



WEBER STATE UNIVERSITY

Lindquist College of Arts & Humanities

Reflection for Interim Review

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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. While it took me over a year, I have now met everyone who works 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.

Getting to know the College and University culture and its processes has been more challenging. I am frequently asking questions of my fellow deans and I also look to the College's experienced Chairs for a sense of the campus culture. At the College level many of our procedures live only in people's general understanding, and record keeping has been sporadic. Based on the belief that clear policies, created collaboratively, can be a tool for addressing equity concerns, I have worked with various groups to develop policies and communicate those more clearly to the College faculty and staff. This is an ongoing project.

I have not yet worked with the College faculty and staff to develop a College-level strategic plan. I made this choice for two reasons: first, I recognized that everyone is exhausted from the challenges presented by the pandemic; second, the newly developed University strategic plan gives us a blueprint for the College to follow. The College did, however, recently approve a new Mission Statement that integrates a focus on equity, diversity, inclusion and belonging. Accompanying this revised Mission statement are six college commitments. It is my hope to use those Commitment Statements to guide a strategic planning process. Below I have included some of the College-level accomplishments from these past two years, as well as a discussion of the

challenges we face and plans for next steps. I close with a discussion of areas of growth needed for me to become a more effective and trusted leader.

College Accomplishments

1. **Mission and Commitments:** As mentioned above, the College recently approved a new mission statement. In the spring of 2022, the College EDI committee generated an initial draft that was first shared with Chairs and Directors and then became the centerpiece of discussion for the College Fall meeting. First in a large group format and then in breakout groups, faculty and staff read and reflected on the draft and submitted comments which the EDI committee then reviewed and used as the basis for revision. This revision was the subject of further discussion in small group settings and was revised several more times before going to the entire College for an up or down vote. With an 89% approval rate, the new Lindquist College mission statement is as follows: *Through the transformative power of teaching and learning, Lindquist College of Arts & Humanities explores human experiences and creations. We embrace difference and engage in academic inquiry and research, artistic expression, and meaningful service in collaborative, and reflective ways.*

The goal for this revision was to integrate our commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion into our mission statement rather than develop a separate EDI statement. We want to communicate that our commitment to EDI is integral to our purpose as a College, which is also evident in our six commitment statements (listed below). These will be showcased on our website and used as the basis for a strategic plan.

- Create a sense of belonging in our college and community.
- Amplify marginalized voices and perspectives within our disciplines.
- Build each individual's capacity in introspection and global awareness.
- Foster critical thinking, expressive communication and the exchange of ideas.
- Cultivate student learning through personalized, high-impact educational practices.
- Develop professional skills and prepare students for a variety of careers and opportunities.

2. Structural Reorganization

- a. *School of Performing Arts:* In its history as a department, the performing arts used resources according to a variety of metrics. In an attempt to address equity concerns within the department, the different areas agreed to reorganize into a School with three

separate programs led by Program Directors. At the Provost's suggestion, an external Chair was selected and the three programs collaborated on an MOU and a shared budgeting process. Although only in its first year and hampered by the departure of its longtime administrative specialist, the soon-to-be School of Performing Arts is moving forward and has selected an internal Chair for the next academic year.

- b. *Department of Interdisciplinary Studies – Film Studies*: Film Studies was created by a committee of faculty who then hired a faculty member to lead the program. That faculty member was placed into the Department of Communication. To clarify the program's interdisciplinary nature and to give Film Studies an opportunity to grow, we placed the program more clearly into the Department of Interdisciplinary Studies, again creating an MOU for leadership and faculty evaluation. This MOU created an Interdisciplinary Chair, drawn from the current group of Chairs, requires an interdisciplinary evaluation process, and indicates the role of the Program Director and the Advisory Board.
3. **Budgeting and Resource Management**: The ability of departments to deliver quality instruction to their students relies heavily on the availability of resources to hire faculty, support initiatives, and encourage professional development. During times of cuts and resources scarcity, the process of budgeting can become particularly fraught. To increase transparency, budget conversations occur regularly during meetings of the Council of Chairs and Directors and each spring with individual Chairs and Directors and their Administrative Specialists. A particular focus has been on faculty lines. Chairs and Directors share their requests and we discuss them as a group – both so each department can understand the needs of the others and so we can collaborate on criteria for evaluating requests.

For Professional Development funding, the College has expanded access to include instructors and staff and has moved to a regular schedule for applications and the creation of a small subcommittee to evaluate those applications. This change is new and we are still working out some kinks. Conversations continue about how to best use the funds available, particularly how to make sure new faculty have access to professional development and how we can use the funds to encourage EDI work.

Funding for scholarships is also a priority and an area where the college has funds available that have not always been fully used. Discussions with Chairs and Directors as well as members of the College Scholarship Committee confirmed the need to provide resources to students who

need it the most. Thus, the College is in the process of creating two new scholarships using its discretionary scholarship index. The first, the “Second Chance” scholarship is geared towards students who are returning to school and who may not qualify for typical merit-based scholarships because of challenges they experienced during their first attempt at college. The second is a one-time emergency scholarship to help students stay in school when an immediate and unexpected need arises. Finally, the College is using one of its donor accounts to help support students’ academic experiences outside the classroom, such as attending a conference or participating in a Study Abroad experience. In the month since this fund has been available, over 20 students have applied and received support for a variety of valuable opportunities to build on their education, often with faculty, outside of the traditional classroom setting.

4. **Committee and Policy Development:** The College created several new committees to meet our goals of transparency, collaboration, and equity.
 - a. *Bylaws/College PPM committee:* recognizing a lack of policies to guide decision making, we have created a bylaws committee to determine those needs and create policies to address them. Focusing on inclusion, the committee includes at least one representative from each department and also staff, tenure-track faculty, instructors and adjuncts. Thus far, the group has created policies or guidelines for: faculty search processes—particularly the creation of search committees; faculty annual reports—to streamline the process and highlight EDI efforts; sabbatical applications—to communicate expectations and criteria more clearly; the distribution or reassigned time—to ensure that it is regularly counted and meets the requirements established in the PPM; and the distribution of professional development funds. Committee representatives regularly consult with their departments on these developments. The College has also created a Canvas sandbox where those policies and guidelines are (or in some cases will be) available for faculty and staff.
 - b. *EDI College Committee:* we relaunched this committee in the fall of 2021. While the committee includes departmental representation, it is also “open access.” Anyone who wants to contribute to these efforts is welcome. One of the goals of the EDI committee is to increase awareness about what is happening at the university and department levels. We also wanted to pursue projects with concrete outcomes for the College and for our students. In

eighteen months, the EDI committee spearheaded the creation of the revised College Mission Statement, making sure that equity, diversity and inclusion were fully integrated into this statement rather than creating a separate EDI statement. The Committee also worked in parallel with the Bylaws Committee on revising the Faculty Annual Report template, asking faculty to reflect on their EDI efforts in teaching, service and scholarship and creative work. The Committee also suggested creating summer microgrants to encourage faculty to revisit their syllabuses with an equity lens and then share their work with the faculty at large. This work, in particular, became the focus of the Fall 2022 welcome back meeting for the College, which featured a number of faculty- and staff-led workshops on inclusive teaching practices. In addition, the College held three College Conversations in the fall, which built on the themes that emerged in the fall workshops.

- c. *Student Success Team*: At the request of the Provost, the College created a Student Success Team, which has been reviewing processes in place to support students as well as analyzing unintentional barriers that have been created.
 - d. *Outreach & Recruitment Committee, Browning Presents! Advisory Group*: In an effort to coordinate efforts and leverage the skills and ideas of faculty and staff, the College recently created two new groups.
5. **Venture and Clemente Courses in Humanities**: This fall saw the relaunch of the Venture Course in the Humanities, which offers free, credit-bearing courses in the humanities to adult learners, as well as the creation of parallel Clemente Course for students at Ogden High School. The first cohort of the new Venture course has over 20 students studying literature, American history, creative arts, philosophy and critical reading and thinking with five WSU faculty at the Community Education Center. Another 20 students are enrolled in the college excitement class at Ogden High, which targets students who have not been steered towards college preparation courses with the aim of showing them that college is for them and that the study of the humanities is engaging and relevant. This course is taught by four Lindquist College Faculty and WSU students serving as teaching assistants. Both programs are offered in partnership with Utah Humanities and are designed to further WSU's open enrollment mission and contribute to efforts to become an emerging Hispanic Serving Institution.

6. **Fostering Community:** the pandemic has made community building both more challenging and, perhaps, more needed than ever. Particularly faculty hired in the last three years have struggled to meet other faculty outside of their disciplines and feel a sense of belonging at this institution. As in-person gatherings become more common and accepted, we have created a number of opportunities for faculty and staff to come together, share ideas and enjoy each other's company, including informal monthly gatherings, dubbed "College Conversations"; college-wide sabbatical presentations; a welcome dinner for new faculty; and fall and spring celebrations. I also encourage in-person meetings while maintaining Zoom options when needed.
7. **College Programming:** The departments and programs in Lindquist College have returned to a robust schedule of public performances, exhibits and events. The College contributes to this schedule primarily through Browning Presents! and the Hurst Artist-in-Residence. While the programs in 2021-2022 were scheduled before my arrival, I worked with the Dean's office staff to facilitate events that reached into our communities and included meaningful opportunities for student engagement. I participated more in the decision-making process for this past year's events, developing a theme of inclusion that focused on giving voice to stories that have been historically erased or ignored. These events began with a co-sponsorship with Onstage Ogden, to bring the Fiske Jubilee Singers to campus, then moved to a staged reading and discussion of *American Moor*, by Hurst artist-in-residence Keith Hamilton Cobb, and will culminate in a presentation by the author of the *1619 Project*, Nikole Hannah-Jones. We have also used Browning Presents! as a vehicle to collaborate with cultural organizations on and off campus, particularly those that celebrate Hispanic and Latinx culture. To that end, we coordinated with Ogden Contemporary Arts on the exhibit *Vida, Muerte, Justicia* (co-curated by DOVAD's art historian, María del Mar González-González) and the performance by sound artist Guillermo Galindo; contributed to the Hispanic Heritage Month art exhibit in the Shepherd Union, and partnered with Lupec to bring Guadalajara Folkloric Ballet to Weber State.
8. **Equity Hiring and Advocacy:** Like many institutions of higher education, Lindquist College has seen its share of transition among faculty and staff over the last two years. Every departure requires analysis and advocacy to make sure we can continue to serve students and to develop new programs within the College, even during times of decreasing enrollments and budget cuts. While such transitions can be challenging, the College has been fortunate in its ability to fund most positions and to hire qualified

individuals. In particular, the college has turned its attention towards best practices in inclusive hiring. For the hiring season beginning in Fall 2022, the College worked with Search Advocate Cindy Reinhard, who gave guidance on job ads to help them reach a wider and more diverse pool, and who ran workshops on avoiding implicit bias that members of faculty search committees were required to attend. Although it is too early to determine the effect of these efforts, initial indications suggest that diverse applicants have responded favorably to our endeavors.

- 9. Fundraising and Grants:** When I arrived at Weber in 2021, the College was in the middle of a large fund-raising initiative to secure a \$2 million endowment to support the curatorial efforts at the Dumke Plaza. Although some concerns about requirements in the proposed donor agreement slowed progress, we successfully secured the complete endowment in the fall of 2022. In collaboration with advancement, we have also secured donor support for the Venture Course in the Humanities, the marching band, scholarships, and a pilot Learning Community program bridging courses in the sciences and those in English or Communication. Conversations for a significant donation to theatre are ongoing and we are still pursuing the potential for an endowment that would support a downtown location for the Matthew S. Browning Center for Design. I have also secured two grants—an internal Hall grant to help with the launch of the Venture Course, and a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities grant to run an Institute for high school teachers here at Weber State. In addition, I assisted faculty in dance and math (Erik Stern and Rachel Bachman), who received a 3-year grant from USHE to support their efforts to expand and sustain a Quantitative Literacy course that uses embodied pedagogy to make mathematics more accessible.

Challenges and Future Plans

Much lies ahead for Lindquist College. Among the projects that require concerted attention are the following:

- 1. Strategic Plan:** The changes brought about by the pandemic have become part of a new landscape for higher education. With the revised Mission and Commitment Statements in mind, the College is poised to develop a strategic plan to help us determine our path forward in this altered environment.
- 2. Student Recruitment, Retention and Graduation:** Faculty and staff make significant efforts to bring students to our College and help them be

successful at every stage of their academic career. New College initiatives, including the formation of the Student Success Team and the College Recruitment and Outreach committee, are designed to coordinate efforts and increase our effectiveness. In particular, we hope to work in tandem with university efforts to increase the enrollment and success of Hispanic students.

- 3. Faculty Recruitment and Retention:** With our efforts to hire over a dozen new full-time faculty, it is vital that we turn our attention to retaining faculty. Towards that end, I will be working with the new Associate Dean to develop a New Faculty Mentorship program based on models I have learned about and discussed with other academic deans. In particular, we need to be attentive to the needs of new faculty from marginalized groups and to help all our faculty feel welcome here and achieve success.
- 4. Space Utilization and Maintenance:** While Lindquist College occupies three separate buildings, demands on space continue to increase. Committees for the Browning Center and Elizabeth Hall are discussing options to rearrange existing spaces to make room for faculty offices, an additional dance/movement studio, a VR studio, student lounge, and a dean's suite. The Browning Center has outstanding management, and VBC Director Jim Craig works actively with faculty in performing arts to facilitate these conversations. The Department of Visual Art and Design faces different challenges, including the need for studio space for students and for full-time studio support.

Areas for continued growth and improvement

It has been an honor serving as Dean of the Lindquist College of Arts & Humanities. I am well aware that I have much yet to learn and significant areas of needed improvement. Some of these areas include:

- **Communication and Transparency:** While transparency is a practice that I value highly, I have fallen short in this area. Having a consistent plan for communication should help in this regard and is something I am working on both individually and in the dean's office. It is also vital that my decisions are grounded in principles of equity and fairness and that I explain those decisions in ways that are clear and honest. We have several channels for keeping faculty and staff updated and part of governance conversations, and I will strive to use them more reliably and frequently.
- **Course Scheduling:** The College Chairs do an excellent job of scheduling courses and offering needed classes despite cutbacks in instructional wage. The questions involved in finding the right mix of courses, times and

modalities are complex and ever-changing. Based on a data-driven analysis of student success across modalities paired with an understanding both of our students' preferences, I hope to facilitate conversations about scheduling across the college.

- **Campus Leadership:** As the newest Dean hired at Weber State, I have spent much of my time learning and asking questions. I hope that I have learned enough in the last two years to assume additional leadership roles at the university. I am especially interested in working on pilot programs to design first-year academic experiences that provide a meaningful introduction to general education, promote the value of the liberal arts, and help students feel a sense of belonging on our campus.

I am constantly humbled by the incredible talent and dedication of the staff and faculty 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 newly approved 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.