



WEBER STATE UNIVERSITY

Lindquist College of Arts & Humanities

Reflection for Review

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18 February 2025

Introduction

I began my tenure as Dean of the Lindquist College of Arts & Humanities in January of 2021. I faced a steep learning curve, made steeper by the conditions of the pandemic. In my first two years I prioritized getting to know the College, its staff and faculty, as well as the policies and practices of the University. For the first months, I invited staff and faculty to 30-minute Zoom sessions so I could learn everyone's names, their interests and expertise and their goals as individuals and for the College. This task was central to my principle of inclusive leadership. I want everyone to feel they are part of the College and that I see them as individuals.

As the crises of the pandemic abated and based on feedback from my interim review, I turned to the needed work of strategic planning. After a two-year process, led by the Bylaws Committee and involving multiple opportunities for college-wide brainstorming and feedback, Lindquist College has a Strategic Plan that complements the University's plan and also focuses on the strengths and affordances of the College of Arts & Humanities while recognizing the challenges we face in our current environment. Below I have included some of the College-level accomplishments from the past four years (emphasizing those that occurred since my interim review), as well as a discussion of the challenges we face and plans for next steps. I close with a discussion of the challenges and uncertainty that we face currently and the related areas of growth needed for me to become a more effective and trusted leader of Lindquist College.

While this document is designed as part of an evaluation of my performance as Dean, I want to be clear that the accomplishments discussed below belong to the College as a whole, its tremendous faculty and staff who, despite significant external challenges, continue to go beyond the confines of their jobs to better serve our students and contribute to the public good.

College Accomplishments

1. **Strategic Planning:** Lindquist College approved a new Strategic Plan in December 2024. As discussed above, the process of creating this plan was led by the Bylaws Committee and included multiple and varied opportunities for college faculty and staff to contribute. The plan complements that of the university, with a strong focus on student retention and success. It also emphasizes the need to articulate and embody the benefits of an education in arts and humanities. In the plan's preamble, we describe the plan itself as a "unifying and aspirational vision across academic departments and programs" that will "guide our work over the next five years as Lindquist College continues to fulfill our mission of transforming lives through the exploration of human experiences and creations." The plan is designed to assess and account for the work we already do, build consistent practices across departments and seek "opportunities to thrive within a rapidly changing educational landscape."

Implementation: The College lost no time in beginning the implementation process for our Strategic Plan. At our College Spring Forum (which had over 80 people in attendance), I shared a spreadsheet of each strategic outcome and the groups assigned to focus on those priorities. For the outcomes without an assigned committee, we had table conversations to generate strategies and interest. We now have working groups meeting to develop action plans and start the work on these strategies and we will have a status update meeting in April to see where we are and where we need to go. Many of the accomplishments discussed below are linked to our strategic priorities. My goal is for the Strategic Plan to guide the College in next steps and for us to communicate often and openly about our progress.

2. **Faculty and Staff hiring, retention and success:** In the last four years, the College has successfully advocated to hire new faculty, many replacing those who have left and a few in strategic new positions. In my previous reflection, I wrote about the College efforts to follow recommendations for inclusive hiring, including our work on job posting language and guidelines for creating search committees. I am pleased to report that our efforts have been enormously successful, and we have welcomed over 30 new faculty in the last two years who are extraordinarily talented and dedicated to the WSU mission.

We have also been able to expand our support staff, particularly in the Department of Visual Art and Design, which has been in great need of

studio technicians. Again, we have been fortunate to hire and promote outstanding staff in a variety of positions.

In my interim review, I also wrote about our intent to create a faculty mentorship program and include that as a central job responsibility of our incoming Associate Dean. Thanks to Associate Dean Steimel's efforts, we have a thriving faculty mentorship program that has helped contribute to a strong ethos of community and collaboration among our incoming faculty.

Over the last few years, the Lindquist College faculty and staff have been incredibly productive and many have received recognition for those efforts, finishing degrees, receiving a number of prestigious campus awards and participating in professional development opportunities. With the help of the Bylaws Committee, we have created a clear and equitable application process for **professional development funds** and have distributed over \$80,000 yearly to faculty and staff. We have also funded student and faculty artistic endeavors with the Lindquist Creative grants.

3. **Student recruitment, retention and success:** Central to the University and College Strategic plans is an emphasis on student recruitment, retention and success. We have several initiatives underway and plans for several more.
 - a. With the hiring of our new Marketing Manager, Brittany Rocha, we have seen momentum in our College Outreach Committee, which is creating a **student ambassador program**. Following the successful model in the Goddard School of Business, we are in the process of finding students to visit area schools and talk about their experiences as WSU students in our various disciplines. We have identified funding to compensate our students for their time and this program should be up and running shortly.
 - b. Under the leadership of Hailey Gillen Hoke, the College Student Success Team has been active in identifying the needs of our students to be successful. As a qualitative researcher, Hailey worked with the Team to design and administer a survey to our students that gave us a clear understanding of some of the barriers our students face. Hailey and the Team led breakout sessions on student success efforts at the Fall Forum and have received funding to support to faculty fellows who will help all College faculty use **Canvas** in ways that are consistent and clear for students.

- c. The Student Success Team also identified **curricular challenges** that students face. Several departments and programs in the college have been revising their curriculum to eliminate unintentional barriers for students, including courses where the expectation for student time exceeds the credit they receive. The Registrar and Office of Effectiveness has created a curricular analysis process and we look forward to using this tool to continue this work.
 - d. Our Strategic Plan includes a goal on **mentoring** as key to student success. Faculty in several departments and programs already have mentoring opportunities integrated into curricular offerings. We also are working with the WSU Peer Mentor Program to design a program specifically for Lindquist College students.
4. **Communication:** Feedback on an early draft of the Strategic Plan emphasized that the College needs to be more effective in communicating the value of our disciplines. The theme of communication is now integrated throughout the plan and has also been an aspect of my leadership where improvement has been needed.
- a. As Dean, I have many opportunities to communicate with external stakeholders, including the Board of Trustees, donors, and community members. With guidance from our Strategic Plan, I have focused on a twofold message: that the study of the arts and humanities provides the durable skills needed in the workforce and that a liberal education contributes to the common good. Led by Marketing Manager Brittany Rocha, the college is embarking on a marketing campaign to communicate these messages both to potential students and to the community more broadly. This has included a recent initiative of creating videos of our seniors talking about the benefits of their majors, as well as the efforts of English Faculty Hal Crimmel in his regular editorials in the *Standard Examiner*, to my own opinion piece published in the *Salt Lake Tribune*.
 - b. Of equal importance is cultivating open communication among the faculty, staff and students in the College. We have tried to reduce our contribution to the barrage of emails through the weekly College newsletter, which highlights critical information and shares accomplishments of faculty, staff and students. We also distribute monthly newsletters to students and to our donors and partners in the community. Given the intense impact of recent

legislative decisions on higher education, I have created multiple opportunities for open and honest conversation.

- 5. Budgeting:** In the context of HB 265, the topic of budgets has become unusually fraught. Under the stewardship of Budget Specialist, Christel Grange-Hicks, we have a much clearer understanding of the budget at the college and department levels and have been able to clarify the budget lines of some of our more complicated departments. This information is regularly shared and discussed with chairs, program directors and department administrative specialists.

With greater insight, the college has been able to support a number of initiatives, including professional development and staff lines, as discussed above. We have leveraged the Stewart Education Fund to support students for a variety of high impact and professionalizing opportunities, such as internships, study abroad and attendance at conferences. We have helped students facing financial exigencies with our emergency tuition assistance program, and we have given returning students another chance at a college education with our second-chance scholarship.

With support from the provost's office, the College has also been able to support a number of capital improvements. Projects range from technology upgrades in classrooms and computer labs to the installation of an injury-preventing floor in the Swenson dance studio. We have contributed to the purchase of equipment for film studies, digital analytics and art studios. Funds have been incumbered for the eventual creation of a student lounge in Elizabeth Hall and we hope construction will begin (and end) over the summer.

Following the news this fall of the proposed 10% budget cut, I met with faculty and staff in a variety of settings, discussing strategies for meeting the expected cuts while protecting jobs and supporting our students. The realities of HB 265 will change some of our equations but not our priorities. The months ahead will require us to collaborate strategically, working within the parameters established by the state and the campus taskforce, articulating the benefits of our programs, and offering innovations for reallocation and investment.

6. Policy development and advocacy

- a. Several legislative decisions from 2024 required policy development at the university and college levels. The college has already developed a process for the faculty annual review, which we built on to create a temporary **post-tenure review** process that meets

the requirements of HB 438. In creating this process, we wanted to minimize the additional workload on faculty reviewers and make a clear distinction between the criteria for post-tenure review and the criteria for tenure and promotion. Thanks to the efforts of Faculty Senate and the Provost's office, we also were able to develop a process for instructors to apply for promotion to the rank of **Senior Instructor**.

- b. HB 261 and the USHE resolution concerning academic neutrality has caused considerable concern among faculty and staff about their efforts to teach topics relevant to their subject area and to demonstrate support students. As a college, we have had many discussions about these rulings and the importance of protecting academic freedom. I have followed up with conversations with other administrators throughout campus in an effort to counter policies that might unintentionally contribute to a culture of fear and silencing on campus.

- 7. **Programming:** Lindquist College is fortunate to have two generous gift accounts that allow us to bring in speakers and performers to enhance the cultural experiences of our campus and community. Since my interim review, I have worked with an ad hoc committee to consider our **Browning Presents!** series. We strive to reflect the diversity of interests in our community and to connect our presenters with our students. Perhaps our most original presentation was last year's Indigenous Soundscapes in Motion, which brought together a group of musicians and dancers who led several workshops and performed to a packed house in the Austad Auditorium. We have also worked to align our programming with the university's eHSI goal, bringing in speakers such as Silvia Moreno-Garcia, Gabby Rivera and Julio Torres.

Faculty submissions for the **Hurst artist-in-residence** program continue to generate amazing opportunities as well and we have been able to support speakers such as Pulitzer-prize winning author Viet Thanh Nguyen and the interdisciplinary sound artist, Alice Boyd. Based on feedback from the committee, we have also made some changes to the application process.

College departments and programs continue to stage amazing performances and exhibits, featuring the talents of students, staff and faculty. Supporting these programs with sufficient marketing has been an ongoing challenge, but we have seen significant improvement of late. Browning Center Director Jim Craig has been keeping a tally of

attendance and found that almost 10,000 people attended performances at the Browning Center in the 2024-2025 academic year.

8. **Fundraising:** With the recent hiring of Senior Development Director Taylor Knuth, the College has seen encouraging progress in fundraising, receiving generous donations to support the Wasatch Writers Center, the National Undergraduate Literature Conference, the Venture Program and the Theatre Experience Fund. For the University Comprehensive Campaign, the College has prioritized fundraising for the Venture program and for Lindquist Living Labs, which are any programs or projects, on-campus or off, that offer students high-impact, professionalizing opportunities based on their areas of study.
9. **Community building:** Returning from the pandemic and recognizing the harm brought by the wave of loneliness reported throughout the country, I have prioritized community building opportunities in my tenure as dean. There was much to build on, as the College is graced with a collaborative and energetic faculty and staff. Nonetheless, the return to campus has not been easy and we have experimented with different events to encourage cross-department interaction and engagement. Something as simple as providing lunch for our College Conversations, and holding them on alternate days to coincide with breaks between classes has led to steadily increasing attendance. We are attentive to the interests among faculty and staff when programming our fall and spring forums, and I host gatherings to foster a sense of belonging within our college.
10. **Campus leadership:** At the time of my interim review, I was the newest dean on campus, but with a number of retirements that is no longer the case. In those two years, I have sought opportunities to play a larger role on campus, ones that contribute to “Big W” initiatives while also advocating for the role of Arts and Humanities.
 - a. As part of the provost's efforts to focus on student retention and success, I have been active in promoting academic efforts to improve retention rates. This work included leading a working group to create a **First-Year Seminar** and advocating for the faculty approval of a **General Education Institutional Area**. The failure of that vote was a difficult blow, and it, along with the state-required reduction in General Education requirements have the potential to hurt enrollments in Lindquist College. At the College level, our Strategic Plan emphasizes the need to review our contributions to General Education to make sure we are teaching our courses in ways to help with retention and to communicate the benefits of our

disciplines. If successful, we can provide a model for improvement of General Education across the campus. I also hope to revisit the first-year seminar work and consider how it can be adopted even without the Intuitional Area requirement.

b. Venture and Clemente: The Venture and Clemente courses continue to serve the mission of the university and college, providing students with free, transformative courses in the humanities. We have seen several students from both programs matriculate at Weber and heard testimony about the profound impact of the courses on their lives. We are currently in conversation with the University of Utah to collaborate on a Venture course in the women's prison in Salt Lake City and raising funds to open additional sites for the Ogden programs.

c. Fostering leadership: Taking an active role in the Council for Colleges of Arts & Sciences (CCAS) has given me opportunities to work other deans across the country. As a member of the CCAS Advocacy committee, I helped revise the resource page of the CCAS website to provide more relevant and up-to-date materials in support of a liberal education. I also organized and led a panel discussion at the national conference last fall on how institutions can respond to legislative decisions affecting higher education.

The college has benefited from CCAS resources and networks in many ways. Recently, we have been offering incoming Chairs opportunities to attend **Chair training** workshops to help with the onboarding process.

Over the last three years, WSU has also been a participant in the **University Presidential Leadership program** run by the University of Utah with a grant from the Mellon Foundation. Each year, three humanities faculty have been selected to participate in this program. I have worked to make sure that the campus portion of the UPL experience is meaningful for our cohorts and just recently we hosted a highly successful, full-day session focusing on leadership in the humanities – both how our training prepares us for leadership and the critical needs for leadership in the humanities.

11. Supporting Scholarship and Teaching: Lindquist College is fortunate to have faculty who excel in the classroom and as scholars and artists. My job is to provide opportunities and support for faculty endeavors and guide improvement efforts where needed. To do this well, it is imperative

for me to keep current with the rapid changes we are seeing in higher education, and towards that end I have participated in several offerings from the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, including those focusing on creating an inclusive classroom and using AI. I also teach a course at Ogden High School through the Clemente program and have taught two courses, one in theatre and now one in English, on campus. In addition, I have continued with my own scholarship, publishing a co-edited book on teaching adaptations of Shakespeare and writing an essay for a forthcoming collection on Shakespeare and leadership. I am also in the midst of editing a special issue of the journal *Women Writing* and submitted an NEH proposal to host a second Institute for high school English teachers on Shakespeare and adaptation.

Leading through change and uncertainty

The attacks we are seeing on higher education in general and on disciplines in the College of Arts & Humanities in particular are unsettling, to say the least. It is difficult not to allow these threats to undermine the important work that we do. But these threats, in fact, make our work *more* important even as they make it more challenging, and that is the message I try to convey in every conversation and every meeting. In the face of so much uncertainty, I find optimism in the intelligence and commitment of the people with whom I have the honor of working. The challenges that lie ahead are daunting and we need to use all the skills we have learned in the arts and humanities to meet them. Towards that end, I have some important areas for continued growth and improvement as dean.

- **Communication and Transparency:** I spoke of this in my interim review as an area where I am both committed and need to do better. As discussed above, I have focused on improving communication with internal and external stakeholders and believe that I have made significant progress; however, there are still times when I fall short. We have several channels for keeping faculty and staff updated and part of college and university conversations. I will redouble my efforts to use them more reliably and frequently.
- **Working with Data:** Having a firm grasp on the necessary data points is particularly critical in light of HB 265. I attend data trainings to better use the data available in the Report Gallery and will be more regularly analyzing and discussing these data with Chairs and Program Directors.
- **Course Scheduling:** Between the reduction in the General Education requirements, the budget cuts, and the move towards centralized room scheduling, course scheduling cannot be siloed in departments. The

College Chairs and Program Directors do an excellent job of scheduling courses and offering needed classes for their students, but I will need to facilitate scheduling conversations across the college as we work together to address these new challenges and opportunities.

I am constantly humbled by the incredible talent and dedication of the staff, faculty and students of the Lindquist College of Arts & Humanities. I am grateful to be part of a college where Weber's mission of access and inclusion are central to our work. Echoing our mission statement, I believe in the transformative power of teaching and learning and am committed to supporting the faculty and staff in their continued efforts to share that power with all of our students.