



# College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences

## Strategic Plan

December 2022

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We want to thank all the people who helped chart this path forward: the three thousand individuals who responded to our surveys, the Executive Dean and CLASS Executive Dean’s Office; student coders; the faculty and staff on the Strategic Planning Steering Committee, and all of the others who have helped.

## Introduction and Background

The College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences (formerly, the College of Arts and Sciences) was founded in 1945 and has grown 15 departments and the Mayborn School of Journalism, which returned to the college in 2019. CLASS is UNT's largest college with approximately 9,000 students, 294 faculty and 100 staff. Four of our programs are ranked in the U.S. News and World Report top 100. Since 2017, CLASS has graduated more than 7,000 students and has thousands of alumni living throughout the United States and around the world. CLASS alumni are well known for their contributions in all areas of human endeavor, from public service, education, communication and scientific research to business and industry. [Learn more about our amazing alumni.](#)

CLASS has a long and remarkable history that informs the present and will give our efforts context and momentum as we envision the future. Our disciplines like history, English, communication studies, dance and theatre, economics, world languages, and more are the foundation of a comprehensive and relevant education for all UNT students. In fact, business leaders throughout the world tell us that the value provided by a liberal arts education is exactly what they are looking for in prospective employees. Our students learn transferrable, tangible skills—how to communicate, collaborate, think critically, analyze and engage in the robust discussions of complex issues (Grobman and Ramsey 2020). CLASS students learn how our past and our present shape tomorrow and beyond. And working with our outstanding faculty, advisers and staff, our graduates gain the mentoring and experience necessary for finding and building meaningful and productive careers. Our scholarship and our creative activity examine the entirety of the human experience to produce knowledge and insight into all the complexity of what we do and who we are as humans. A strong vibrant college of liberal arts is the very cornerstone upon which higher education is built.

## The Strategic Planning Process

Now we chart our exciting course for the future. As a newly defined College—CLASS consists of the liberal arts and social sciences, while the natural sciences are now in the College of Science—with a “new” identity, we have created the CLASS Strategic Plan 2021 – 2026. Executive Dean Tamara Brown gave the CLASS Strategic Planning Steering Committee (SPSC) its charge in October, 2020 and asked the SPSC to

- articulate the CLASS identity
- evaluate and identify achievable goals we will pursue to advance our teaching, research and creative activity
- determine how best to incorporate four themes into our plan: a) Student Success; b) UNT as a Minority Serving/Hispanic Serving Institution; c) UNT as a Carnegie Ranked Tier 1 Research University; and d) the CLASS relationship with UNT's new campus in Frisco

The Committee asked our students, alumni, faculty, staff and other stakeholders in surveys and in meetings about their perceptions of CLASS and our strengths and weaknesses; their ideas for making CLASS better; and what they value about our College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences.

The SPSC received surveys from 1494 alumni; 937 students; 39 staff; 14 department chairpersons and 120 faculty. In addition, the SPSC also utilized data from a fall 2020 survey from the CLASS Executive Dean's office of 400 faculty, staff and students to inform our discussion and the writing of the plan. The open-ended responses to many of these questions were coded by a team of 11 student coders, which permitted even greater exploration of our stakeholders' preferences and ideas. We sought to identify, understand and act upon what they and we perceive as the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges facing CLASS. Committee members have researched the themes identified by Executive Dean Brown, analyzed our data, read past and present strategic plans, and carefully considered how the CLASS identity and future can be open and welcoming for all students, faculty and staff. Based on all this input and research, we believe the plan we have developed is truly reflective of the powerful diversity of our disciplines, faculty, students and staff. The plan contains exciting directions we will travel in the next decade to elevate CLASS to the top ranks of liberal arts colleges in the United States.

### **The Strategic Planning Steering Committee**

James Meernik (Department of Technical Communication) and Andrea Miller (Mayborn School of Journalism), Co-Chairs

Iftekhhar Ahmed	Department of Communication Studies
Karen Anderson-Lain	Department of Communication Studies
Jason Balas	Department of Media Arts
Marijke Breuning	Department of Political Science
Tony Carey	Department of Political Science
Adam Chamberlin	Department of Dance and Theatre
Sara Champlin	Mayborn School of Journalism
Guillermo Covarrubias	Department of Economics
Tami Deaton	Mayborn School of Journalism
Lisa Gage	CLASS Executive Dean's Office
Debra Griffin	CLASS Office of Student Advising
Lisa Henry	Department of Anthropology
Patricia Kaminski	Department of Psychology
Jongsoo Lee	Department of Spanish
Joshua Lopez	Department of History
Mike McKay	CLASS Office of Student Advising
Lisa Nagaoka	Department of Geography and the Environment
Yousef Omar	Department of Economics
Kathryn Raign	Department of Technical Communication
Walt Roberts	Department of History
Javier Rodríguez	Department of English
Jeffrey Rous	Department of Economics
Gul Seckin	Department of Sociology
Christopher Todd	Department of History

## **The Challenges and Opportunities Ahead**

A scan of the regional and national environments reveals a number of trends in business, the economy and higher education that portend very well for the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences at UNT, *if* we seize on the opportunities inherent in this rapidly changing world. At the same time, many challenges await us. We are emerging from a pandemic, which has caused tremendous disruption at UNT and to higher education throughout the country, has created untold, economic hardship for our students and their families, and caused profound emotional distress for many. The pandemic has laid bare many of the weaknesses in our society, but also has focused our attention and energies on what truly matters—the many and diverse people who make up the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences. These trends represent both real risk and outstanding opportunity for the College. We have paid a price for the knowledge we have gained during this pandemic about what works and what does not work in higher education. We must apply this knowledge to reach and teach our students, and provide them with what truly matters—a world *class* education delivered by committed and caring professionals—so that they can experience all UNT and CLASS have to offer and be exceptionally ready to lead successful lives and careers.

### **Liberal Arts, Social Sciences and the Future**

A great deal of attention has been given to the debate over the future of the liberal arts in higher education. On the one hand, many policymakers and some experts have questioned whether the traditional liberal arts are still relevant in today's world. To listen to many of these experts one might conclude that students, parents and government officials care for little except career ready majors and career placement. That is not the whole story. Businesses, professionals and our alumni are telling UNT, like other universities around the country, that they not only want students to develop the skills necessary to navigate a particular industry, but the skills to navigate any challenges that arise. A liberal arts education prepares students to be adaptable, flexible and innovative—skills that require thinking deeply and critically about all aspects of a problem then effectively communicating knowledge and insights to fully explore the human experience. This is the education that comes from a vibrant engagement with the liberal arts—the education CLASS provides. In fact, as UNT alumni E. Michele Ramsey and her co-author argue, “Study after study, article after article, report after report say the same thing: the humanities and liberal arts are vital to the current and future economy” (Grobman and Ramsey 2020, 1).

Our stakeholders in business and industry tell us that they can train their employees—our graduates—in the job performance skills they need. What they cannot “train” employees to do is to appreciate how people from diverse backgrounds can work and thrive together. They cannot create a manual to make someone an effective communicator who knows her audience, and who can speak and write in clear and compelling terms. They cannot develop a program that generates critical thinking skills. They can train people to follow rules, but there is no PowerPoint that can produce an ethical, thinking and caring employee. They can assign work to people, but it is the liberal arts education CLASS delivers that helps students discover their passions and interests, and the ability to act independently and solve problems in service of a greater good.

And no one can ever develop an app that instills in someone an appreciation for and the ability to build upon the depth and breadth of the human experience. This is what we do in the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences. CLASS teaches students to navigate and thrive in a diverse workforce; to write and speak well; to organize effectively; to work independently and creatively and with a sense of purpose, and to work ethically.

Confidence in the liberal arts and social sciences is exactly what is needed at this time. The declining numbers of first time in college freshman (FTIC) because of national and regional demographic trends present challenges and opportunities to the field of higher education and to the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences. Many of our FTIC and transfer students are satisfying lower division, core requirements in high school, or are postponing enrollment in four-year institutions while they complete core requirements in community colleges. These trends suggest that our college must be prepared to compete for a decreasing student population with new degree programs that meet student ambitions and career needs. We must provide strong support to enable faculty and staff to create outstanding online courses to attract students whose lives demand more flexible learning schedules. The College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences is exceptionally well-positioned to take these challenges and convert them into opportunities. CLASS has an ever-expanding number of courses and degree programs that are fully available online, excellent faculty whose skill in teaching in this challenging environment is highlighted by the increasing enrollments in CLASS even during the pandemic. As we will describe later, CLASS is building a productive relationship with the New College at Frisco to deliver many of our courses and even some degree programs to provide Collin County with an excellent 4-year university education. We can best address these challenges by providing faculty and staff with the resources and support they need to build these programs and provide the value of a liberal arts education to the changing student population and higher education environment.

### **Tier 1 Research University**

The University of North Texas is a Tier 1 research institution according to the rankings published by the prestigious Carnegie organization. As a recent member of this exclusive club of the top universities in the United States, UNT and CLASS have a great deal of work to do in sustaining this ranking. CLASS has a critical role to play in providing the support necessary for harnessing the intellectual energy of our faculty and students to contribute to the research enterprise and the graduation of our doctoral students. Our research and creative activity are as diverse as our departments and people. Importantly, the potential from interdisciplinary work is great with a proper Tier 1 level of support. CLASS has an international reputation in research areas such as the environment, human security, communications, established Centers and Institutes (including the Center for Psychology; the Military History Center, the Economic Research Institute; and the Psychology Clinic), as well as world-renowned scholars.

Given the size and diversity of CLASS, we must be especially focused on ensuring that faculty have what they have identified as most critical to their success—time and support—to do the work they are trained to do. Because our goals as well as our needs concern the college as a whole, we envision a strategic plan that speaks to all faculty about their scholarship in all its

diversity. Our plans and goals must also speak to the many faculty, staff and students who are involved in creative activity and the performance arts. We must also provide the support these programs require for their growth and success, such as by working with private organizations and foundations that are often the wellspring of support for these programs. More generally, we find that all the departments and programs in CLASS would benefit from a comprehensive plan to identify and compete for funding not just from government agencies like the National Science Foundation, but also funding from governmental and non-governmental organizations.

### **Social Justice**

We conclude this overview of our challenges and opportunities by recognizing the central importance of racial justice, and equity more broadly toward marginalized communities today and the unique role that CLASS can play in confronting this issue. There can be no denying the impact of the protests for racial justice in the summer of 2020, and the great passion so many of our students, faculty and staff bring to this issue. These protests and subsequent events have highlighted what we have known, or should have known for many years—the experiences of black people and other people of color differ profoundly from those whom the system was and is set up to privilege and favor. The College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences has a tremendous opportunity to help lead this effort to identify and understand the forces behind racial injustice, and create the solutions for racial justice. We see time and again that no matter what audience’s opinions we consider—students, staff, faculty, and alumni—they clearly prize diversity. Diversity is who we are. It is what we need to become more of and better at, and it is the strength that will always make us the most powerful and relevant of colleges. Our diversity can be the beating heart of CLASS.

Because of the great depth and breadth of our disciplines, which engage the most critical questions humanity faces, CLASS is uniquely positioned to contribute to efforts to promote racial understanding and reconciliation, as well as a broader understanding of marginalized communities, globally, nationally and locally. We study human behavior in all of its sociological, psychological, political, and economic complexity, and through our creative arts we can explore the tragedy of the past as well as the resilience of our humanity that continues to bend the moral arc of the universe. We look for ways throughout this strategic plan to integrate these insights into our actions and identify opportunities for CLASS students, faculty and staff to learn from and contribute to this dialogue so that CLASS is not only the heart, but the inclusive “face” of higher education.

### **A Bright, CLASSy Future**

There has rarely been a more opportune time to reflect deeply on the major changes occurring in our society and across the landscape of higher education. At the same time, rarely has the need to absorb and act upon these changes been more urgent. Major changes are underway at this very moment in society, the climate, politics, the economy and higher education. The future of higher education will belong to those institutions that build an excellent, inclusive team of faculty, students, staff and administrators who can provide robust and enduring support to our existing and emerging strengths so that we might work to address these major

changes in the world. At the same time, we must be nimble enough to respond to the evolving preferences of students and industry to provide new programs and new modalities of instructional delivery, while simultaneously engaging our intellectual capacity to address the consequences of these changes and challenges for society and our students. The College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences has the strength of its diversity, its creativity, its caring and its resilience to harness research, creative activity and teaching to lead the way at UNT and in the region in thriving in this new environment.

Every individual student, each staff member and all faculty should find in CLASS and discover in this plan an open and welcoming environment. Every person, regardless of their identity, the intersection of their identities, or their aspirations in life should see themselves reflected. We study the human experience; we teach the human experience; and we encompass the human experience in all its complexity and diversity. When we use these great strengths and build upon our amazing diversity, with imagination and hard work, we can accomplish all we propose to do.

## **CLASS Values & Identity**

The mission and vision of both UNT and CLASS below are the first steps in helping the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences define who we are and how we are different from other colleges within UNT.

### **UNT Mission & Purpose**

At the University of North Texas, our caring and creative community empowers our students to thrive in a rapidly changing world.

Our students will be the innovative leaders of tomorrow.

### **UNT Vision**

We will become globally known for collaborative and imaginative educational innovation and scholarly activity that transforms our students and benefits the world around us.

### **CLASS Mission**

Our mission is to kindle the thirst for truth, justice, and beauty; to foster cultural literacy and scientific investigation; and to cultivate thinking, speaking, creative expression, and writing abilities characterized by clear expression and logically coherent, evidence-based arguments. We see these as the values, forms of knowledge, and skills most needed by citizens of a democracy and by productive members of the global workforce.

### **CLASS Vision**

We seek a future in which the achievements of our faculty and students reach ever greater heights of excellence and public recognition; in which a spirit of inclusion and mutual respect is maintained and strengthened among faculty and students with differing viewpoints and from diverse backgrounds; and in which increasing interdisciplinary collaboration opens up new opportunities for intellectual, empirical, and creative discovery.



## **CLASS Values & Identity**

Our values and identity are who we are in the present and what we aspire to be in the future. The next step is to articulate the values of this college. In the strategic planning research process, we asked all of our stakeholders—students, faculty, staff and alumni—two questions to begin to parse out and develop how we as individuals and as part of a collective want to be known. The Strategic Planning Steering Committee received survey feedback from over three thousand students, faculty, staff and alumni about which three to four core values best describe CLASS. We also asked, what is CLASS best known for as it moves forward and continues to shape its identity? Based on our stakeholders' contributions, we propose that CLASS's core values be interdisciplinarity, equity, student excellence, community and bold ideas. These values provide the guardrails for this plan. They are at the crux of who we are and how we as a college seek to interact with each other and the world.

### **INTERDISCIPLINARITY**

CLASS, as the interdisciplinary leader, is the heart of the university. We are the force that connects all of the colleges at UNT. We are the force that connects all of the colleges at UNT. No student graduates from UNT without taking at least one course from CLASS. CLASS represents interdisciplinarity for we draw knowledge and inspiration from our many different areas of study and academic disciplines. We promote interdisciplinary creativity, innovation and collaboration between faculty and students from the social sciences, humanities, and communication and the performing arts. While traditional disciplines such as English, history, theatre, communications, sociology, anthropology, economics, and political science form the basis of our liberal arts curriculum, many from across CLASS have come together to form new programs that train students to think creatively through today's and the future's greatest problems. CLASS pledges to continue to support research across disciplines that has created a culture of collaboration to solve problems and to challenge students. We value all of our departments, programs and schools. And our value is enhanced by working together.

### **EQUITY**

We value diversity. We are a college that educates diverse citizens of the world and fosters an inclusive campus climate reflective of our diverse student body. However, we expand this core value and rename it equity. During our present, calls for racial justice have exposed the limitations of diversity initiatives. Yet, diversity is important as there is a crucial need for more women and staff and faculty of color as well as a curriculum that integrates voices of marginalized communities. Diversity is only one part of creating an equitable and inclusive college environment. CLASS's aim should not only be reflective representation, but the cultivation of a strong sense of belonging where all people are equal partners in seeking social justice. The face of UNT is a patchwork quilt of experience, race, culture, identity, and beliefs. And like a patchwork quilt, everyone has a place of equal value in the fabric of the UNT community. In addition to being a college known for its diversity, CLASS should also be known for its equity.

## **STUDENT SUCCESS**

We are committed to student success. We prepare our students for the real world with critical and creative thinking skills, problem solving, adaptability, and the ability to effectively communicate. Students cultivate skills that are flexible and applicable to many career options. We also recognize that these skills are only truly valuable if our students continue to use them after graduation. Therefore, we prepare our students to be lifelong learners who can adapt to changing times by providing opportunities to engage in project-based learning, internships, and the application of new technologies. CLASS will continue to foster student excellence by integrating a holistic approach so that students receive a liberal arts education that provides a sense of preparedness for all aspects of the real world. We believe we prepare our students to be good citizens of the world. We also believe our students will be leaders, not just followers.

## **COMMUNITY**

We are a community that is supportive and recognizes each other's value and successes. We recognize the importance of a college where people are kind to and collaborative with one another. Our students want a "personable" and "holistic" educational experience, which means learning from faculty who sincerely care about their students as both learners and individuals. We believe our students deserve to be treated as complex beings with individual needs. We also want staff to be supported and recognized as integral members of the college. In connection to equity, CLASS will foster a strong sense of community that is built on institutional support and recognition. It is with this in mind that CLASS values community, where each individual member is valued, recognized, and supported for the work that they do. With such support, we believe our students, faculty and staff will thrive and make the world a better place.

## **BOLD IDEAS**

We embrace bold and new ideas in an ever-changing professional and societal landscape. Student preparation is multifaceted. Yes, students must learn how to think critically and communicate complicated ideas effectively, but they must also be capable of internalizing new ideas in order to create and innovate. Acceptance of fresh, ingenious and resourceful ideas is a prominent core value of many industries that must shift with the times and technologies. Indeed, many of the subjects we study, such as racial justice, climate change, and governance, demand bold ideas and solutions to address deep-rooted problems. Life-long learning, curiosity, as well as academic freedom are other ways of describing an openness to all ideas. We want our graduates, along with our faculty and staff, to not only appreciate new ideas, but recognize that new ideas are a source of innovation and growth.

CLASS, as an **interdisciplinary** leader, is the heart of the university. We are the force that connects all of the colleges at UNT.

We seek to create an **equitable** environment in order to educate diverse citizens of the world and life-long learners who are prepared for any and every changing work environment. We foster an inclusive campus climate reflective of our diverse student body.

Our **student success** is our success. We teach students how to solve problems critically and holistically and with the ability to communicate those solutions effectively. We help students not only find themselves and their places in the world, but choose exciting and fulfilling career paths.

Our faculty, staff and students thrive in the **community** we have created. We value a holistic approach where everyone in the community is valued and supported.

Our innovative faculty from the social sciences, humanities, and communication and performing arts areas embrace **bold ideas**. They create positive change and solve problems that will lead us through the next five years and beyond.

## Goals and Strategies for Student Success

### Context and Background

The success of our students is our first priority. We must be especially concerned with our students' educational needs and career aspirations given the events of the recent past. The pandemic, the psychological, social and economic consequences it wrought on our students' and their families' lives, to say nothing of the problems of racial injustice roiling the country have made these recent times among the most challenging in the history of higher education. It is imperative that, after all everyone has been through, we take full stock of the consequences and lessons of the pandemic. UNT serves a large and diverse population of students with diverse needs. We, as a college, must identify how to provide the best mix of programs and courses to meet students' educational as well as co-curricular and extra-curricular needs. We must learn from recent events to ensure that CLASS is best positioned for continued success as we begin defining a "new normal" while confronting the many enduring challenges of higher education, such as affordability, access, retention, equity and more.

Our students depend on our faculty, who must be equipped to provide the best possible education in the most appropriate learning environment, and our staff who must be supported in all the work they do that affects our students. Through our research of student, faculty, staff and alumni perceptions about education, careers and how CLASS can best assist students to have a successful college experience at UNT and CLASS, we have identified several goals and numerous strategies through which CLASS can increase student success. We are especially interested in ensuring that students are equipped to handle the demands and challenges of today's work force and possess the necessary skills in communication, technology, collaboration, critical thinking, the role of diversity in the workplace and other critical skills. We find that there are three areas in which CLASS can provide additional support that will facilitate student success and ensure faculty and staff have the resources necessary to support student success:

- Increase career and professional development opportunities
- Ensure students are equipped to meet technological challenges
- Create a CLASS Teaching Center to ensure faculty and staff have the resources, and training to support student success

These strategies are designed to support both undergraduate and graduate education.

### **Student Success Goal 1: Increase career and professional development opportunities for graduate and undergraduate students.<sup>1</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup>The Strategic Planning Steering Committee suggests that each of the general goals and specific goals in this section should positively affect recruitment, retention, graduation and placement of students. We recommend that CLASS identify proper metrics in these areas and determine ambitious, but realistic goals for increasing recruitment, retention, graduation and placement of students. Further, the committee recommends that student success data be collected across as many populations of students, such as LGBTQ, veterans, minority students, etc., to evaluate the effectiveness of the efforts.

**Rationale:** Ensuring that students succeed means looking beyond their time at UNT and into their future as professionals because it is our responsibility not only to ensure they learn while they are in school, but that they leave UNT with the skills they need to learn and succeed in their careers. While students want a curriculum that helps them develop as well-rounded individuals, they are also looking for help with that next step after graduation. Providing this help is complex because employers target different career readiness competencies. According to the Job Outlook Surveys conducted by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE), employers consistently place the following skills at the top of their essential competencies:<sup>2</sup>

- Critical thinking
- Creative problem solving
- Teamwork/collaboration
- Professionalization/work ethic
- Oral/written communication skills
- Familiarity with digital technology
- Global/multicultural fluency
- Management skills

Business leaders value the creativity and critical thinking skills that liberal arts students bring to the workplace, but they also want UNT to equip its graduates with practical preparation for the job market. To meet this goal CLASS should 1A) continue developing and supporting the CLASS Professionalization Program (CPP); 2A) encourage and train faculty to offer project-based learning; 3A) and provide enhanced support for using technology in the classroom.

*Specific Goals and Strategies 1A: CLASS will support continued development and funding of the CLASS Professionalization Program*

CLASS has begun developing the CLASS Professionalization Program, which is designed to make sure that the students from the UNT College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences possess these essential competencies. In phase 1 of the program students who participate in this program will engage in self-directed work via LinkedIn Learning and in person seminars held in CLASS. The first phase will focus on giving students workforce skills. Phases 2 and 3 will focus on the development of internships and mentoring. The Strategic Planning Steering Committee recommends CLASS continue supporting the CPP to accomplish all three facets of its mission and develop this community of student leaders.

*Specific Goals and Strategies 1B: CLASS will increase CLASS investment in and offering of courses that feature Project-Based Learning Curriculum*

Graduates of all CLASS undergraduate and graduate programs should not only be ready for the workforce with a toolbox of interdisciplinary experiences and skills, but should understand and appreciate the breadth and diversity of human experiences, and approach their personal and professional life with integrity, inclusivity, and openness to new ideas. Project based learning is

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<sup>2</sup>As found at <https://www.naceweb.org/talent-acquisition/candidate-selection/employers-want-to-see-these-attributes-on-students-resumes/>

one way to develop such sensitivity. From our survey research and the work of others, we find that students are increasingly viewing the world through the prism of issues and problems they want to tackle and solve rather than as discrete domains of disciplinary information. To solve these complex and multi-faceted problems, such as climate change, racial justice and food insecurity, many students will need a more interdisciplinary curriculum based on problem solving skills. Developing and mentoring communities of learners and problem solvers will characterize how much of this work will be achieved. However, while faculty recognize the effectiveness of project-based learning, they may need help to implement it in their courses. Indeed, some faculty may not be able to adopt a project-based learning model for their courses, therefore CLASS should investigate methods and means of support by which, more faculty can adopt this teaching strategy.

*Specific Goals and Strategies 1C: CLASS will supplement university efforts when possible and work with faculty to identify and utilize teaching technologies that will enhance student engagement and learning in the classroom*

Developing critical thinking, creativity, openness to new ideas, and an appreciation of diversity have long been strengths of the CLASS curriculum. However, the technical revolution that has taken place over the past 20 years has fundamentally changed the skills needed in today's economy. Competency with software used for word processing (e.g. Word, Google Docs), analyzing data (e.g. Excel), and creating presentations (e.g. PowerPoint or Prezi) is essential. But increasingly, so is familiarity with social media, web design, and programming tools such as Python. And these skills are not just needed by students working in more technical fields. All students who want to be competitive when they enter the work force will need these skills to some degree. Consequently, faculty should be encouraged to devote more of the CLASS curriculum to teaching these technological skills. We encourage CLASS to identify strategies for increasing faculty use of technology in the classroom. CLASS should work to identify tools most likely to be of value to students after graduation and encourage instructors to include usage of them within their coursework. Many times, faculty themselves must learn to use these new technologies before they can be taught. Such strategies might include providing training assistance in emerging technologies, ensuring students have access to critical software 24/7; and developing teaching with technology grants to help faculty make the necessary modifications to their curricular design. CLASS will work with UNT units, such as CLEAR, as well as with departments to help achieve this goal.

**Student Success General Goal 2: CLASS should work with departments to support staff to help all undergraduate and graduate students succeed.**

*Specific Goal 2A: CLASS will increase the number of CLASS advising staff in order to close the gap between the CLASS Student: Advisor Ratio and the NACADA recommended 296:1 ratio by 2026.*

*Specific Goal 2B: CLASS will work with departments to help each department provide the quality services required by our undergraduate and graduate students.*

**Rationale:** The survey data indicate that in some CLASS departments and programs there is a shortage of support staff, which can hamper basic day-to-day functions. First, CLASS Advising is well behind national best practices in student to staff advisor ratios as established by the National

Academic Advising Association (NACADA). Based on NACADA 2011 National Survey of Academic Advising (Carlstrom, 2013), the median case load of advisees per full-time professional academic advisor is 296, or a ratio of 296 students to one full-time advisor.<sup>3</sup> This compares to the current CLASS ratio of 385 students per advisor. A lack of adequate advising staff (and all staff) can impact students in several negative ways. On a practical level, inefficient or substandard advising on academic matters due to staffing issues can lead to unintended delays in student progress, which may create additional costs to students, lower retention, and lower graduation rates. As well, there is a need to forge stronger relationships between CLASS Advising and other CLASS academic units. A better student to advisor ratio would allow advisors to establish deeper personal relationships with students, allowing advisors to identify non-academic obstacles that may be preventing certain students from completing their degrees in a timely manner. By encouraging staff communication and synchronization between Advising and other CLASS academic units, the students would receive more holistic mentoring, resulting in more successful and timely completion of their degree, and a more positive foundation for a continued partnership with CLASS and UNT.

**Student Success General Goal 3: Create a mechanism within CLASS—an interdisciplinary Teaching Center—to provide training on best practices in pedagogy, emerging technologies, online learning, different learning strategies, project-based learning, and other strategies, offer mentoring and classroom observation for faculty, and provide other resources that will ensure faculty effectiveness in the classroom and student learning.**

**Rationale:** Higher education is undergoing dramatic changes as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic that will shape how we teach for years to come. Faculty have experimented with numerous new and emerging technologies, have sought to master the online teaching environment, have faced challenges in engaging students in difficult circumstances and many other situations. Mentoring students, especially at the graduate level where productive relationships with faculty supervisors is key to their success (and which is one of the most important factors in determining their success according to our survey results), has also garnered serious attention as a key determinant of student success. CLASS can be a leader at UNT in advancing the teaching for all instructors. Therefore, we urge the creation of a Teaching Center that will help faculty learn and develop new pedagogical techniques in the classroom, best practices in mentoring techniques; and support for faculty to continue to improve their teaching performance.<sup>4</sup> We also strongly encourage CLASS to make alumni a part of this endeavor. CLASS should investigate the many methods by which an interdisciplinary Teaching Center could form partnerships with alumni, such as regular Zoom lectures by faculty to an alumni audience; continuing education and career skills workshops offered on and off campus; events that can bring alumni and faculty, students and staff together. CLASS should develop a LinkedIn page and ask graduates to connect at the time of graduating. This is a great way to learn where graduates are getting jobs and can be used to post events, successes, happenings, faculty stories, goals, etc.

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<sup>3</sup> (<https://nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Clearinghouse/View-Articles/Advisor-Load.aspx>)

<sup>4</sup> Previously CLEAR, The Center for Learning Experimentation, Application and Research, would have engaged in this work, but it has shifted its mission in recent years.

We recommend CLASS create a committee to investigate how best to establish and structure such a Center and develop a plan to create the Center.



## **Goals and Strategies for UNT an Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) and a Minority Serving Institution (MSI)**

### **Context and Background**

The student body at the University of North Texas increasingly reflects the demographic changes occurring across the North Texas region. Early in 2020, immediately before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, UNT achieved HSI status for the first time, which means that at least 25 percent of its undergraduate student body was of Hispanic origin. UNT was already an official MSI-- Minority Serving Institution, a status achieved when more than 50 percent of its student body identified as minority. These two key transition points highlight both serious concerns and abundant opportunities. Clearly, the success of UNT as an institution of higher education will depend in large measure on its ability to meet the needs of a highly diverse population of African American, Latinx, and students from other minority populations, as well as white students. To put it succinctly, diversity issues are no longer marginal to the core mission of UNT; they are key elements of the core mission itself.

As is often reported, national 6-year graduation rates for non-Hispanic whites trend higher than for African American and Latinx students. At UNT, the difference is not quite as great, with 56 percent of non-Hispanic whites graduating in 6 years compared to 53 and 52 percent for Latinx and African Americans respectively.<sup>5</sup> Of course, these numbers still indicate that about half of our students do not achieve a timely matriculation. The matter becomes more urgent when we realize that the future population of Texas will increasingly be diverse and increasingly Latinx.

UNT has already taken several, effective steps to meet the needs of its diversifying students. In CLASS there is the Latina/o and Mexican American Studies Program (LMAS), which offers a certificate, and a major in Latino Culture, Economy and Policy. Given the issues of race, culture, and identity that form the foundation for these projects, it is clear that CLASS will continue to be critically involved in practically all of UNT's initiatives to recruit, retain, and graduate minority students, (a term that will likely need to be reconsidered given that Texas is already a minority-majority state).

Despite effective steps in recent years to address diversity, our data highlighted a growing urgency among the faculty regarding the University's performance in this arena. In recent years, UNT has had its share of controversies regarding insensitivity toward matters of race and culture, and the recent expression of public protests by Black Lives Matters, the maltreatment of immigrants by federal authorities and most recently, an upsurge in anti-Asian violence, have brought these issues to the foreground. Minority students at UNT have expressed a range of emotions ranging from dissatisfaction to anger regarding UNT's awareness and responsiveness, or lack thereof, to matters of race and social justice. Among the faculty as well, our data indicates that there is a general belief that UNT can be more sensitive to the concerns of under-represented students regarding matters of race, ethnicity, identity, social justice, and equity. Our

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<sup>5</sup> See <https://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/?q=University+of+North+Texas&s=all&id=227216#retgrad>

data also reflects the feeling of many faculty that UNT must do a far better job of recruiting and retaining faculty from under-represented populations. As has been repeatedly demonstrated, minority students succeed at higher rates when they find connections among their professors, when they feel welcomed at a campus, when their cultural and racial complexities are acknowledged and treated with respect, and when they feel free to express their views in classrooms settings. To address these imperatives, the hiring and retention of faculty from under-represented groups must remain a fundamental goal for both the University and for CLASS.

**HSI / MSI General Goal 1: CLASS will increase its efforts to recruit and retain faculty from under-represented groups so that by 2026 its faculty is as diverse as its student population.<sup>6</sup>**

**Rationale:** One of the most pressing issues facing UNT is the demographic discrepancy between its students and its faculty. For example, although Hispanics now make up more than 25 percent of its undergraduates, only about 6 percent of its faculty identify as Hispanic and about 5.9 percent identify as African American (15% of UNT students identify as African American). (A total of 1,160 faculty, of which 70 identified as Hispanic, 69 as African American, and 2 as Native American (according to the 2020-2021 UNT Fact Book). In our survey data of faculty, 54 percent somewhat agreed, agreed, or strongly agreed that there are significant issues with diversity and equity within CLASS. Perhaps no other issue is as pressing or as potentially transformative as the hiring of more faculty from under-represented populations. No one single other initiative will make as large an impact as developing a faculty team that reflects UNT's growing diversity. CLASS has created the Inclusive Excellence Committee, which can help departments continue to achieve progress on critical issues such as ensure that all job openings are posted on websites geared toward African American, Latinx and other underrepresented faculty populations, and that hiring committees are diverse and provided with proper training on fair and equitable job search processes.

Furthermore, there are other concerns identified by the Strategic Planning Steering Committee that will affect CLASS's overall climate of inclusion and pursuit of equity, most especially those practices that pertain to retention. The SPSC reiterates that it is essential that CLASS and ultimately UNT make progress in pay equity to ensure that women and in particular women of color are paid equitably compared to their male counterparts. Periodic reviews of merit evaluations and promotion should be conducted and imbalances rectified. As well, because faculty from under-represented groups are routinely called upon to perform extra service regarding diversity issues, such work should be fairly evaluated, valued, and rewarded. Therefore, CLASS should explore options and opportunities that will facilitate the recruitment of a more diverse faculty including the following:

**Specific Goals and Strategies**

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<sup>6</sup> To create a measurable goal for this section, data on the ethnic/racial/gender make-up of the faculty are necessary to make the proper comparisons.

*1A. CLASS Inclusive Excellence Committee will work with departments, the Office of Faculty Success and other units on campus to develop initiatives that will ensure faculty from under-represented groups feel welcomed and fully included once hired. A key strategy in retaining a diverse faculty will be exploring innovations in mentoring and support across the faculty evaluation process (merit and promotion).*

*1B. CLASS will identify opportunities to increase the diversity of its faculty by identifying areas of current as well as potential interdisciplinary excellence in research topics of interest to our faculty, student and communities of color. CLASS should explore building upon current and potential areas of strength in fields of interest to attract further students, graduate students and scholars. The process initiated by the Office of Research and Innovation requires all departments and colleges to chart future growth opportunities in research to sustain UNT's Carnegie Tier 1 status. A synergistic approach here will offer excellent opportunities to identify areas of existing strength to help produce innovative and fundable research projects, and that will augment UNT's goals regarding communities of color. Increasing the diversity of faculty will signal to prospective hires that UNT is a place that welcomes diversity and is committed to equity.*

**HSI / MSI General Goal 2: In partnership with departments, the Office of Equity and Diversity and other units, CLASS Inclusive Excellence Committee and the Teaching Center will develop a range of innovative teaching initiatives to address the needs and ambitions of its African American, Latinx, and other students from marginalized and under-represented groups.**

**Rationale:** Research consistently shows that students from under-represented groups respond positively and powerfully to courses and other projects that explore and document their experiences. In the survey research done by the Strategic Planning Steering Committee, the evidence indicated that students and faculty are both interested in diversifying the curriculum and ensuring that the widest variety of voices and experiences are part of the educational experience for all students. Furthermore, we acknowledge and underscore the well-documented relationship between culturally responsive pedagogy and student success. Simply put, for CLASS to meet the needs of its students, it must ensure that its teaching projects speak to them in direct and relevant ways. All of the College's stakeholders realize that the chief strength of CLASS is its diversity—diversity of students, diversity of disciplines and academic departments, and the diversity of experiences represented by all our stakeholders. The best way to recognize and celebrate that diversity is by providing as many opportunities as possible for the wide array of voices within CLASS and the wide spectrum of perspectives beyond Denton to be expressed and shared with our students so that they gain the level of holistic understanding of people and society that is vital to their success in the 21<sup>st</sup> century US society and workplace. The following strategies are suggested as potential means by which the CLASS curriculum can encourage and ever greater inclusivity of voices and perspectives in the classroom and in co-curricular and extra-curricular activities to ensure such equity:

### **Specific Goals and Strategies<sup>7</sup>**

*2A. CLASS will identify a means by which to support the creation of more courses focused on cultural and racial diversity, especially interdisciplinary courses that bring together faculty expertise across departments and those that emphasize innovative teaching methodologies.*

*2B. CLASS will support the development of new programs such as degrees in African American Studies, American Indigenous Studies, and in Social Justice. These programs could include certificates, minors, majors, and other types of credentials as appropriate.*

*2D. CLASS will continue to support existing programs, such as the Women and Gender Studies program and the Bachelor of Arts degree in Latino, Culture, Economy and Policy (LCEP), to ensure they have the necessary personnel and support.*

*2E. CLASS will provide incentives and opportunities for faculty to expand the diversity of voices and perspectives reflected in their syllabi. CLASS should focus on identifying those numerous and significant opportunities to expand the diversity of voices from academic disciplines, local communities, and from other groups at home and internationally.*

**HSI / MSI General Goal 3: CLASS will establish a process by which to review programming focused on diversity issues; evaluate the effectiveness of this programming; and make appropriate changes and modifications in light of knowledge developed from these evaluations.**

**Rationale:** Because the imperatives we face are so urgent, we feel that the CLASS must commit itself not simply to launching diversity initiatives, but to the equally important work of modifying and improving them as deemed necessary by periodic evaluations. Given the exigencies of a dynamic cultural landscape, it is necessary for CLASS to be both deliberate and flexible as it addresses the many challenges that lie ahead. The Inclusive Excellence Committee can play a vital role in to work proactively to make sure the University's HSI/MSI status is more than a label, but an integral aspect of its mission.

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<sup>7</sup> The Strategic Planning Steering Committee suggests that each of the general goals and specific goals in this section should positively affect recruitment, retention, graduation and placement of students. We recommend that CLASS identify proper metrics in these areas and determine ambitious, but realistic goals for increasing recruitment, retention, graduation and placement of students.

**Specific Goals Strategies**

*3A. The CLASS Inclusive Excellence Committee should institute periodic reviews of diversity hiring and monitor CLASS progress toward achieving and maintaining faculty equity across its departments and programs. The Committee should also develop regular surveys and other assessment tools to gauge how students are responding to various diversity initiatives, and to gather data which can lead to improved programming.*

*3B. The CLASS Inclusive Excellence Committee should help develop a “Best-Practices” guide that compiles the newest data and research regarding diversity in the academy, especially as it pertains to faculty hiring and retention.*

## Goals and Strategies for UNT as a Carnegie Tier 1 Research University

### Context and Background

In both 2015 and 2018 the University of North Texas was designated as a “Doctoral University, Very High Research Activity,” with the classification code “R1,” in the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education.<sup>8</sup> R1 is the most research-intensive classification, and in 2018, only 130 universities were classified as such.<sup>9</sup> The achievement of this prestigious ranking not only elevates UNT’s reputation and visibility nationally, it is also an international claim to fame. The stature and recognition that this ranking affords UNT not only will help us attract more research funding, greater enrollments, and more excellent faculty, but the impactful and increased research will create jobs and more local economic activity.<sup>10</sup>

The Center for Postsecondary Research at Indiana University produces the Carnegie Classification and reevaluates universities every few years (the next classification will be published in 2021 using 2020 data). Their methodology considers specific variables from each university and uses them to create a research score. That research score is based on the relative value of each university’s variables used in the analysis. As a result, there is no absolute threshold to determine a university’s classification. Because it is our relative position that matters, research advances at other universities could diminish UNT’s position, even if the values of our research variables hold steady. What this means is that earning the R1 status in both 2015 and 2018 does not insure our R1 status in the future.

A careful analysis of the 2018 Carnegie information reveals several key features we must bear in mind. First, in terms of research, expenditures are what matter most, while published journal articles, academic books, awards earned, etc. are not considered. However, a distinction is made between research expenditures in what Carnegie considers science and engineering (S&E) fields (which include the following CLASS departments: anthropology, geography, economics, psychology, political science, and sociology) and research expenditure in all other fields. Second, non-tenure system faculty employed at UNT as research faculty (including post-doctoral fellows) are valued in the Carnegie methodology, but only if they are in one of these S&E fields.

Third, in terms of doctorates awarded, the Carnegie methodology splits degrees into four categories: S&E, social science, humanities, and other. For doctorates awarded by CLASS departments, only political science and sociology are considered social science (our psychology doctorates are considered “other”). The other doctoral programs in CLASS are considered “humanities” doctorates in the Carnegie methodology. These are important distinctions because,

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<sup>8</sup> Commonly, R1 classified schools are referred to as “Tier 1 research universities”, however, that is not an official Carnegie Classification term.

<sup>9</sup> Besides UNT, eight Texas Universities were classified as R1 in 2018, including, Rice University, University of Texas, UT Arlington, UT Dallas, UT El Paso, Texas A&M, Texas Tech, and University of Houston.

<sup>10</sup> See <https://uh.edu/about/tier-one/tier-one-faq/#significance> as accessed on March 26, 2021.

within the Carnegie methodology, additional social science doctorates awarded provide more of an impact in the Carnegie analysis than in any of the other categories.<sup>11</sup>

Fourth, it is important to recognize that our understanding of how changes in UNT's research variables would likely impact our Carnegie research score and classification are all based on the 2018 analysis. While the variables included in the analysis do not typically change over time, the relative impact of each variable might. This is mainly because it is the ranking within each variable among all schools that matters.

### **Long Term Strategy**

Because of the number of faculty and doctoral programs in the college, CLASS will necessarily play a prominent role in maintaining UNT's R1 classification. CLASS faculty and students engage in research and creative activities that contribute directly to the Carnegie ranking. At the same time, however, much of our work is relevant to other university missions. We engage in socially relevant and applied research, produce works of art, and engage in the many research activities that Carnegie does not count, such as producing books and articles, but which elevate the status of the university in different ways. This means that policies that enhance our Carnegie standing could have the unintended consequence of reducing overall academic output. In our opinion, the college should not lose sight of the idea that CLASS' primary research goal is to produce high quality, socially beneficial research in line with what UNT has identified as R1, OUR way.

Therefore, while we propose strategies for contributing to UNT's Carnegie ranking, we focus on goals that will engage all faculty and students in the widest diversity of research and creative activity. We strongly believe that only by developing the necessary levels of support, infrastructure, and policies at the college level can our research and creative activities be fully realized. While most of our Carnegie cohort has had decades, and even centuries to build the infrastructure needed to be a globally competitive university, we are still in the process of laying the foundation. Therefore, in addition to proposing strategies directly related to our Carnegie ranking, we contend that creating key pieces of this infrastructure is a necessary pre-condition for anchoring and elevating our standing at this ranking.

### **Tier 1 General Goal 1: CLASS will work with departments to support greater levels of faculty research productivity and creativity.<sup>12</sup>**

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<sup>11</sup> The Carnegie methodology does value certain activities more than others. For example, for the 2018 analysis, one extra social science doctorate awarded would have had the same impact on UNT's Carnegie research score as \$1,200,000 in externally funded Non-S&E research or \$2,100,000 in S&E funded research. That same one social science doctorate would have had the same impact as 4.8 additional humanities doctorates or 7.9 additional psychology doctorates awarded. What these numbers tell us is that, while every faculty member and every department can have an impact, the size of that impact can vary dramatically across the college.

<sup>12</sup> In order to determine ambitious, but realistic goals for advancing research and creative activity, as well as the most appropriate benchmarks for comparison over time, precise and current data on overall research funding, research expenditures and funded research per capita in CLASS is necessary.

**Rationale:** Findings from a faculty survey conducted by the CLASS Strategic Planning Steering Committee reveal a majority of faculty in the college believe their teaching and service do not encroach upon their research responsibilities. At the same time, however, a report from the CLASS Executive Dean’s office and anecdotal evidence indicate that while there are many challenges faculty confront when considering applying for funding, the need for more time due to teaching and service work is among the most critical. Responses from the faculty survey report that 41% of faculty had never pursued external funding and a large proportion of faculty said they have not pursued fellowships and visiting professorships at other institutions.

What these responses tell us is that the research mission across CLASS departments can vary considerably in terms of what faculty may need to succeed. In some disciplines and areas of research, a great deal of funding is needed to support the research. In other areas however, research expenses are minimal and applying for external research support may not be worthwhile. In some disciplines, faculty work largely alone without need for assistance from graduate students, while in other departments, extensive involvement of graduate students in faculty research is the norm. The language from the Executive Dean’s report on research funding reads, “In sum, time, research support/assistance/mentoring, and seed funding were the three most important factors identified as potential supports/barriers to increasing grant submission and yield among CLASS faculty”.<sup>13</sup> If CLASS wants to expand the role of external funds in underwriting research, incentives will have to change to encourage efforts in that direction. The strategy we propose is simple: create policies that have the effect of lowering the cost of applying for external funds or increase the benefit of doing so.

### **Specific Goals and Strategies**

*1A. CLASS will identify strategies for providing incentives, perhaps through promotion or the merit process, to reward faculty who apply for and/or receive research grants. Other incentives should be considered as well.*

*1B. CLASS will create a CLASS Research and Creative Activity Support Committee. This group of faculty experts in external grants, as well as private fundraising and other mechanisms for attracting resources can provide advice to the Executive Dean about strategies for supporting faculty work, eliminating impediments to their success, and identifying interdisciplinary opportunities for funding.*

*1C. CLASS will create a project manager position as many departments and colleges in other Tier 1 universities use. Such a position could provide substantial assistance to help faculty address those aspects of grant applications that are not integral to the research component.*

*1D. CLASS will create a team of personnel focused on providing holistic support for research and creative activity funding. These individuals can work with the faculty committee (described above) to identify best practices in helping CLASS faculty find grants programs to target; work with the Office of Research and Innovation to troubleshoot impediments to applications and success; and*

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<sup>13</sup> Report to the Executive Dean: Findings from a Survey on Faculty Perceptions about Grants. 2021. p.2.



*support all facets of grant-writing that are focused on process and compliance rather than the substance of the grant.*

*1E. CLASS will identify funding sources to provide course releases to faculty, beyond what is currently available with Faculty Development Leave. Such opportunities should be focused on faculty with a demonstrated interest and firm research plan to write and submit an external grant within a 12-month window.*

*1F. CLASS will expand internal seed money available to support applications for external funding beyond what is available through university awards.*

**Tier 1 General Goal 2: CLASS will increase the number of faculty in core areas of interdisciplinary research strength within CLASS that will help advance UNT's Carnegie R-1 status.**<sup>14</sup>

**Rationale:** While most faculty hires are focused on specific department needs and finding replacements for vacant lines, CLASS should identify and help create specific opportunities to hire faculty in areas of interdisciplinary strength. This effort should be focused on areas where multiple departments are represented, such as those areas represented in the new university-wide Center for Racial and Ethnic Equity in Health and Society (CREEHS) and in areas as identified in the initiative by the Office of Research and Innovation. Developing research strengths that exist across multiple departments will impact greater numbers of faculty, increase the likelihood of successfully competing for larger grants, and will help build partnerships with other units across campus that can further advance CLASS's success in acquiring funding. Focusing on areas of strength will also allow CLASS to better recruit faculty and enhance its reputation in these areas.

**Tier 1 General Goal 3: CLASS will create research faculty positions (either post-doctorate fellowships or permanent research faculty positions) that will help advance UNT's Carnegie R-1 status.**

**Rationale:** These types of faculty can provide multiple benefits in the Carnegie methodology. First, one variable (among the eight) used in the Carnegie methodology is a simple count of non-tenure system research faculty at a university. Second, 100% of the funds used to hire research faculty is counted as research expenditure. Third, to the extent that research faculty enhance efforts to attract external research funds, UNT's research expenditure variable is increased as well. Obviously, care must be taken to consider the external funding available in the fields where such a hire is being considered. For permanent research faculty positions, bringing in external research funds should be a key part of their job description. Fourth, if research faculty are

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<sup>14</sup>In order to determine ambitious, but realistic goals for advancing research and creative activity, as well as the most appropriate benchmarks for comparison over time, precise and current data on overall research funding, research expenditures and funded research per capita in CLASS is necessary.

associated with departments with doctoral programs and these faculty can help to expand these programs, an additional benefit may be the awarding of more doctorates.<sup>15</sup>

**Tier 1 General Goal 4: CLASS will develop and acquire funding sources to supplement current UNT funding so that all PhD students in CLASS have their tuition paid for over the course of a 5-year PhD program.<sup>16</sup>**

**Rationale:** Across the United States, competition for graduate students has been growing for at least two decades. Attracting high quality graduate students not only increases the likelihood that they will complete their degrees in a timely manner, but also means the students are more productive research assistants, increasing departmental research productivity. From our survey analysis we found that 52% of graduate students reported that tuition waivers influence their choice of grad school. CLASS should pursue expanding that funding so that we can attract students who will have the highest possible likelihood of graduating. Currently, there are too many complications, contingencies and questions about the current level of funding to make it attractive to many of the best students. The best students will want that guarantee of full funding when they begin their program, and not have to be subject to changing conditions and requirements to maintain these benefits. Simply put, CLASS and UNT must become more of a first choice among prospective graduate students who seek us out, rather than the “local” option or the safe choice. Full tuition funding is key to this effort, alongside efforts to raise graduate student pay and provide health insurance.

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<sup>15</sup> Only research faculty in departments classified as S&E are counted however. The CLASS S&E departments include anthropology, economics, geography, political science, psychology, and sociology.

<sup>16</sup> More precise data on PhD and Masters level funding, salaries and health care are necessary to establish proper benchmarks and goals.

## Goals and Strategies for CLASS and the New College in Frisco

### Context and Background

Key to the long-term success of UNT and CLASS is the growing campus at the New College in Frisco. There are tremendous growth opportunities in Collin County, which has a population of 800,000 people, and is the largest county in North Texas without a 4-year institution. Further, while in the U.S., 23% of the population has a baccalaureate degree, 46% of the population in Collin County has an undergraduate degree. This indicates potentially substantial demand for both undergraduate and graduate degrees that UNT, as the only 4-year institution in the county, can meet with the right mix of courses, programs, and outreach.

Frisco currently measures success primarily by the number of unique students. The campus offers few lower division course offerings now as the campus focuses on students transferring in and taking upper division courses. In the longer term, the campus will welcome freshmen and will add more CORE classes to its campus offerings over time. UNT's goals in Frisco are ambitious-- 3,000 unique students by the time the new campus officially opens in 2023; 5,000 students in 5 years and 20,000 in 20 years. To reach these numbers, Frisco will need a combination of existing UNT degrees, new degrees offered exclusively at Frisco and more classes from Denton. Frisco is generally reliant on Denton faculty to teach their courses, although they have made some campus hires. All faculty at Frisco thus far are non-tenure track.

Two existing programs encourage students to take courses in Frisco. First, a dual-credit program with Frisco ISD is a growth area. Additionally, the Frisco campus works with Collin College to allow students seamlessly to transfer to the Frisco degrees or to other UNT degrees and finish in two years. Finally, Frisco is operating and developing courses and programs based on five core competencies/literacies/approaches to curricular design. They are: 1) quantitative literacy/applied critical thinking, 2) communication/storytelling, 3) digital literacy, 4) creative/design thinking and 5) commerce/business acumen.

Currently, CLASS contributes to and is engaged with Frisco in a number of ways and receives SCH for courses taught there. First, CLASS helps the Frisco campus deliver CORE courses. Second CLASS helps Frisco offer a transfer-friendly psychology degree program. Third, CLASS offers a number of other courses, especially those that relate to the five core competencies, such as classes in the general area of communication. There are numerous areas where cooperation is necessary and where more collaborations can help make both CLASS and Frisco better. CLASS has a great depth and breadth of faculty who can make curricular and programmatic contributions across the five competencies. There are opportunities for further collaborations in areas such as big data science, narrative non-fiction, local, state and federal policymaking, and many other areas that can help bolster the student populations and profiles of both campuses.

While we find that there are many wonderful opportunities for faculty on the two campuses to collaborate, there is still a need to cultivate a widespread culture of support from the Denton campus for the Frisco campus, and to develop an awareness of and appreciation for the curricular model at that campus.

We would be remiss, however, if we did not acknowledge some of the growing pains. In general, course scheduling and maintaining a regular set of CLASS courses in Frisco has proceeded collegially, if generally in an ad hoc fashion. Some chairs perceive a burden in offering classes in Frisco and feel as though they are responsible for providing the requisite instructors, which is often quite difficult to fulfill, especially with upper-level classes. Many faculty do not want to commute to Frisco, which makes finding the right mix of UNT faculty to teach on that campus difficult. As well, many at UNT Denton have indicated that there needs to be more and better communication between the two campuses to ensure smooth operating class scheduling and program creation.

Other challenges face the partnership between CLASS and the Frisco campus. How do we make sure curriculum is cohesive? For example, if the same CORE class is offered at Frisco and Denton, how do we ensure that all students have a similar learning experience? How do we help students, faculty and staff in Frisco find a way to still feel connected to the main campus and to CLASS? How do we ensure that merit, workload distribution, promotion guidelines and other key personnel matters are handled in a commensurate fashion at each campus? However, these are not insurmountable problems, but rather the principal challenges facing us that we must successfully grapple with and resolve.

In keeping with the points raised above, and based on multiple discussions with individuals involved in CLASS and the New College at Frisco, we propose the following four goals. We note that the accomplishment of Goal #1 is a necessary step to begin work on the other goals.

**Frisco General Goal 1: Establish a CLASS New College at Frisco Advisory Council that oversees, shepherds and supports the work of Goals #2, #3, and #4.**

**Rationale:** As both the New College at Frisco and the UNT campus in Denton continue to grow, and more opportunities arise for collaboration, an oversight mechanism must be created to facilitate an optimal mix of CLASS courses to be offered in Frisco, and establish procedures for helping CLASS academic departments work with Frisco to plan ahead for the increasing demand of CLASS courses. The oversight mechanism can also help identify and facilitate the creation and offering of new and different CLASS courses in Frisco, can help develop new curricular partnerships, and can enhance the CLASS presence in Frisco and Collin County more generally to develop relationships with industry, business groups, local government and other partners.

*Specific Goals and Strategies 1A. CLASS will create an oversight mechanism of faculty and staff to facilitate and support effective and transparent collaboration between CLASS and the New College at Frisco will be created by the end of AY2021/2022.*

*Specific Goals and Strategies 1B. The oversight mechanism will submit a report to the Dean and college at the end of every academic year, updating initiatives and growth of CLASS efforts in Frisco as outlined in Goals 2-4.*

## **Frisco General Goal 2: Increase the CLASS curricular presence in Frisco.**

**Rationale:** There are numerous opportunities for CLASS to develop partnerships with the Frisco campus that will benefit both parties, such as the development of dual credit opportunities with Frisco and Collin County. CLASS will continue to provide its CORE courses, but should also investigate other opportunities to expand its presence in order to meet student demand and grow its enrollment. Among the most prominent of these opportunities are several that both play to CLASS strengths and are urgent given the need to establish a strong presence in Collin county in anticipation of major competition from other four-year universities.

*Specific Goals and Strategies 2A: CLASS will increase the number of CLASS CORE and other classes at the New College at Frisco by at least 2 per year through 2027.*

*Specific Goals and Strategies 2B: CLASS will create 3 new, interdisciplinary degree programs with the New College at Frisco by 2027.*

CLASS should investigate the potential for creating new interdisciplinary degrees at both the undergraduate and graduate level. In particular, when CLASS expertise dovetails with the Frisco emphasis on more applied, project-based learning that aligns with Frisco’s curricular design principals, there is great potential to create new degrees. Increasingly students are wanting degrees that enable them to solve problems that do not fit neatly into one discipline or department. The great depth and breadth of CLASS expertise ensures that there will be multiple, disciplinary perspectives available to create interdisciplinary programs in the broad areas of communication, quantitative literacy and social scientific analysis, and creative design thinking that could engage faculty in the humanities (Ramsey and Grobman 2020).

The challenge for CLASS in offering new courses in Frisco or developing interdisciplinary programs, however attractive and important that is, will be support and funding. Too often new initiatives at UNT take resources from established programs and perpetuate a “rob Peter to pay Paul” process that leaves disillusionment in its wake. It is incumbent on all parties to identify new resources or create new incentives to attract the kind of intellectual talent and drive that it will take to create and bring to fruition new courses and new programs. Because of the necessity of developing a strong presence in Collin County, it will be critical for the level of investment to match the needs.

## **Frisco General Goal 3: Ensure consistency between Denton and Frisco campuses for faculty and students.**

*Specific Goal 3A: CLASS will review existing curricular relationships between CLASS and Frisco to determine if there are any areas of divergence in practices, processes and support for faculty and student success by the Oversight Mechanism by the end of AY2022 – 2023.*

**Rationale:** CLASS and the New College at Frisco will need to work to ensure that the substance and presentation of class material does not deviate significantly between campuses. That is, a student taking an upper level Psychology class in Frisco should find that the UNT equivalent

generally uses the same materials, has the same expected course outcomes and is taught in a mostly similar manner. This is critical and necessary as SACS accreditation will hold CLASS and its departments accountable for the learning outcomes in Frisco involving CLASS courses. It will also be important to ensure that students and faculty will have access to the same types of classroom and IT services and support necessary for classroom success. Further, both campuses will need to ensure that annual evaluation and promotion processes are handled the same between UNT and Frisco and that policies align. In that respect, it will also be important for Frisco lecturers to have access to the same support as their counterparts enjoy at UNT and are held to the same high standards. While many, if not most of these keys to success will be the responsibility of upper administration, because CLASS has such a strong presence in Frisco, we have a particular responsibility to ensure this consistency of treatment.

**Frisco General Goal 4: Manage and grow our relationships/partnerships with businesses/alumni and other groups in the community in Collin County.**

*Specific Goals and Strategies 4A: CLASS/Frisco Committee will conduct an inventory of all existing CLASS relationships with businesses and other groups in Collin County.*

*Specific Goals and Strategies 4B: CLASS will work with the Frisco leadership to identify the most promising businesses and industries that the CLASS Frisco Committee or the CLASS Professionalization project can work with to develop mentoring and internship relationships, and to ascertain curricular and programmatic needs in the coming years.*

As the only 4-year institution in Collin County, UNT and CLASS are uniquely positioned to benefit from the extensive number of businesses located and headquartered there. These businesses are already working with our students and faculty, and we find that there are more excellent opportunities for mentoring and internships for students to practice and apply their skills. Further, many of our students will work at these businesses in Frisco. We also see tremendous potential to develop partnerships with these businesses to conduct research together as well as opportunities for funding faculty research. We anticipate as well that by developing extensive and productive relationships with these businesses and other groups in the community, they will become better acquainted with our substantial CLASS strengths in research and teaching. This, we believe, will lead to greater support for CLASS initiatives in these areas. It will be especially crucial to establish a strong presence in this area as life returns to “normal” after the pandemic. We would expect significant competition for the student population from state-wide and regional competitors. CLASS and UNT need to establish these relationships so that people and businesses in Collin County identify with UNT and not a competitor.

## Conclusion

The College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences has changed significantly since its inception in 1945 and since the last Strategic Plan in 2014. We have grown to become the largest college in terms of faculty, staff, students, curricula, programs and facilities. Our students emerge from our classrooms not only with transferrable, tangible skills, but as critical-thinking citizens who are ready and able to solve society's complex problems. We contribute in all areas of human endeavor, from public service, education, scientific research and the creative arts to business, industry and finance—we are accomplished artists, social scientists, entrepreneurs, community leaders and professionals. CLASS is committed to an intentionally inclusive educational community that will attract and develop highly qualified students, faculty and staff. We take pride in our achievements, growth and maturation thus far, but we are ready for the next steps.

This strategic plan is an important milestone in determining the direction of CLASS over the next five years. It was collaboratively built on our creative and intellectual strengths to ensure that we continue to provide excellence in support, instruction, research and leadership for our global communities.

An unwritten goal that underpins this plan is the ultimate objective to continuously improve the experiences we offer students, faculty, staff and alumni as part of the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences. It is also characterized by the distinctive values and aims of CLASS that include interdisciplinary collaboration, student success and curricular innovation, stakeholder holistic value and supportive community, bold ideas and research excellence, and diversity with equity and intentional inclusivity. The plan is also aligned closely with the mission, vision and goals of UNT. Most importantly, we must always keep in mind that when we write in our goals, "CLASS will create" this project, or "CLASS will support" that initiative, **CLASS is all of us**. Those words refer to all of us. The work to be done in realizing the ambitions of this plan is not the sole responsibility of the CLASS Executive Dean's Office. *The ideals, the ambitions and the work of the plan belong to all of us, and we must all do our part to achieve this vision.*

Below is a summary of the goals that we will strive to achieve and thus realize our College mission and vision.

**Student Success Goals.** *These goals support UNT Strategic Plan priority of **Student Empowerment and Transformation**.*

- Goal 1: CLASS will increase Career and Professional Development Opportunities for Graduate and Undergraduate Students.
- Goal 2: CLASS will ensure Staff Have the Resources and Support They Need to Help All Undergraduate and Graduate Students Succeed.

- Goal 3: Create a mechanism within CLASS—A Teaching Center—to provide training on best practices in pedagogy, emerging technologies, online learning, different learning strategies, project-based learning, and other strategies, offer mentoring and classroom observation for faculty, and provide other resources that will ensure faculty effectiveness in the classroom and student learning.

**UNT as HSI/MSI Goals.** *These goals support UNT Strategic Plan priorities of **Student Empowerment and Transformation and People and Processes.***

- Goal 1: CLASS will increase its efforts to recruit and retain faculty from under-represented groups so that by 2026 its faculty is as diverse as its student population.
- Goal 2: CLASS will develop a range of innovative teaching initiatives to address the needs and ambitions of its African American, Latinx, and other students from marginalized and under-represented groups.
- Goal 3: CLASS will establish a process by which to review programming focused on diversity issues; evaluate the effectiveness of this programming; and make appropriate changes and modifications in light of knowledge developed from these evaluations.

**UNT as a Carnegie Tier 1 Research University Goals.** *These goals support UNT Strategic Plan priority of **Scholarly Activity and Innovation.***

- Goal 1: CLASS will support greater levels of faculty research productivity and creativity.
- Goal 2: CLASS will increase the number of faculty in core areas of interdisciplinary research strength within CLASS that will help advance UNT's Carnegie R-1 status.
- Goal 3: CLASS will create research faculty positions (either post-doctorate fellowships or permanent research faculty positions) that will help advance UNT's Carnegie R-1 status.
- Goal 4: CLASS will develop and acquire funding sources to supplement current UNT funding so that PhD students in CLASS have their tuition paid for over the course of a 5-year PhD program.

**CLASS and the New College in Frisco Goals.** *These goals support UNT Strategic Plan priorities of **Student Empowerment and Transformation and People and Processes.***

- Goal 1: CLASS will establish a CLASS New College at Frisco Advisory Council that oversees, shepherds and supports the work of Goals #2, #3, and #4.
- Goal 2: CLASS will increase the CLASS curricular presence in Frisco.



- Goal 3: CLASS will ensure consistency between Denton and Frisco campuses for faculty and students.
- Goal 4: CLASS will manage and grow our relationships/partnerships with businesses/alumni in Collin County.

Setting these goals and writing the strategic plan are just the beginning steps in a 5-year effort to realize our ambitions. The CLASS Executive Dean and her office will determine how to begin work on achieving these goals and identifying the more precise metrics necessary for measuring progress.

The College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences will continue to be responsive to the broad perspectives of our many and diverse constituents. We would once again like to thank all who took the time to think critically and creatively about our path forward. Our diverse stakeholders are our greatest assets and supporters; we strived to make sure everyone saw themselves reflected in the future of CLASS.

Finally, this is a dynamic and living document as we continue to be responsive to our people and our circumstances. The plan will be regularly updated to reflect the College's changing priorities while remaining true to our values and identity.

[UNT Strategic Plan](#)