programs and centers, the College of Arts and Sciences consists of an extraordinary range of areas of inquiry and methods of approach. This breadth and diversity of interests is both an interdisciplinary strength and a priority challenge. Therefore, the college will leverage its strengths by clustering faculty and students around common disciplines and/or interdisciplinary areas of inquiry.

At the same time, we have to recognize our college and institutional limitations. While recognizing that each unit in the college has a unique role to play in advancing the college and university missions, we cannot expect to place all teaching and research areas in all disciplines or sub-disciplines as top priorities. We must begin with a focus on our established university priorities:

- STEM
- Early Childhood/Child Welfare
- Sustainability
- Global Engagement
- Doctoral/Research

Building on these strengths, we must identify new directions and opportunities that have high potential for excellence and growth based on the following considerations:

- Excellence across disciplinary areas—humanities, social and natural sciences—is critical to the college’s teaching and engagement missions.
- Excellence within discipline. Outstanding and established disciplinary programs in research, teaching, and engagement exist throughout the college. These must maintain high priority and ample resource support.
- Development and support of more interdisciplinary teaching, research, and engagement is necessary. Interdisciplinary efforts cannot be perceived as conflicting with disciplinary programs; instead, both should be mutually reinforcing. Therefore, we must sometimes look beyond departments when department resources are contributed to the success of the larger good of the college and/or university.

### **Defining and Weighing Priorities**

Fair and equitable distribution of resources requires establishing priorities based on serving the institutional mission. The following standards are central to SVC Reed’s framework, and will be central to how we will identify priorities and resource allocations.

Meeting Student Needs and Demands: The primary drivers to identify programs with potential for growth, programs with steady enrollment, or declining enrollments is first determined by student demand for courses and capacity to offer courses in a curricula.

Student success: To ensure the successful retention and student completion, the college needs to expand advising structures in critical areas, such as pre-health, and participate in emerging campus strategies, such as the creation of Academic Learning Communities.

Increased Research/Creative Activity: Funding to increase or expand funding for research will be considered based on whether the program (a) has a strong record of research (b) works within established college and/or UNO priorities (c) will improve the quality and reputation of the college and UNO, has strong promise for external funding, and (d) is sustainable.

Engagement: While the college already takes an active role in support of UNO’s engagement goal, we can do more to create engagement opportunities for students through service learning projects, internships/externships, and other instructionally based engagement activities.

**Resource Needs:** To accomplish one or any of the priorities, resources will be required. These resources will be both one-time (often multiyear), for equipment, postdocs, and/or permanent, for personnel or operating.

My goal is to identify strengths in the College of Arts and Sciences with a focused attention on crossing disciplinary teaching and research boundaries. Complex units with multiple concentrations, graduate and undergraduate program offerings, have identified strengths within their units that identify clusters or centers of excellence within the college.

**Meeting Student Interests and Demand:** The College of Arts and Sciences, at times with partnership with other UNO school and colleges, possesses significant and unique interdisciplinary teaching and research strengths. While the goal for student growth focuses on a simple numerical equation—20,000 students by 2020—identifying targets for growth will be more complex than applying a simple set of growth equations for each unit in the College of Arts and Sciences. Thus, for purposes of this planning process, I will organize this part of the discussion around interdisciplinary approaches as a way to highlight existing strengths and additional areas for growth and development.

**Life/Health Sciences:** This area of focus has been, and will continue to be, the subject of considerable attention and investment, most notably in the areas **Neuroscience** and **Biology**. But there are other units in the college that are partners, or should be partners, of this priority. **Neuroscience** has been the fastest growing major since its inception in 2009, with 180 majors and counting, while **Biology** has been operating at capacity since 2008. And the rapid growth in Neuroscience has not diminished the number of majors in either Biology or Psychology, the two largest majors in the college. The addition of a Ph.D. in Translational Biology brings both challenges and opportunities for growth and sustainability of existing offerings (see Ph.D. proposal). **Chemistry** offers a number of courses critical to fulfilling the requirements for students entering the health sciences, and the number of chemistry majors has been increasing, and will likely to continue increasing with the widespread interest in health professions. **Geography** can pursue a partnership with UNMC on Geographic Health Analysis Center, which would focus on understanding the geographic aspects of medical problems. Likewise, **Physics** will be hiring a specialist in biomedical physics this year to begin developing a concentration in that area. **Sociology and Anthropology** has an emerging strength in the area of medical health disparities and health and organizations. **Philosophy** seeks to hire a specialist in the area of medical ethics. **Religious Studies** is developing a focus/concentration in Spirituality and Health.

Life/Health Sciences represents one of the greatest potentials and challenges for growth in the College of Arts and Sciences. The demand in these areas is at an all-time high, and national trends suggest that UNO trails behind the national averages on degrees awarded in these areas. Unwieldy growth in Neuroscience and waiting lists for Biology courses suggests that UNO is probably not meeting the demand in

this area. Unless there is a real chance that there will be a new Science/STEM building that will address these capacity issues within the next 5 years, additional renovations of spaces in Allwine like the one done for Physiology and Anatomy, which increased capacity from 650 to 1144 per year, are needed. And new approaches, such as those found in Geography, Physics, and Sociology, are welcome additions that will strengthen this truly interdisciplinary priority.

**STEM Education:** As a university priority, there has been substantial progress in support of this interdisciplinary effort, including a significant strategic plan that is fully operational, so I don't intend to rehearse any justification for the priority or explain the significant role Arts and Sciences plays, along with the Colleges of Education and Information Sciences and Technology. In the current discussion, I need to briefly discuss the development of B.S. degrees in **Math, Chemistry, Physics** (and soon **Biology** and **Earth Sciences/Geography-Geology**) with concentrations in Education in conjunction with the College of Education. This allows students to major in the science discipline, thereby remaining a student in the College of Arts and Sciences. This change will undoubtedly result in increased enrollments in the sciences.

**Computational education:** Computational fields at UNO are entering a new era of redefinition and expansion, including the use of computational methods and models in mathematics and the social sciences. Words like "big data," "analytics," and data science" are commonly used to describe various aspects of this field. Information collected in conversations with local corporations reveal the need to train future data professionals by having three colleges (Arts and Sciences, Business, and IS&T) collaborating together and partnering with the local business community. In the College of Arts and Sciences, **Mathematics** has taken the lead on this initiative, hiring a statistics/data science specialist, developing new concentrations at undergraduate and graduate levels, and forming educational partnerships with local companies such as ConAgra, OPPD, and Union Pacific. Significant growth in these new concentrations is expected.

Additional discussion of this priority follows in the section on Student Success.

**International/Global Studies:** The College of Arts and Sciences has a strong tradition in the international/global studies. The college is home to many interdisciplinary area studies programs, including **Foreign Languages, Latino-Latin American Studies, Political Science, History, Holocaust and Genocide Studies, Ancient Mediterranean Studies (minor in process) Geography, Black Studies, Religious Studies, the Schwalb Center for Israel and Jewish Studies, Islamic Studies**, and, of course, a major in **International Studies**.

Faculty in these areas are engaged in scholarly and teaching activities that support the college's and UNO's global mission in ways that extend beyond the scope of this report. Students and faculty in the college come from different parts of the world,

and each year students and faculty in the college participate in study abroad programs.

**Foreign Languages** offers courses of study in Spanish, French, German, and Russian. With the help of International Studies and Programs, we have been able to supplement these standard offerings with others in Arabic, Chinese, Portuguese, and Japanese. While Spanish must continue to be the focus and strength of the department, there is college-wide interest in developing additional offerings in Arabic and Chinese, as well as more focused support for languages such as Hebrew and Latin. Scaling up language offerings would require additional faculty and instructors to support them with little assurance of their sustainability over time.

Given the richness of this priority, it will be necessary for departments and programs to work together to insure that, whenever possible, future faculty hires will fill the gap in more than one unit. For example, **History** hires in African or Asian history can open up new possibilities for interdisciplinary programming, teaching, and outreach initiatives. This point is especially critical in programs that do not serve as tenure home to any faculty.

The International Studies major is currently in the midst of its seven-year program review. It is expected that the completed review will outline new and interesting directions for the major.

**Environmental Studies and Sustainability:** Environmental Studies directly supports UNO's campus priorities in STEM and Sustainability. As noted by the director of Environmental Studies, "Environmental Studies represents one of the fundamental components of sustainability." Environmental Studies is supported by majors in Earth Sciences, Geography and Planning, and Life Sciences concentrations supported by **Biology**, **Geology**, and **Geography**. Biology's research and education facility (the Barn at Glacier Creek/Allwine Prairie) as well as the developing Nebraska Watershed Network provide outstanding teaching/research opportunities for UNO students and local stakeholders. In addition, recent hires in the department of **Geography-Geology** have focused on environmental and urban sustainability, thereby increasing teaching and research opportunities in these areas. This department also provides important courses focused on hazards geography in support of UNO's Emergency Management Degree program. Other important contributors to the emerging sustainability priority are **Philosophy** (Environmental Ethics) and **Sociology** (Environmental Sociology).

The new BGS concentration and minor in sustainability will place a strain on existing faculty resources to support all of these important offerings.

**Online:** Campus-wide, the growth of online courses and programs has contributed greatly to increases in credit hour production. The College of Arts and Sciences has contributed significantly to this growth, most notably in offering a wide array of General Education courses that support the BGS and allow on-campus students to

create more flexible schedules. In addition, the college and units within the college have developed/are developing more online courses and programs to allow the college that are creating new markets for student degrees and new ways to deliver courses in high demand areas.

The following units either have substantial online offerings or are developing them. Both degree offerings and development of key courses are critical in attracting new students, increasing capacity for large, multi-section courses, and creating potential for growth.

- ✓ **Political Science** M.S. According to the chair, Virginia Tech offers the only other online M.A./M.S. degree in Political Science in the country. The department plans to develop another Master's focus in International Relations. Given this, the tremendous demand on UNO's program should not be surprising, and it seems clear that the program can grow more with additional resources.
- ✓ **Sociology** B.S. First offered in Fall 2013 with two options: a concentration in Health and Society and no concentration.
- ✓ **Women's and Gender Studies**, Certificate in Gender & Leadership, which goes online in 2015
- ✓ M.A. in **Critical and Creative Thinking**. Target date for offering is Fall 2015.
- ✓ **Psychology** 1010. Development of hybrid version of 1010. Piloted in fall 2013, spring 2014.
- ✓ M.A. in Applied Behavior Analysis Program, **School Psychology**.
- ✓ Online certificate/and or continuing education programs for Early Childhood Professionals to support the Early Childhood/Child Welfare Priority and the Buffet Early Childhood Institute. Target date for complete offering of the degree (minus the practicum) is Fall 2015.
- ✓ **English**. Development of hybrid composition courses. 8 sections will be piloted in spring 2014.
- ✓ **Foreign Languages**. Hybrid/flipped courses have been piloted and there is interest in the department in making the entire graduate program available online.
- ✓ **Geography**. Blended/Online M.A. in Geographic Education, requested from Geographic Educators of Nebraska.

**Student Success—Meeting Student Needs:** The goal to reach 20,000 students by 2020 does not rest solely program growth and development and it will not be reached simply by recruiting more students. UNO and the College of Arts and Sciences must be committed to increasing and improving our efforts to retain students through better advising and by providing rich opportunities for students enhance their experiences through support for such activities as undergraduate research and internships. Enhanced recruitment will naturally follow.

- Pre-Health Advising Office: More students (approximately 2500) come to UNO seeking a health care career, or are attracted to UNO because we place

more medical (or related) students than any other school in Nebraska. The presence of this office will not only help recruit more high achieving students to UNO, but it will help students with better advising and help some students identify alternative health career professions.

- Internship/externship opportunities/peer mentorship: While many departments and programs in the college have successful internship programs, the college is exploring ways to expand opportunities for students and strengthen connections with alumni.
- Undergraduate research: Units in the college have an outstanding record of support for undergraduate research, but our goal should be to provide a research experience for every student who wants one. To make this goal possible, the college proposes to develop additional student research facilities.
- General Education: The College of Arts and Sciences affirms its commitment to supporting UNO's General Education initiatives, including development of first-year seminars and academic learning communities.

### **College of Arts and Sciences: Fundamental Commitments**

The College of Arts and Sciences takes pride in its mission and the fundamental role it plays to support UNO's core values: academic excellence, student focus, and community engagement. The liberal arts are universally understood as the foundation for undergraduate education, but they also frame the work we do in the College of Arts and Sciences. We do not just train specialists in their field, but educate students in the fundamentals of what is interesting and valuable about knowledge and learning.

The College of Arts and Sciences is proud to support these ideas and encourage the pursuit of knowledge in the liberal arts and sciences for all students, regardless of their background. This document is founded on the following principles:

1. We will base our investment of human and physical capital on these priorities and other priorities that emerge over time.
2. We will commit our efforts to hire a more racially and ethnically diverse faculty.
3. We will provide outstanding undergraduate education to help students see connections between and among disciplines.
4. We will continue to refine our General Education offerings to insure they are based on the principles of a liberal arts education.
5. We will strive to offer outstanding online degree programs and courses whose quality is equal to our face-to-face offerings.
6. We will offer outstanding doctoral and masters programs within and across traditional disciplinary boundaries.
7. We will promote cutting-edge research and scholarship within and across disciplinary boundaries.
8. We will support UNO's mission to become the premier metropolitan university in the nation.

**By the Numbers:**

These are basic calculations: As of 2011, the College of Arts and Sciences 4,120 students (undergraduate and graduate). This number represents 26.9% of UNO's total of 15,275.

If the college were to increase proportionally, this would require an additional 1,255 students, bringing the college total to 5,375.

Between Fall 2007 and Fall 2012, the College of Arts and Sciences increased from 3,755 to 4,152, or 397 students (~10.5%)—combined undergraduate and graduate.

A sustained growth at this rate would yield between 700-800 additional students which, combined with increases in retention, should get the College near the target.

The College is committed to growth in all areas and programs. Existing and emerging distance education program offerings have much promise for growth.

Growth of this magnitude will depend obviously on the ability of UNO to recruit additional students that will support levels of growth not only for this college but for all colleges at UNO.

\*Across the board calculations: the College of Arts and Sciences plans to grow by 10%, combined graduate and undergraduate in the next three years—or by 415 students. The following use 2012 numbers:

Science/Math:	
Biology	779
Chemistry	109
Geology	20
Math	146
Neuroscience	180
<u>Physics</u>	<u>77</u>
Total	1311 X.10=131

Note: the area within the college represents the greatest potential for growth, especially in Neuroscience and the emerging concentration in Data Science in the Math Department. However, while demand for science/STEM offerings is extremely high, the ability to grow will depend on UNO's ability to address space capacity issues, either with a new science/STEM building or additional renovations in Allwine Hall such as the one completed for Physiology and Anatomy. If there can be no new science facility within the next 5 years, we should explore additional renovations.

Social Science:

Black Studies 9

Geography	89
International St.	190
LLAS	17
Political Science	201
Psychology	727
Sociology/Anth	186
<u>WGS</u>	<u>15</u>
Total	1434 X.10=143

NOTE: Biggest opportunities for growth are in Political Science and Sociology, where both departments have developed complete online programs.

Humanities:

English	231
Foreign Languages	186
History	211
Philosophy	52
<u>Religious Studies</u>	<u>21</u>
	701 X.10=71

Master's of Critical and Creative Thinking:

This fully online MA program is expected to be offered for the first time in Fall 2015. We hope to have 20-30 students entering the first year.

Additional resources will be needed to support this growth:

- 1) support and promote existing programs
- 2) develop new programs and curriculum
- 3) provide additional staff and advising support, especially in support of the UNO-UNMC Pre-Health Advising Office

Additional Faculty/Staff Positions (next 1-5 years):

- 2.0 Faculty lines to support Ph.D. in Biology
- 1.0 Instructor lines to support Biology
- 1.0 Faculty line in Philosophy to support Medical Ethics
- 1.0 Faculty line in Geography to support Medical Geography
- 1.0 Faculty in Computational Statistics to support Data Science
- 1.0 Instructor line in Math to support Math1000
- 1.0 Faculty line in History/Black Studies to support African history
- 1.0 Faculty line in Social Science area to support Sustainability minor
- 1.0 Faculty/instructor line to support Introduction to Psychology
- 1.0 Faculty line in Geography to support online program in Geographic Education
- 3.0 Advisors to support UNO/UNMC Pre-Health Advising Office

Possible PoE requests:

- 1.0 Faculty line in Social Science area to support Sustainability minor
- 1.0 Faculty in Computational Statistics to support Data Science

NOTE: These will be prioritized according to emerging demands and needs, and funded internally and with help from new dollars from the SVC. Most help from the SVC will be in the area of providing additional support for the emerging Pre-Health Advising Office and for strategic hires that support university goals.