

College of Arts & Sciences Strategic Planning Valuing People and Missions Working Group Final Report

Executive Summary

The working group is charged with developing plans for elevating the value and the visibility of our people and missions inside and outside Texas A&M University. The group has engaged with multiple stakeholders, including faculty, staff, former students, and donors. The goals of this working group are to develop plans to promote and reward faculty; to construct an effective staffing structure for the future; to elevate our alumni relations and former student engagement; to increase financial support from corporations, backers, donors and former students; and to enhance our marketing and communication efforts to elevate College visibility and the outstanding work of our faculty and staff, and to further strengthen the brand.

The top four themes that emerged in faculty and staff survey questions that engaged this area of the strategic plan include: Collaboration and Community Building; Resource Allocation and Support; Communication and Transparency; and Recognition and Appreciation. Our objectives and action items are designed to respond especially to these core issues.

Faculty Affairs: The college is committed to enhancing faculty recognition, clarity of faculty roles, ArtSci identity, and internal communications. Strategic initiatives in these areas outline key objectives designed to support faculty excellence, foster community, and improve operational transparencies. The success of these initiatives will depend on consistent participation and sustained engagement across units. Aligning practices across departments while still preserving their unique needs and composition will require special attention. Building cross-disciplinary communities may require cultural shifts and resource allocation.

Staff: The College of Arts and Sciences aims to build a culture that values staff by enhancing career development, recognition, mentoring, and retention. This includes strategic hiring, addressing salary disparities, expanding recognition, and improving communication. Initiatives like a Career Paths Project, leadership training, and a Staff Council will support growth and engagement. A systemic, inclusive approach is key to success.

Alumni & Donor Relations: The phrase "Once an Aggie, always an Aggie!" perfectly captures the spirit of lifelong connection and commitment to the community. Engaging with the nearly 140,000 former students not only enriches the experiences of current students but also benefits former students, faculty, and staff. This mutual engagement fosters a sense of belonging and continuity, reinforcing the Core Values instilled during their time on campus. It's a powerful way to advance the mission of the college and create a supportive, interconnected network.

Development: In light of declining legislative support and the escalating costs associated with higher education, financial contributions from former students, benefactors, and corporate partners are essential to the continued success of the College. The development team remains dedicated to identifying and cultivating new avenues of support for the College of Arts & Sciences.

MarComm: The need for expanded and effective marketing and communications was expressed by all strategic planning working groups and other stakeholders during the strategic planning process. The College will embark on initiatives designed to support the College's growth toward national preeminence through targeted marketing, strategic communication, and enhanced collaboration. The MarComm team will develop and implement a marketing and communications plan to support the goals and objectives of the strategic plan in conjunction with College leadership and the strategic planning working groups, and implement measures to track progress and measure success.

Process

Although our group did not host a comprehensive working retreat because of the disparate areas addressed in this section of the strategic plan, we benefited from the inputs provided during the co-chairs participation in the other three subcommittee retreats: Research (November 1, 2024); Graduate Studies (February 11, 2025); and Undergraduate Studies (February 21, 2025).

Sub-groups of the committee conducted individual team retreats. The Faculty Affairs team (Senior Executive Associate Dean, three Associate Deans, and the Executive Director) discussed feedback and revisions at their weekly team meetings throughout March and April 2025. The Alumni & Donor Relations Group and the Development Group gathered information from a staff retreat, which included all of the alumni and donor relations staff and the development team. Additionally, all co-chairs of the committee participated in the February 2025 Dean's External Advisory and Development Council meeting, during which former students, who are members of these groups, were able to reflect and provide inputs on college objectives and potential action items. The Marketing and Communications (MarComm) group likewise held a retreat and planning session where inputs from the other working group retreats were shared and the MarComm team discussed additional ideas, challenges, and opportunities.

A special report of recommendations produced by the Dean's External Advisory and Development Committee was an additional input in the development of the marketing and communications section of this report.

The Faculty Affairs team benefits from continuous contact with various tenure-track and APT faculty groups throughout the year. Drafts of the Faculty Affairs portion of the report included feedback from the following groups: Faculty Affairs Councils, FAC-TT (12 tenured faculty) and FAC-APT (10 APT faculty); Deans Advisory Committees, DAC-TT (10 tenured faculty) and DAC-APT (8 APT faculty). The Faculty Affairs team conducted new faculty workshops throughout the 2024-2025 academic year, and these workshops provided inputs through ongoing discussions of opportunities and challenges for new faculty. The groups attending each of the workshops ranged from 10-15 tenure-track and APT faculty, for a total of approximately 50 total participants (including TT and APT faculty).

Additional inputs included feedback from faculty and staff at the ArtSci Town Hall (April 22, 2025). During the interactive table talks, five tables met with two groups of faculty and staff, with each group averaging seven participants: 70 total participants. In addition, feedback from the student survey conducted by Hanover research and the faculty and staff survey (approximately 300 total) conducted by Hanover research were included in revisions to the preliminary planning document.

We have not yet had the chance to incorporate data from the university Employee Engagement Survey; however, this will be an important input to include over the summer.

Opportunities

The University and College's distinguished faculty research and teaching programs, which span diverse fields and contribute to significant global advancements, provide a solid foundation for promoting interdisciplinary collaboration and innovation. Offering robust career paths for staff ensures a motivated and skilled workforce, which is essential for maintaining excellence in education and research. Additionally, engaging current and former students through the Aggie Network fosters a sense of community and loyalty, enhancing alumni relations and support. Effective marketing and communication efforts are critical to supporting, celebrating, and promoting work across the college, university and System, as well as increase the awareness and build a strong brand reputation for the college with external audiences.

Faculty Affairs: As the largest college in the university, we can promote and value our tenure-track and APT faculty by recognizing achievements through awards and spotlights, offering tailored professional development, and ensuring transparent promotion pathways. By investing in faculty development, transparency, and community engagement, the College can position itself as a leader in restoring public confidence in higher education. The College's broad academic portfolio enables it to lead in developing interdisciplinary programs that respond to evolving workforce needs. Texas A&M's traditions of service, leadership, and academic rigor provide a strong foundation for faculty engagement and recognition. By fostering transparent, collaborative decision-making between faculty and administration, the College can serve as a model for effective academic leadership.

Staff: As a newly formed College, there's a rare opportunity to build a modern, inclusive, and strategic staff culture from the ground up—free from legacy constraints. The College can draw on Texas A&M's strong institutional identity and values—such as service, leadership, and community—to create a compelling staff experience. By launching initiatives like the Career Paths Project and Staff Leadership Academy, the College can become a model for career development in higher education. Expanding recognition programs and showcasing staff achievements can boost morale and retention, setting the College apart in a competitive talent market.

Donor Relations: The combining of the three legacy colleges have brought nearly 140,000 former students into one College. The opportunities for impact are now broadened and expanded. There are limitless opportunities to engage with these former students in hopes of supporting Texas A&M University.

Development: The College of Arts & Sciences is uniquely positioned to attract robust development support through a variety of strategic opportunities. With a vast alumni network, a significant role in delivering core curriculum across the university, a wide spectrum of high-impact research, and the strong workforce contributions of recent graduates, the College presents compelling avenues for meaningful investment. These strengths are critical to sustaining the tradition of excellence for which Texas A&M is renowned.

MarComm: There are strong opportunities to elevate the marketing and communications efforts of the college by participating and aligning with the marketing and communications campaigns of the university, the System and our affiliates, Texas A&M Foundation and the Association of Former Students. Providing relevant content from the College of Arts and Sciences to the upcoming University campaign in the fall of 2025 will help us reach a larger audience while utilizing University funds. The MarComm team will also develop and implement a marketing and communications plan to support the goals of the College's strategic plan. This will include implementing strategies and tactics to engage with important audiences and measure these results.

Objectives

Objective 1: Expand and amplify the recognition of ArtSci faculty and staff

Rationale: Enhancing the recognition and visibility of ArtSci faculty and staff through awards, media features, and professional honors supports retention, recruitment, and reputation-building.

Actions: Implement a coordinated, college-wide strategy to increase faculty and staff recognition through structured planning, expanded awards, nomination support, mentoring, and strategic communications.

1. Collaborate with departments and centers to create annual plans for identifying and nominating both faculty and staff for internal and external awards.

2. Conduct a gap analysis of current ArtSci awards to identify underrecognized contributions and develop new awards accordingly for both faculty and staff.
3. Offer college-wide programming with successful nomination examples, detailed rubrics, and templates to support effective nomination writing for faculty and staff awards.
4. Design and distribute an annual calendar of major award deadlines and a planning guide for departments to proactively manage nomination efforts.
5. Pair past award recipients with faculty and staff who are eligible for nomination, to support development of strong nomination materials and strategic planning.
6. Collaborate with units to regularly identify faculty and staff to be featured in MarComm spotlights that highlight excellence and innovation.

Assessment: Tracking and assessment will include both outcomes and engagement indicators, aligned with the action plans.

1. Recognition Outcomes:
 - Number and percentage of faculty and staff receiving internal and external awards.
 - Number and percentage of faculty and staff nominated for internal and external awards.
 - Number of prestigious and pathway awards received by faculty (e.g., via VPFA amplification program).
 - Number of new ArtSci awards created or existing awards revised to broaden recognition of faculty and staff achievements.
 - Increase in National Academy or equivalent prestigious memberships.
2. Engagement Metrics
 - Number of departments with unit-level recognition plans submitted annually.
 - Participation in college programming on best practices for nominations (e.g., workshop attendance, resource downloads).
 - Number of mentoring matches established between past awardees and potential nominees.
 - Number of MarComm spotlights featuring faculty and staff awardees.
 - Engagement with MarComm features (click-throughs, shares, or internal reposting).

Anticipated Challenges:

Challenges include ensuring consistent communication and dissemination of award guidelines and deadlines. Coordination of nominations for prestigious external awards remains uneven across units. In addition, mentoring structures for both faculty and staff need to be strengthened. Smaller departments, in particular, may face capacity constraints or experience burnout due to repeated nomination cycles.

Objective 2: Increase awareness of APT faculty roles, responsibilities, and promotion pathways

Rationale: Greater understanding, consistency, and visibility of APT faculty roles, paired with structured support, will strengthen job satisfaction, performance, and retention of APT faculty across ArtSci.

Actions: Implement a coordinated approach to support APT faculty through community-building, clearly defined roles and expectations, constructive evaluation feedback, and structured mentorship.

1. Offer dedicated programming for incoming and continuing APT faculty to build community, support identity development, and foster a sense of belonging.
2. Partner with departments to standardize appointment letters and ensure that APT faculty titles and assigned responsibilities are clearly defined and appropriately aligned, with reclassification of titles as needed.

3. Ensure annual reviews include actionable feedback regarding promotion readiness, with integration into departmental and college-level promotion support.
4. Create cross-department mentorship opportunities, including regular panels and mentoring pairings between senior and early-career APT faculty (Years 1–3).

Assessment: Track progress using both qualitative and quantitative indicators to evaluate clarity, consistency, and satisfaction among APT faculty.

1. Annual faculty survey results on APT role clarity, satisfaction, and promotion readiness.
2. Analysis of annual evaluations to track inclusion of feedback related to promotion pathways.
3. Trends in APT faculty time-to-promotion across ranks and disciplines.
4. Number and percentage of APT faculty on multiyear contracts.
5. Number of APT faculty participating in mentoring programs, community-building activities, and professional development programs.
6. Feedback on mentoring and community-building efforts through post-event surveys and periodic assessments with analysis of perceived value, sense of belonging, and support for professional development.

Anticipated Challenges:

The recent ArtSci merger has brought together varied legacy practices for APT recruitment, evaluation, and promotion. An ongoing challenge is balancing respect for departmental autonomy with the need for consistent practices across the college. Additionally, standardizing appointment and evaluation processes requires significant coordination and clear communication with department leadership.

Objective 3: Promote a strong sense of faculty identity and connection within the College of Arts and Sciences

Rationale: Fostering a strong sense of connection to ArtSci promotes collaboration, a unified college identity, and sustained success for faculty and staff across departments.

Actions: Implement strategies to support faculty connection to ArtSci by encouraging collaboration, communication, and engagement across departments and disciplines.

1. Facilitate the development of research, teaching, and administrative/service communities that span departments, while providing resources and recognition for faculty and staff across the full range of scholarly and professional activities.
2. Develop and disseminate college-wide guidelines and resources to enable and incentivize courses taught by interdisciplinary faculty teams.
3. Provide college-level support and visibility for faculty in all areas of research, teaching, and service.
4. Organize annual or biannual interactive town halls to provide open forums for faculty feedback, idea-sharing, and dialogue with college leadership.
5. Create and promote informal engagement opportunities (e.g., lunch-and-learns, mixers) that foster cross-departmental connection and idea exchange.
6. Facilitate meaningful interaction between faculty and the College's External Advisory Committee to promote shared goals and external visibility.

Assessment: Evaluate progress toward a stronger college-wide faculty identity using both participation metrics and qualitative feedback.

1. Results from an annual faculty survey assessing faculty identification with the College, sense of belonging, and perception of cross-college collaboration.
2. Participation indicators:
 - Number and percentage of faculty participating in college-sponsored networking events, workshops, and town halls.
 - Number and percentage of team-taught courses, disaggregated by faculty from the same vs. different departments.
 - Number of interdisciplinary faculty groups formally recognized or supported.

Anticipated Challenges:

Promoting college-wide identity remains a delicate balance with long-standing departmental cultures. Challenges include lingering skepticism about the ArtSci merger, the need for clearly communicated college vision, competition for resources such as team-teaching support, and a lack of shared physical spaces that facilitate organic faculty interaction across units.

Objective 4: Create model communications plan

Rationale: Effective and comprehensive communication with faculty is essential to foster engagement, increase visibility of college initiatives, and strengthen faculty governance. A well-structured communications plan ensures that faculty are informed, heard, and empowered to participate in shaping the college's direction.

Actions: Implement a comprehensive communications strategy by auditing current practices, establishing a two-way communication system, enhancing digital platforms, and incorporating student-led content development.

1. Evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of existing communication tools and platforms (email, newsletters, intranet, etc.). Identify gaps, redundancies, and areas for improvement.
2. Develop a structured framework for both top-down (college to faculty) and bottom-up (faculty to college) communication. Include mechanisms such as feedback forms, listening sessions, and faculty liaisons.
3. Improve the college intranet and website to ensure intuitive navigation, updated content, and centralized access to calendars, announcements, and resources. Integrate tools for real-time updates and notifications.
4. Explore the creation of in-house internships for student journalists to support faculty communications. Assign students to produce newsletters, spotlight stories, and event coverage.

Assessment: Evaluate progress using qualitative feedback, engagement analytics, and communication outputs.

1. Results from annual faculty and staff survey to measure satisfaction with communication clarity, frequency, and responsiveness. Include open-ended questions for qualitative feedback.
2. Track usage and interaction data on the intranet, event calendars, and newsletters. Monitor open rates, click-throughs, and time spent on key pages.
3. Count the number of communication deliverables (articles, videos, etc.) produced. Track engagement metrics (views, shares, comments) for each deliverable.

Anticipated Challenges:

Faculty and staff are inundated with messages from multiple sources, making it difficult to prioritize important communications. The use of diverse platforms across departments complicates the goal of a unified communication strategy. The size and diversity of the college community present logistical challenges in ensuring consistent and inclusive communication.

Objective 5: Build a culture where the people and missions of College staff are valued by enhancing career paths, professional development, recognition, mentoring, and retention across our academic departments and units

Rationale: Successfully developing staff requires a systemic approach over the course of their career in the College including recruitment, development, mentoring, and retention. The recent creation of the College and the University's move to centralization creates an opportunity to reassess our procedures and practices regarding staff by creating a strategic staff hiring plan to support the College, systematic training, and professional development programs.

Actions:

1. Develop a strategic staff hiring plan to support growth in tenure-track and APT hiring that: (a) supports research, teaching, and student success, and (b) aligns with ratios in other Texas A&M Colleges, schools, and peer institutions.
2. Address College of Arts and Sciences staff salary disparity and compression issues within the College and in comparison to other Texas A&M Colleges and schools.
3. Create additional pathways for recognition beyond college-level staff awards and the One Time Merit program to celebrate and reward outstanding staff accomplishments and efforts.
4. Showcase the work and accomplishments of staff through regular announcements to boost visibility and enhance morale and retention.
5. Launch a Career Paths Project so the College can better understand the desired career paths for staff and whether certain key positions in the College need to be redesigned to create an accessible meaningful career path for staff members.
6. Create a comprehensive training and leadership development program within the College by: (a) creating systematic training for common staff positions, (b) funding external professional development opportunities, (c) creating a Staff Leadership Academy, and (d) developing unit-level plans for staff development and peer mentoring.
7. Enhance professional communication between staff teams and academic leadership within and between units to engage staff and keep them informed.
8. Create a Staff Council that includes centralized staff. Include faculty reps in staff council to facilitate connections between faculty and staff.
9. Develop procedures and practices to facilitate better interaction among our College and centralized staff members and streamline workflows.

Assessment:

Assessing a staff strategic plan involves evaluating its alignment with organizational goals, effectiveness in execution, and impact on employee performance and engagement. Follow up with staff surveys at specific intervals to gather feedback. Key factors include gathering staff feedback through surveys, measuring progress via key performance indicators (KPIs), and ensuring active stakeholder involvement.

Anticipated Challenges:

1. Lack of clear goals and direction.
2. Resistance to change.
3. Limited resources.
4. Poor communication across teams leading to misunderstanding and lack of trust.
5. Difficulty in measuring progress.
6. Lack of employee engagement and buy-in.

Objective 6: Build rewarding relationships with former students through education, engagement opportunities and meaningful connections to advance the mission of the College

Rationale: Strong relationships with the College's former students benefit our students and provide support for our programs.

Actions:

1. Improve contact information for former students.
2. Create opportunities to engage with departments both on and off campus.
3. Develop advisory/development councils for all departments.
4. Develop mentorship programs across the College.
5. Collaborate with MarCom to market "new" College to former students.
6. Collaborate with MarCom to increase the social media presence for all departments.
7. Create meaningful opportunities for former students to return to campus.

Assessment:

Establish measurements of engagement of former students from events, communications, etc.
Compare the number of events and communications from one year to the next to create benchmarks.

Anticipated Challenges:

1. Resistance/lack of awareness of former students as to how to update their contact information.
2. No singular platform to reach former students.
3. Enormity of college/opportunities in relation to size of current staff.
4. Potential budgetary restrictions to implement ideas.

Objective 7: Build rewarding relationships with current students to teach the importance of staying engaged with their alma mater and share what the Office of Alumni & Donor Relations does

Rationale: Creating relationships with students while they are on campus will aid in future engagement endeavors as they become former students.

Actions:

1. Teach current students how to be former students.
2. Establish programs that create touch points between former and current students.
3. Participate in college-wide student organizations.
4. Create ArtSci ambassadors to work/assist with donor/former student events.

Assessment:

By developing targeted programs and fostering collaboration with student organizations that align with the interests and needs of current students, the College can strengthen its engagement pipeline. Additionally, implementing a structured process to measure alumni engagement at key milestones—such as one, five, and ten years post-graduation—will provide valuable insights to inform future outreach and support strategies.

Anticipated Challenges:

1. The size of the college and trying to reach a majority of students.
2. Potential budgetary restrictions to implement ideas.

Objective 8: Intentionally inspire the College's internal and external relationships through strategic education and engagement to align their passions in a meaningful way

Rationale: Creating and nurturing relationships through education and engagement with the College will enhance development opportunities.

Actions:

1. Showcase departmental activities to align with donors' interests.
2. Establish departmental tours showcasing strengths, research, etc.
3. Invitations to lectures, seminars, etc. (i.e., Fallon Marshall, Glasscock Book Prize).
4. Create meaningful campus activities for donors.
5. Coordinate departmental milestones with donor outreach.
6. Create stewardship events to bring donors to campus to showcase impact.
7. Continued evolution of the College's stewardship activities.
8. Create a comprehensive stewardship plan for lead College donors.
9. Continued production of stewardship impact reports and messages of impact.
10. Increase collaboration with the Texas A&M Foundation to support and expand donor opportunities.
11. Increase the number of development officers fundraising for the College.

Assessment:

Establishing a clear baseline will enable the College to conduct annual assessments of key development metrics, including the number and total value of gifts received. Additional indicators of engagement can be tracked through donor participation in College-sponsored events, lectures, seminars, and campus visits, providing a more comprehensive view of alumni and supporter involvement.

Anticipated Challenges:

Current challenges include the size of the development team as compared to the size of college, its departments and alumni base.

Objective 9: Raise the College's visibility by increasing awareness of internal and external audiences and enhancing the brand

Rationale: To help the College grow to preeminence, we must engage in marketing and communications activities that increase awareness of the College and enhance its reputation.

Actions:

1. Develop and implement a strong annual marketing plan to include the development of the College's mission and vision; identification of audiences; the development of strategies and tactics to reach these audiences and the implementation of tools to measure and track the success of the plan.
2. Prioritize, strengthen, and promote impactful College research and faculty to raise College visibility and reputation to improve rankings, and to communicate with peer institutions, funding agencies and prospective graduate students.
3. Grow audience engagement through creative strategies and tactics and by educating and utilizing College faculty, staff, and students to provide consistent and accurate messaging with audiences.
4. Commit Marketing and Communications resources to activities that support the priorities of the strategic plan. Other requested projects will be accommodated as time and capacity allows or through outsourcing and/or creating embedded positions in departments and centers.

Assessment:

Develop the marketing plan with input from leadership; conduct a regular review of the plan and its results to report to leadership.

Anticipated Challenges:

The challenges that may influence or disrupt the college's ability to accomplish these objectives and actions are:

1. Small internal MarComm team to support the college and its 18 departments, 32 centers and institutes, donor and alumni relations, college academics and college research units. While the MarComm unit has plans to expand to better support the college, the timeline for this expansion will depend on the availability of funding.
2. Funding to accomplish some of the objectives and actions in the Strategic Plan are contingent upon funding.

Objective 10: Align messages and promotion among departments, College, and University

Rationale: Better alignment with the University, College departments, units and centers and Texas A&M affiliate development organizations will expand the reach and visibility of the College and thereby, the impact of its messaging.

Actions:

1. Support University, Association of Former Students and Texas A&M Foundation campaigns through greater collaboration and participation. Developing related content and supply interviews leads to actively participating and supporting these campaigns and goals.

2. Create a formal expert list of College researchers to assist Central MarCom with national media pitching and placements.
3. Support Alumni and Donor Relations communications needs to foster relationships and engagement with former students and help raise funds for scholarships, new facilities, etc.
4. Increase engagement and participation in department, center and University meetings and events. Identify common threads between departments/centers to foster multi- disciplinary projects and enhance working relationships.

Assessment:

Keep a log of content submissions to these entities and track the pickup and the placement of this content and the success of the submissions in reaching target audiences.

Anticipated Challenges:

We will be competing with all other colleges on campus for the inclusion of our content in these campaigns. This will take consistent collaboration including regular meetings and engagement with leadership of these other MarComm teams. Additionally, we would need to conduct constant story mining and depend on regular submissions from our departments and units to identify and create strong content acceptable to these campaigns.

Synergies

Synergies of Group #4 with other groups include:

1. Compensation
2. Recognizing and rewarding excellence
3. Faculty support and culture
4. Staff support and development
5. Interdisciplinarity: Teaching and Research collaborations
6. Communications

The MarComm team works college-wide by supporting department and unit needs for promotional materials, content creation, editing, graphic design, video production, website development and photography.

7. Former student engagement

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