

# College of Natural and Social Sciences

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## Strategic Plan 2004

Steering Committee

The College of Natural and Social Sciences at California State University, Los Angeles, is faced with the challenges of defining and adopting new strategies in a rapidly changing environment. Strategies must provide continuing quality in academic programs, and ensure future directions consistent with those specified in the University Strategic Plan.

The Strategic Plan for the College outlines strategies in several key areas, including faculty and student recruitment and retention, enrollment management, quality of the learning environment, funding high-cost science programs, infrastructure and facilities improvements, and integration of innovative technology. These strategies evolved from a candid assessment of the current environment in which the College operates and an examination of projected needs. They also define future directions necessary to ensure a continuing and important presence in the community for the delivery of quality educational programs.

### *Mission Statement*

The College of Natural and Social Sciences at California State University, Los Angeles is committed to programs of academic excellence that provide educational and research opportunities for our diverse student body. Faculty from sixteen departments and programs are dedicated to instruction, scholarship, and university and community service. In general education and undergraduate and graduate programs, the faculty support students in developing creative and critical thinking skills in preparation for careers or for admission to competitive graduate or professional programs in their respective disciplines. The College prides itself in the close interaction between faculty and students, and in its collaborative research environment that encourages student discovery. The College seeks to inspire in our students an appreciation for the biological, physical, and social aspects of our earth and a life-long commitment to improving the lives of its inhabitants.

### *Vision Statement*

The College of Natural and Social Sciences at California State University, Los Angeles seeks to empower students of diverse backgrounds in their pursuit of knowledge, discovery through research, and development of creative and critical thinking. The College will strive to strengthen community involvement and increase recognition for excellence in teaching and scholarship.

## COLLEGE PROFILE

### *Student Enrollment and Academic Resources*

Of the approximately 19,000 registered students, about 15 percent are enrolled as majors in the College of Natural and Social Sciences. In Fall Quarter 2001, the College enrolled 2,352 undergraduate and 744 graduate majors. The number of undergraduate majors peaked in Fall 1996 at 2,548, but reached a low in Fall 2000. Although Fall 2001 shows a modest increase, it is still significantly lower than Fall 1994. On

the other hand, enrollments in the Graduate programs for the College have been steadily increasing, going from 602 in Fall 1994 to 744 in Fall 2001.

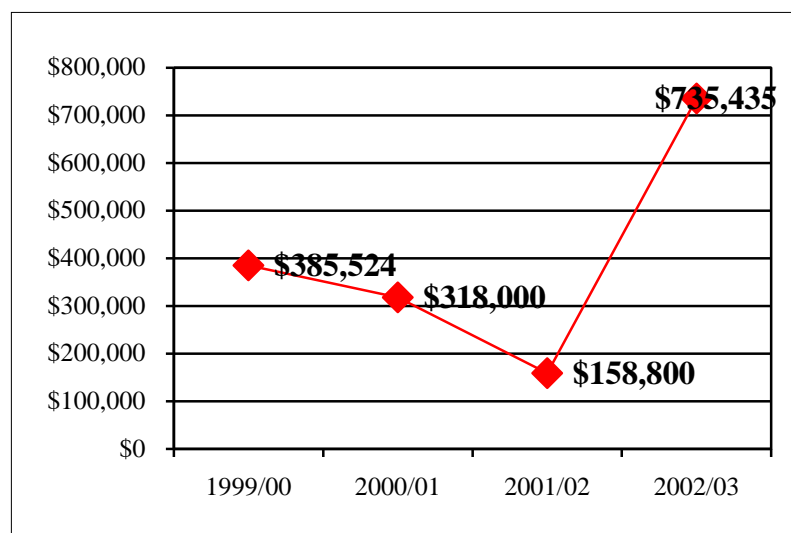
Because the College is responsible for providing a significant proportion of the lower-division General Education program, the number of first-time freshmen admitted to the University is essential to our livelihood. Numbers of first-time freshmen have been decreasing over the last few years, showing only a slight increase in Fall 2001. More specifically, the Full-Time Equivalency Students (FTES) enrollment in the College from Fall 1994 through Fall 2001 peaked in Fall 1998 and reached an all-time low in Fall 2000. Because funding for the University is enrollment driven, it is imperative that the College effectively meet enrollment targets, particularly by ensuring sufficient enrollment at the undergraduate level.

An additional challenge to fiscal stability of the College results from the heterogeneous costs of courses offered. Some courses, such as those offering valuable hands-on experience with state-of-the-art techniques in the sciences, as well as courses which have required field-trip components, are expensive and are not adequately compensated by current FTES formulas. Even in the environment of rising student fees, the challenge of providing additional funding for these high-cost courses must be met.

### ***Faculty***

The College must continue to increase the number of full-time tenure-track faculty in order to accommodate the projected growing enrollments of the College. During the next five years the College will be faced with the challenge and opportunity for faculty renewal due to a large number of retirements, with approximately 25 percent of faculty leaving. The hiring of new faculty will allow departments and the College flexibility to develop new directions and strengthen inter-disciplinary programs of research and teaching. A high percentage of our existing expertise must be maintained for delivery of College programs, but a major area for development will be in interdisciplinary programs as well as Science and Math education. In order for the College to continue to offer academic excellence, it is essential that we increase retention of existing faculty and continue to hire quality faculty to replace those retiring.

When hiring new faculty, departments in the natural sciences require extensive start-up costs due to significant laboratory expenses (see Figure 1). Additionally, faculty hires in several of the Social Sciences departments, such as Psychology and Anthropology, also require specialized laboratory space and equipment. In order for the College to continue to attract and retain quality faculty, start-up costs will continue to rise. The value of the offer packages that Cal State L.A. is able to put forth will continue to play a major role in the acceptance decisions of potential faculty. In order for the College of Natural and Social Sciences to maintain a competitive edge, it is imperative that adequate resources be allocated for new faculty start-up costs.



**Figure 1: Start-up Costs**

1999/00 – 9 faculty
2000/01 – 6 faculty
2001/02 – 9 faculty
2002/03 – 18 faculty

### ***External Funding***

The College has been very successful in securing external funds in support of the academic endeavors of faculty. NSS leads the six Colleges in bringing in external grant dollars to the University with a total of \$19,674,619 in active grants and a cost share of \$1,695,249. When faculty are rewarded grant funding, the College typically contributes to the project. Therefore, as the College continues to encourage the faculty to seek external funds the College's cost share commitments will continue to rise as well.

### ***Facilities***

The College of Natural and Social Sciences' sixteen departments and programs are housed in five different buildings. Many research and computing labs and technology-enhanced classrooms need to be upgraded to better meet the needs of faculty and students. Spaces are currently not conducive to instructional and research needs unless they are redesigned. There are multiple inadequacies that cause repeated problems such as leaks and faulty utilities. The current budget allocation to the College for remodeling is inadequate, and as future hiring of new faculty increases, the demand for space to conduct research will also increase. Further, safety issues are also a concern since many spaces are not compliant with ADA requirements and safety codes. While planned projects such as the new Science Building and planned renovation of the Biological Sciences building will provide partial remedy to these issues for some departments, it is clear that the College must take additional proactive steps to ensure an effective and safe infrastructure for educational and academic achievement.

### ***Technology***

Hardware, software, network, instructional delivery, training and support are a few of the broad areas of **critical** interest to maintaining and improving instruction, learning and productivity. Significant achievements have been made in assuring that students, faculty and staff have current hardware and software in departments, faculty offices, electronic classrooms and department laboratories. Use of technology-enhanced classrooms has increased, technical support has significantly improved, and more and more users are taking advantage of the numerous training opportunities within the College and University-wide. There are still, however, a number of areas that need some degree of focus and attention. These include: (1) improving faculty and staff recruitment and retention through professional development provisions, consistent and reliable technical support, and systematic communication efforts informing them of pertinent computing news and updates; (2) rigorously engaging in student outreach and recruitment with up-to-date, informative department web sites, and effective integration with the Golden Eagle Territory portal; and (3) ensuring quality academic programs and support services by developing a variety of options for the integration of technology into instruction. If the College is to continue its focus on ensuring an instructional environment that nurtures optimal teaching and learning exchanges for our faculty and students, we must recognize how essential the complementary use of technology resources is to our growth as a major College at Cal State L.A.

## **INITIATIVES & OBJECTIVES**

Based on an analysis of the College's general profile, data, resource limitations, strengths and weaknesses, and the projected opportunities and threats facing the College, the Steering Committee developed the following initiatives and objectives that need to be realized to meet the needs of faculty, staff and students, and enhance our quality programs.

**1. Strengthen faculty recruitment and retention.**

Objectives:

- a) Aggressively recruit outstanding faculty while continuing to stress ethnic and gender diversity.
- b) Examine workload issues and their impact upon faculty retention.
- c) Improve conditions for and communication to junior faculty.
- d) Develop procedures for welcoming new faculty.
- e) Conduct a study of the College faculty age structure as related to retirements.

**2. Strengthen student recruitment and retention.**

Objectives:

- a) Ensure consistently high quality of advisement across departments.
- b) Reduce time-to-graduation.
- c) Improve outreach to high school and community college students.
- d) Foster a positive, welcoming student life experience.
- e) Increase student satisfaction with advisement and student-staff interaction.
- f) Improve service to students.

**3. Continue to develop a student-centered learning environment that provides excellence in curriculum and instruction.**

Objectives:

- a. Incorporate instructional activities that optimize student learning.
- b. Ensure that students develop critical thinking, quantitative reasoning, writing, and oral skills.
- c. Utilize programmatic assessment to ensure that program objectives are met.

**4. Increase student enrollment.**

Objectives:

- a. Increase number of first-time freshmen.
- b. Identify and support graduate programs with growth potential.
- c. Increase number of students in ethnic studies programs.
- d. Increase number of students in both multiple-subject and single-subject teacher preparation programs.
- e. Ensure adequate staffing of courses to optimize course offerings.

**5. Increase number of students majoring in the natural sciences.**

Objectives:

- a. Increase passing rates of students in Math “gateway” courses.
- b. Increase outreach efforts to current Cal State L.A. students.
- c. Increase student awareness of career opportunities in the natural sciences.
- d. Consider development of new programs which would attract students.

**6. Improve staff productivity**

- a. Evaluate departmental staffing needs and allocations.
- b. Assess and improve staff working conditions.

- c. Enhance staff professional development and training in University-wide programs and systems, productivity software, and use of technical equipment.
  - d. Establish direct communications with University offices so that matters such as scheduling, add deadlines, filing of paperwork can be efficiently addressed.
  - e. Clarify the role of staff in student advisement.
- 7. Improve infrastructure and facilities to support the instructional and research environment for faculty and students.**

Objectives:

- a. Re-examine indirect cost recovery distribution.
  - b. Aggressively seek infrastructure grants.
  - c. Streamline process for facilities modifications.
  - d. Develop a program to identify and report existing conditions which pose a safety risk.
- 8. Support technology for innovative instructional delivery and research activities.**

Objectives:

- a. Increase faculty access to technology for teaching.
  - b. Improve network access to technology resources.
  - c. Enhance faculty professional development in the area of technology.
  - d. Improve training and support for technical staff.
  - e. Improve communication efforts between all of the technology organizations on campus and the faculty and staff.
- 9. Develop a plan to support high-cost programs.**

Objectives:

- a. Review College support for high-cost programs.
- b. Aggressively seek private and public funding.