College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences (CAHSS) Strategic Plan, 2020-2025

Created and adopted Academic Year 2019-2020

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Shepherd University

CAHSS Strategic Planning Committee

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Mission Statement: College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences

Shepherd University's College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences is a collaborative community of engaged and dynamic scholars who believe in transformative and experiential learning. We maintain that an interdisciplinary education, guided by creative thought, critical inquiry, and reasoned communication, will cultivate students who can thrive in a global community.

The College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences mission statement echoes the mission statement of Shepherd University. As such, we are engaged citizens and leaders working to build a better world.

Vision Statement: College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences

We will find strength in diversity and inspire our students, and each other, to shape our local communities and global world.

Mission Statement: Shepherd University

Shepherd University, a West Virginia public liberal arts university, is a diverse community of learners and a gateway to the world of opportunities and ideas. We are the regional center for academic, cultural, and economic opportunity. Our mission of service succeeds because we are dedicated to our core values: learning, engagement, integrity, accessibility, and community.

Core Values

The College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences adheres to the five core values of Shepherd University: Learning, engagement, integrity, accessibility, and community.

Learning
Shepherd University creates a community of learners who integrate teaching, scholarship, and learning into their lives.

Engagement
Shepherd University fosters environments in which students, faculty, staff, and members of the community engage with each other to form mutually beneficial relationships. We believe that meaningful engagement, with ideas and with people, promotes deep learning and nurtures critical thought.

Integrity
Shepherd University strives for an environment of honesty and fairness in its actions. University officials seek input from students, faculty, and staff and make informed and objective decisions. We expect all members of the community to act in accordance with this value.

Accessibility
Shepherd University provides services to all qualified students. Our staff and faculty are available to students and are committed to respecting and meeting individual needs. University governance and budgeting structures reflect our commitment to transparent processes and public access to information.

Community
Shepherd University comprises a community that includes students, faculty, staff, alumni, and involved citizens. We meet the needs of this community through assessment, development, and implementation of innovative programs and initiatives. We strive to create a safe environment based on mutual respect and acceptance of differences.

SWOT Analysis
College of Arts, Humanities, & Social Sciences

Strengths

Accreditation – Several of our units are accredited in their respective academic fields, including the School of Music, the Department of Social Work, and the Department of Contemporary Art and Theater.

Award-winning competitive teams – Our students compete in student competitions across the country. For example, the Political Science department sponsors the award-winning Debate and Forensics team as well as the Model United Nations team.

Award-winning faculty - Our faculty have been recognized through numerous high-profile awards at university, local, state, regional, national, and international levels. This includes multiple faculty who have won West Virginia Professor of the Year.

Community partnerships – Departments have partnered with local and regional organizations for educational purposes, and have offered educational opportunities and workshops to the community that leverage our expertise.

Clubs and organizations – Our students are engaged in a variety of clubs, honor societies, and organizations, many of which are national or international organizations with a chapter on our campus. Our faculty sponsor and/or advise chapters for these organizations.

Events, lecture series, and community outreach – We host lecture series, training programs, and outreach events that leverage our expertise and provide timely, valuable and actionable knowledge to the community.

Foundation of liberal arts education / Service courses – Our college offers many liberal arts courses to the university Core Curriculum, serving the entire university. These courses serve as a foundation to our liberal arts mission and our role as a COPLAC institution.

Graduate education preparation – We prepare our students for success earning graduate-level degrees. Our students have gone on to attend highly-rated graduate schools throughout the country, including our own graduate program offerings.

Grants – Faculty have secured grants to support learning projects, research, performances, archives, field experiences, installations, community partnerships, and other efforts that support building a thriving academic community on our campus.

Hands-on teaching resources and labs – Our departments have labs that offer students hands-on opportunities for learning. Examples include the FASTEnER lab in the Department of Contemporary Art and Theater, the Television studio in the Department of Mass Communications, and the research lab in the Department of Psychology.

Internships, practica, and co-ops – Our students have gone on to complete highly-competitive internships in government, non-profits and the private sector.

Moore Civil War Center – The history department is in partnership with the George Tyler Moore Civil War Center, which offers hands-on educational opportunities to our students and the community, bridging the connection between the university and the rich history of the region. The center serves as an important public-facing component of the university.

Online courses – We offer online courses to meet the growing demand for asynchronous learning and flexibility, while maintaining rigorous academic expectations.

Professional staff – Our staff is dedicated to excellence in service to faculty, students, and the general public, i.e., managing communication and executing policies, practices, and procedures for the college.

They provide valuable administrative support for college programs and activities in the arts, humanities, and social sciences, e.g., budgetary and communication management, scheduling, recruitment activities, lecture series, workshops, conferences, concerts, exhibitions, and awards ceremonies.

They are actively involved in service on councils and committees across the university.

They maintain currency on university policies and procedures through ongoing training sessions and other forms of professional development.

They are cordial collaboration with faculty and supervisors.

They present a positive and professional image to the campus and greater community.

Recruitment and retention – Our departments are active in recruiting students, including participating in recruiting events, sponsoring competitions at local high schools, and other creative efforts. We have taught dual enrollment courses and have worked with colleges and universities to create 3+3 and 2+2 transfer articulation agreements.

Research and professional publications and presentations - While balancing a 4-4 teaching load, our faculty are highly productive in research, book-writing, art instillations, and performances. Our faculty has published in top-tier journals, have presented at international conferences, and have been recognized for their performances and instillations.

Service to the university – Our faculty and graduate assistants in our graduate programs are actively involved in service on committees across the university.

Study-abroad and teaching abroad – Our faculty have led study abroad programs and taught courses overseas, including in Europe, South America, Canada, Asia, and the Caribbean.

Student-run media, performances and publications – The college provides important informational and entertainment media and live performances to the university and community through its student-run publications, troupes, and broadcasts which are advised by our faculty. This includes the literary journal *Sans Merci*, the newspaper *The Picket* and the WSHC radio station, The Rude Mechanicals, and a robust performance program through the School of Music.

Taking our courses beyond the walls of academia – Our professors provide service-learning opportunities for our students to gain hands-on experience completing projects for businesses, non-profits, and other organizations. These opportunities offer our students resume-building experience.

Undergraduate research, publications and creative productivity – Our faculty have guided students in the development of scholarly and creative works that have been presented or published via peer-reviewed publications, performances, and conferences at regional, national, and international levels. Our students gain research experience through data collection and analysis.

Weaknesses

Aging facilities and equipment – It is difficult to incorporate best practices with insufficient facilities and equipment, remain competitive, and function efficiently.

Alumni engagement – Low alumni engagement results in limited fundraising and limited ability to message our successes. We have limited resources devoted to alumni tracking and career services.

Designated giving – There is a perception that there is a barrier to this being available to our donors.

Disagreement between full-time faculty and administration – The number of full-time faculty needed to teach at Shepherd and the outline of what constitutes an appropriate workload.

Diversity as a core pillar of our mission - We use the words "diverse" and "diversity" in our mission statement and values, but we have never (1) defined what a diverse campus community actually looks like, (2) committed to manifesting that image, or (3) held ourselves accountable to accomplish that. What would a truly inclusive, diverse, affirming, and life-altering educational experience look like when you examine us online, step on our campus, and give yourself over to become a member of the Shepherd University community?

Fundraising – The freeze on the comprehensive campaign for fundraising does not make sense right now. There is a silo-mentality; austerity (grants and fundraising).

Graduate study programs – These are limited at Shepherd University.

Liberal Arts identity –We claim to be a public liberal arts institution, but we offer mostly professional degrees. Here is an opportunity for rebranding or re-defining our mission. The Enrollment trend in STEM fields is affecting liberal arts majors. Because we teach in areas where the connection (path) from classroom to career is more opaque than some other fields (such as nursing and accounting), it is more difficult to promote the degrees we offer when the public and student population are focused on job-preparedness. We could be meeting the needs of adult learners and the workforce in general. The social sciences aren't as 'sexy' in the news and public conversation as STEM. We could lead in regional marketing of the value of a liberal arts education.

Limited opportunity for cross-disciplinary work – In spite of an interest from faculty in team teaching opportunities and other interdisciplinary activities, the relationship between workload, teaching load, and accountability means that this is not encouraged. We could benefit from cross-disciplinary working/teaching spaces.

Marketing – We don't have a cohesive image or brand, and it is a well-known, long-standing issue. We aren't getting the "opportunities after college" and "entrepreneurship" in the image of our university.

Recruitment initiatives – We are told to do more, and *many* faculty are engaged in recruiting. Our efforts so far have not increased enrollment. What else is there left to do?

Small number of faculty – In some departments, this means that the full-time faculty is stretched too thinly. We need better integration of part-time faculty.

Technology – Ongoing technology issues: staffing, updates, cost of acquisition, training, and getting faculty to utilize these resources.

Professional Staff - Staff members are few in number, spread thin in their duties, and expected to complete both basic and complex tasks in a dynamic, demanding, and constantly evolving environment.

Professional staff salaries remain low in comparison to workplaces in the region, making recruitment and retention an ongoing challenge.

Communication by general administration with college staff is inconsistent and often inadequate.

Orientation and mentoring for new employees is inadequate, and more assistance is needed for existing employees when assigned new tasks.

Opportunities

Liberal Arts – Advocate in public forums for the value of a liberal arts education, championing its value to professional programs, careers, and life-long learning.

Use innovative pedagogy, including high-impact practices, to build student life skills for the modern marketplace in areas such as communication, critical thinking, team work, and inter-cultural competence.

Work to build greater civic knowledge and engagement in our students through class projects, service learning, and special events and activities, utilizing the Stubblefield Institute for Civil Political Communications.

University/college culture – Build a culture of collaboration, cohesion, creativity, and proactivity in the new college.

Engage faculty, students, and staff in interdisciplinary discussions and initiatives that showcase the strengths of the arts, humanities, and social sciences, e.g., team teaching, co-sponsored events and programs, and interdepartmental and inter-professional research and presentation.

Cultivate and build stronger relationships with the other colleges on our campus.

New projects – Serve as a campus incubator for creative works and innovative projects extending across the disciplines, integrating scientific inquiry, humanistic approaches, and business/entrepreneurship.

Explore/develop new courses, degree programs, and certificate programs that draw on faculty expertise, emphasizing interdisciplinarity, in areas such as leadership, diversity, security, social justice, and digital literacy.

Recruitment/retention – Aid in offering courses for dual enrollment students from area high schools, staff them with dynamic, innovative instructors, and provide more opportunities for high school students to participate in campus programs.

Monitor and improve student retention, working closely with appropriate campus groups and offices.

Develop and cultivate meaningful partnerships with community colleges and universities, e.g., 2+2, 3+2, 4+1, shared courses, and additional accelerated programs.

Work with University Communications on branding and publicity for programs, departments, schools, and the college.

Engage in student recruitment by maintaining current program materials and web pages, sponsoring special events, participating in open houses, and working collaboratively with Enrollment Management.

Professional staff – Provide more training sessions/professional development and hands-on assistance pertinent to staff PIQs (job descriptions).
Increase communication and collaboration between general administrative offices and the college's professional staff.

Explore innovative ways of utilizing the expertise and experience of the professional staff and provide appropriate support with university resources.

Engage in life-long learning for personal fulfillment and professional development.

Continue to advocate for salary increases for professional staff.

Experiential learning – Develop more experiential learning opportunities/entrepreneurship opportunities for students in the arts, humanities, and social sciences, including collaboration between programs in experiential learning, e.g., internships, co-ops, field trips, and study tours.

Develop more opportunities for international and inter-cultural learning through curriculum, programming, study abroad and study away, international partnerships, faculty and student exchange programs, and fundraising for study abroad scholarships.

Flexible learning options – Enhance online options in the arts, humanities, and social sciences, e.g., a fully online program, shared online courses, WVROCKS, and collaborative arrangements with institutions outside of the U.S.

Community engagement – Engage vigorously in community outreach and serve as a regional resource in the arts, humanities, and social sciences, e.g., CAHSS Speaker Series, Stubblefield Institute, Speak Story Series, and Lectures and Libations.

Fundraising – Work with the Foundation to enhance designated giving to CAHSS programs and initiatives.

Grant writing – Support collaboration on grant writing within and between departments, offering faculty incentives for grant activity.

Threats

Declining enrollments lead to budget challenges – These impact our professional development opportunities, increase full-time faculty workload, and limit the ability of the physical plant to address our campus needs. These require us to increase efforts in fundraising and grant opportunities, looking for outside partners.

Perception of value – The cost of a four-year college education to the average middle-class family has created a societal perspective that a college education might not be worth it or might not be a good deal.

Morale – The current uncertainty/fear/low morale and culture inhibit our progress. Addressing skepticism; ongoing accountability to external groups/general public.

Regional competition – The larger, diverse colleges in our region with nationally-recognized names and the community colleges are our competition. Competition from community colleges and technical schools where the cost of two years of education is at *no* cost to the students depending on program of study (last day in WV and similar programs in MD). People are starting at their local community college and transferring to universities because community college is less expensive. In a true culture of price-conscious education, our out-of-state tuition pricing is not as competitive as it used to be in Maryland, Virginia, and Pennsylvania. That selling point that made us so attractive to students outside of West Virginia is no longer true.

Time Demands – We are being asked to do more with less every year. Tasks such as advising, managing capstones, and other tasks are time-intensive services to our students. These detract from our ability to find time to be productive in terms of research, grants, etc. We have only a few administrative assistants spread across multiple departments. Not having graduate assistants also prevents us from leveraging our time to its fullest extent.

Professional Staff: Increasingly heavy workloads due to budgetary constraints, and reduced human resources through attrition, thus negatively impacting staff morale, retention, and recruitment.

State and institutional policies and mandates make daily practices and procedures overly complex and cumbersome.

Pathways (Goals), Objectives, and Strategies

Pathway I. The Student Experience: Provide an Innovative and Transformative Learning Experience for All Students

Objective 1: Create more flexible learning opportunities in the interest of fostering inclusivity and meeting the needs of our diverse student populations.

> **Strategy:** Assess the feasibility of offering compressed semesters, increased online courses, half-semester courses, and more online/hybrid degrees.

Objective 2: Develop more high impact practices within college programs to help students relate what they are learning to practical applications.

> **Strategy 1:** Departments identify specific learning outcomes that can be applied within related professions and invite professionals to engage with students on those outcomes (online, workshop, lecture, etc.).

> **Strategy 2:** Work to support and to increase student awareness of existing experiential learning opportunities within courses, departments, and the college.

Objective 3: Enhance the student learning experience in college courses and programs through innovative curricular development and cross-disciplinary opportunities.

> **Strategy 1:** Identify what is working well at Shepherd and why in order to build upon successful existing strategies and programs.

> **Strategy 2:** Identify ways to encourage collaborative teaching to help create new learning environments.

> **Strategy 3:** Identify successful and sustainable cross-disciplinary programs that have been researched and reported as current and forward trending and work to implement them in the College.

> **Strategy 4:** Develop ways to better honor and promote the liberal arts core and the value of liberal arts degrees at Shepherd and in the wider community.

Objective 4: Increase student participation in on- and off-campus programming related to our partnerships (CATF, ACFF, Stubblefield Institute, Civil War Center, etc.) to enhance the learning experience.

> **Strategy 1:** Establish a taskforce with departmental representatives to develop strategies to increase program participation.

> **Strategy 2:** Design and distribute lists of all events before the semester begins to be promoted as supplemental learning opportunities in the classroom.

Strategy 3: Explore ways to incentivize student participation in partner programming through the awarding of credit for participation, integration of programming events into required courses such as first year experience classes, creation of a common time across campus that is left open for scheduling programming events, or other innovative approaches.

Pathway II. The Faculty Experience: Foster a culture of excellence in teaching, research, and innovation.

Objective 1: Advocate and promote the Liberals Arts.

Strategy 1: Demonstrate the value of a liberal arts education to professional programs, careers, and lifelong learning.

Strategy 2: Work to build greater civic knowledge and engagement, and appreciation of diverse cultures.

Strategy 3: Create and promote community engagement through programming.

Strategy 4: Increase outreach to institutional peers, community colleges, and regional high schools.

Objective 2: Recruit and retain high quality faculty in college programs with a focus on building diversity.

Strategy 1: Cultivate a culture that attracts and supports diverse faculty.

Strategy 2: Identify means to reach diverse populations and to recruit from those populations for both full time and adjunct faculty.

Strategy 3: Develop, review, and implement departmental mentoring plans for all new faculty.

Strategy 4: Advocate for incentivizing resources for all faculty on campus. For example, tuition waivers for spouses and dependents, gym memberships, day care, professional development funds, expansion of family leave, etc.

Strategy 5: Replace faculty lines left vacant due to retirement or departure, and continue to add tenure-track faculty lines in areas of need and growth.

Strategy 6: Facilitate better integration of each department's adjuncts and the resources available to them. For example, library subscriptions and databases, specialized facilities, workshops, etc.

Objective 3: Increase collaborative teaching opportunities.

Strategy 1: Foster a culture of collaboration and interdisciplinary teaching.

Strategy 2: Develop a banking program for credit hours to support faculty engagement in collaborative teaching.

Strategy 3: Allocate professional development funds to encourage more collaboration in interdisciplinary initiatives.

Objective 4: Support and enhance the faculty experience to realize each person's full potential.

Strategy 1: Increase support to help faculty receive external funding for research and creative endeavors.

Strategy 2: Prioritize funding for professional development in teaching, service, and research.

Strategy 3: Publicize and recognize faculty activities and achievements.

Strategy 4: Support faculty initiatives that build global connections and advance inter-cultural learning.

Strategy 5: Cultivate and encourage innovation in pedagogy. For example, online learning, hybrid courses, compressed format courses, high impact practices, WVRocks, and certificate programs.

Pathway III. Ensure the long-term vitality and sustainability of the academic enterprise and Shepherd University.

Objective 1: Recruit more students into college programs to improve the financial condition of the university

Strategy 1: Update and maintain college and department recruiting materials including the web and social media presence. Work with and adhere to the consistent Shepherd University brand identity on the website, print media, and correspondence within all college departments.

Strategy 2: Better engage and support faculty involvement in recruiting activities through low-cost or no-cost incentives, recognition for recruitment activities as service, and clearer strategies for what faculty can do effectively with their limited time (for example, Music Visitation Day, Student Leadership Academy, Creative Writing Workshops, etc).

Strategy 3: Departments will respond to Admissions reports that include all admitted and deposited students, making early and frequent connections with potential majors. In particular, departments should help incoming students establish and engage in relationships with their advisor earlier.

Strategy 4: Implement and market innovative academic programs and activities. Look at online programs, certificate opportunities, dual degree programs, and collaborative majors from existing resources in addition to programs like the RBA.

Objective 2: Retain more students in college programs to improve the financial condition of the university.

>**Strategy 1:** Intentionally build a "college to life" program that identifies personal challenges and connect the student to life-long learning.

>**Strategy 2:** Foster discussion about common strategies being employed in major-specific FYEX classes and explore potential ways to improve student understanding of the connection between the liberal arts and professional careers.

>**Strategy 3:** Create common spaces to foster a culture of learning and community for students and faculty, such as a social-academic, co-work space.

Objective 3: Increase fundraising for the college

>**Strategy 1:** Department Chairs will meet with Shepherd University Foundation representatives to identity fundraising opportunities, which will be incorporated into the comprehensive campaign.

>**Strategy 2:** The College Dean will create an administrative calendar to discuss fundraising progress and future projects with each department.

Objective 4: Create pathways for post-graduation engagement

>**Strategy 1:** Develop a means for capturing alumni contact information in conjunction with already-existing university efforts.

>**Strategy 2:** Bring in alumni who can engage with existing students to share their valuable life experiences. This can be utilized in first-year seminar and senior seminar courses via Skype/Zoom/in person. Find ways to make this a common practice within individual majors.

Pathway IV: The Staff Experience: Foster and support a culture of excellence in service to the college.

Objective 1: Improve morale by fostering competencies.

>**Strategy 1:** Organize and sustain a professional staff support group.

>**Strategy 2:** Continue and consistently support staff training within job specifications, e.g. finance and procurement.

>**Strategy 3:** Develop procedural and policy guides/manuals specific to each staff member's job responsibilities.

Strategy 4: Advocate for and assist in providing orientations and appropriate training and mentoring to new employees as well as to existing employees when assigned new tasks.

Strategy 5: Work with administration to streamline processes and procedures for more efficient and effective work flows.

Strategy 6: Empower staff by listening and encouraging them to contribute ideas and solutions.

Objective 2: Improve staff salaries and support staff with university resources.

Strategy 1: Advocate for salary increases and merit pay appropriate to PIQs and annual performance evaluations.

Strategy 2: Utilize university resources to support staff professional development and life-long learning, e.g., webinars, workshops, certifications, and other opportunities relevant to work responsibilities.

Strategy 3: Work with supervisors to update PIQs in response to a changing work environment and responsibilities.

Strategy 4: Advocate for and provide fair compensation for staff to share their expertise and to realize their full potential, e.g., adjunct instruction, stipends for special assistance, etc.

Objective 3: Help to build cohesion and collaboration in the new college, with an emphasis on staff collaboration and excellence in service.

Strategy 1: Hold college staff meetings as necessary or requested.

Strategy 2: Develop procedures and contingency plans for staff absences due to emergencies and unforeseen circumstances.

Strategy 3: Provide staff support as needed for college events and activities, e.g., guest lectures, ceremonies, etc.

Strategy 4: Provide recognition of staff for excellence in service.