College of Natural and Social Sciences
Strategic Plan
April 2011

1. Introduction

This Strategic Plan serves as the guiding document for the allocation of funding, initiation of new programs, and assessment of current programs. The Plan is intended to stand for five years, and it is recommended that the College Steering Committee re-examine the Plan after three years. As with any strategic plan, the guiding principles for the development of this document have been the Mission Statement (a statement on what we do), the Vision Statement (a statement on what we want to become), a set of Core Values, and an assessment of the internal and external environments affecting the College (a SWOT analysis). The Plan's concluding section provides a set of Goals and a list of Strategies that provide a guide for achieving those Goals.

2. Mission, Vision, and Core Values

The **Mission Statement** of the College of Natural and Social Sciences is:

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 supports a collaborative research environment that encourages student discovery through effective mentoring and strong student involvement in research and scholarly activities. The College strives to foster community interactions and multidisciplinary approaches to twenty-first century issues, from the local to the global. The College seeks to inspire in our students an appreciation for the biological, physical, historical, and social aspects of our earth and a life-long commitment to improving the lives of its inhabitants.

The **Vision Statement** of the College of Natural and Social Sciences is:

The College of Natural and Social Sciences will be nationally recognized as a leader among colleges of natural or social sciences with a high proportion of nontraditional students achieving outstanding educational outcomes through innovative and integrative programs that maximize the creative energies of all of the College's disciplines. The College will be recognized in Los Angeles as the most effective higher education partner for the improvement of our community and will be recognized at the regional, national, and international levels for scholarship and creative activity that are coupled with student engagement or community service. The College will become an academic destination of top choice that prepares students to become civic-minded members of and leaders in a global society who will use their education to shape a changing world.

As we organize ourselves and our resources to achieve this vision, we will hold firm to these **Core Values**:

- Excellence
    - In teaching and learning
    - In scholarship and creative activities that support the College mission
    - In student achievement
- Community
    - In the department or program, College, and University
    - In equally valuing faculty, staff, administrators, and students
    - In creating and maintaining meaningful connections with our Los Angeles neighbors
    - In our shared governance of the College
    - In celebrating our successes
- Diversity
    - In our faculty, staff, administrators, and students
    - In our range of programs and departments
    - In our appreciation of different perspectives
- Integrity
    - In our words and actions
    - In our promises to our students
    - In our evaluation of how well we meet our promises
- Service
    - To the community, whether it is the program or department, College, University, or Los Angeles
    - To the individuals in the NSS and CSULA communities, whether faculty, students, staff, or administrators
    - To the community of scholars within and outside the University who create, expand, and communicate knowledge and understanding
- Innovation and Integration
    - In the development of our academic programs
    - In the use of our resources
    - In the service of the Los Angeles community
- Inquiry
    - Toward a deeper understanding of the natural and social world
    - With an active disregard to bias and prejudice

3. Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

In determining how the College should achieve its Vision, an assessment must first be made of the environment in which we operate. In conducting a Strength Weakness Opportunity Threat (SWOT) analysis, one considers the following:

- *Strengths: internal attributes that will support the achievement of a vision*
- *Weaknesses: internal attributes that will hinder the achievement of a vision*
- *Opportunities: external conditions that can help achieve a vision*
- *Threats: external conditions that can damage the prospects of achieving a vision*

The following attributes have been identified in relation to the Vision Statement of the College:

Strengths:
● Faculty commitment to the CSULA student body in and out of the classroom
● Faculty scholarship and creative work
● Diversity of programs
● Diversity of student population
● Diversity of faculty
● Faculty success in teaching
● Success in obtaining grants that support student research and activities
● Graduates' success in Ph.D. and professional programs
● Staff commitment to the students, departments, and programs
● New science facilities

Weaknesses:
○ Limited operating funds
○ Heavy reliance on lecturer faculty for delivery of curriculum
○ A curriculum developed with the expectation that there will be a heavy reliance on lecturer faculty for its delivery
○ Limited funding to support scholarship and creative activities
○ Limited support for advising of students at all levels
○ Financial need of students that prevents focus on learning
○ Insufficient faculty staffing for some programs
○ Inadequate staff to support programs
○ Lack of a current strategic plan to guide resource allocation
○ Lack of a shared mission among the diverse disciplines of the College
○ Failure to match activities and challenges to resources available to the College
○ Low faculty, staff, and student morale as the College struggles to meet its redefined mission and constrained fiscal resources
○ High-GPA students leaving the University at above-average rates
○ User-unfriendly and/or outdated websites within departments, the College office, and other campus units; insufficient support for website authoring and maintenance
○ High-rate of entering students requiring developmental (i.e., remedial) math and English instruction; one of the highest rates in the CSU
○ Limited facilities and classrooms in support of academic programs and research
○ An impoverished library with limited resources and services
○ Inefficient student services

Opportunities:
● Location in East Los Angeles and connections to the greater Los Angeles area
● Community need for engagement of higher education
● Lack of focus of other higher education institutions on the needs of East Los Angeles and the greater Los Angeles area
● Impaction of other CSU campuses
● Ability to partner with other CSU campuses and with other higher education institutions in the region
● NSS alumni in influential positions
● Success in external grants

● Development of the Honors College and Community Engagement at CSULA
● An increasingly connected online and digital world

Threats:
○ Cuts in state funding
○ Increased direct student costs for attendance
○ Increased competition for external funds
○ Lack of recognition of CSULA and NSS in the greater Los Angeles community
○ Failure to be a destination of first-choice for many students in the region
○ Recruitment of best students from our area by other institutions
○ Weaknesses in coordinating student support throughout CSULA
○ Poor planning at the University level for the allocation of space
○ Limited support for external fundraising
○ Potential competition from online classes offered by other universities, including for-profit institutions

4. Goals and Strategies

To reach the Vision described above, NSS will have to clearly define what we want to achieve, dedicate current resources to support those goals, and, most importantly, develop new resources to allow us to move beyond what we can do with our current resource base. The following seven goals are all highly valued and are not listed in any particular order. They represent the College's priorities as it moves into the future. These goals do not cover all activities conducted and valued by the College. They instead lay out the College's plan for realizing its Vision Statement. No attempt has been made at this point to provide the necessary specific quantitative targets or timelines for achieving those specified targets. Those targets and timelines will be developed in consultation with the NSS Steering Committee and NSS faculty.

Goal 1: Increase the number of students completing academic programs from NSS departments and programs, and improve the quality of their academic experience

> Strategy 1.1: Creation or revision of gateway courses within academic programs to ensure a higher level of successful completion of course learning outcomes for introductory classes

> Strategy 1.2: Improve advising for students in academic majors and programs to ensure the appropriate courses are taken and progress toward the degree is appropriate

> Strategy 1.3: Increase the number of lower-level courses available to all students provided by departments or programs with a small number of majors

> Strategy 1.4: Reduce the time to graduation for all incoming students

> Strategy 1.5: Increase the percentage of students remaining in NSS from admission to graduation

Strategy 1.6: Revise and streamline curriculum within academic programs so that the needs of students are most efficiently met with course offerings each quarter

Strategy 1.7: Enhance culturally-relevant curriculum and instructional methods in the College

Strategy 1.8: Improve outreach to regional students so that the College becomes a destination of choice

Goal 2: Lead the CSU in the number of students from underrepresented groups achieving educational excellence

Strategy 2.1: Increase student contact with full-time faculty, especially through small class sizes for courses that involve intensive writing assignments or original research

Strategy 2.2: Increase the number of NSS students being awarded Sally Casanova pre-doctoral scholarships, leading all CSU colleges in this category

Strategy 2.3: Increase the number of students in honor societies, so that the percentage of students in the College belonging to honor societies leads the CSU

Strategy 2.4: Increase the number of students supported by grant activity, so that the percentage of students from the College on grant activity leads the CSU

Strategy 2.5: Increase the number of students engaged in the publication of a refereed article so that the College leads the CSU in this category

Strategy 2.6: Actively recruit high-achieving students from underrepresented groups using the Honors College funding for scholarships

Goal 3: Increase external funding for programs and departments for scholarship and creative activities linked to student achievement or community engagement

Strategy 3.1: Provide incentives by returning to grant recipients a portion of reimbursed activity funding for individual faculty members or groups of faculty who obtain grants that include student or community engagement

Strategy 3.2: Provide additional support (i.e. grant-writing support, course release, matching funds) for writing grants to external agencies

Strategy 3.3: Develop programs that have substantial community engagement, broad faculty participation, and multiple sources of external funding

Strategy 3.4: Develop funding partnerships with corporations, businesses, civic entities, and educational institutions

Goal 4: Increase funding for operating expenses, facilities, and faculty support

Strategy 4.1: In the event that the University operates Summer term on a 'self-support' basis, increase self-support summer academic offerings and allocate revenue generated for operating expenses and faculty support

Strategy 4.2: Coordinate naming opportunities with the Development Office and allocate part of the funding generated to College facilities support

Strategy 4.3: Create an internal fund to support instructional development opportunities and sabbatical replacements

Goal 5: Earn recognition for the engagement of faculty, students, and staff in the greater Los Angeles community

Strategy 5.1: Increase community engagement as a required component of student learning outcomes for programs

Strategy 5.2: Develop community advisory boards for departments and programs that create partnerships for community engagement

Strategy 5.3: Develop a reward system internally for programs that earn community recognition

Strategy 5.4: Publicize the commitment of the College to community support by regularly highlighting successful programs in the community through campus and Los Angeles media venues and through department and College websites

Goal 6: Develop inter/cross/multidisciplinary programs that span disciplinary boundaries, address important issues, and create community both within the College and with other Colleges and other University entities.

Strategy 6.1: Support the development of programs that have potential to bring external funding from public and private interdisciplinary funding initiatives

Strategy 6.2: Complete the development of a program focusing on urban environmental issues, using Los Angeles as a site for study and application

Strategy 6.3: Complete the development of a program focusing on Religious Studies

Strategy 6.4: Develop and adopt guidelines for the creation of additional programs that support inter/cross/multidisciplinary programs that address evolving issues of vital importance

Goal 7: Match program offerings to the ability of the College to provide adequate faculty and operating resources to ensure program excellence

Strategy 7.1: Determine how well each program or department uses resources, meets student needs, and supports achievement of the College Vision, using multiple means of assessment

Strategy 7.2: Based on assessment outcomes (7.1), modify programs so that each department or program has adequate enrollments, faculty, and budgets

Strategy 7.3: Using a transparent budget process and assessment outcomes (7.1), allocate resources to programs that contribute to the achievement of Goals 1 through 6 and the College Vision Statement

Strategy 7.4: Develop new programs based on their ability to contribute to Goals 1 through 6 and the Vision Statement