Strategic Priorities

College of Humanities and Social Sciences

Sam Houston State University

2024-2029

Contents

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Mission, Vision, and Values

Mission: The College of Humanities and Social Sciences (CHSS) supports excellence in research, prioritizes student success, and collaborates with the community to provide a high-quality and accessible education that prepares students to engage in, and successfully navigate, a vibrant and multifacted world.

Vision: Harnessing the multiple strengths and perspectives of the college's disciplines, CHSS will empower students, faculty, and staff to champion critical thinking, produce new knowledge, and work as engaged citizens.

Values:

Active Learning: Methods of instruction that promote critical thinking and actively and experientially engage students in learning

Community Engagement: "Collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity" (Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education, n.d).

Culture of Belonging: An environment where everyone is valued and has a positive, meaningful experience

Innovation: Programs and curricula that anticipate stakeholder needs (e.g., student, employer, community) and meet these needs in novel ways

Scholarship: Scholarly activity that produces new knowledge, integrates and interprets knowledge across disciplines, applies knowledge for service and practice, and publicly transmits and transforms knowledge through teaching.

Student-Faculty Research: A high-impact practice in which students and faculty partner to execute research through a collaborative mentoring relationship

The Tradition of the Humanities: Focuses on understanding human beings in their similarities and differences as expressed in their literatures, histories, ideas, values, across a variety of communication practices and behaviors; also promotes analyticand interpretive research skills and the development of interpersonal communication abilities.

Strategic Priorities Overview

Strategic Priority	Goals
I. Faculty and Staff Excellence	▪ Invest in opportunities for excellence in research. ▪ Develop pathways for collaborative and interdisciplinary teaching, internships, and service. ▪ Increase faculty and staff retention by cultivating a sense of belonging in CHSS. ▪ Support the essential role that CHSS staff play in the successful functioning of the college. ▪ Support the essential role that CHSS non-tenure track faculty play in the successful functioning of the college.
II. Student Recruitment and Retention	▪ Use internal and external resources to understand the various factors that contribute to student retention and timeliness of degree completion. ▪ Invest in all faculty who deliver introductory and core courses and in the staff that provide key support for these pedagogical activities. Not only are introductory and core courses essential to improving students' post-secondary skills, they are a primary recruitment tool for CHSS majors and minors. ▪ Institute a college-wide recruitment strategy.
III. Student Career Readiness	▪ Examine relevant college-level data (e.g., SHSU Analytics, Alumni survey) to understand the role of discipline-specific skills in workplace settings and the ways in which a CHSS education leads to career success. ▪ Build faculty buy-in for career readiness initiatives by identifying clear links between a CHSS education and in-demand workplace skills (e.g., problem-solving, communication, adaptability). ▪ Develop a database of relevant resources to aid in communication with students about careers and opportunities beyond the classroom/course content (e.g., field-specific training opportunities). ▪ Provide student-focused activities that increase engagement with career-readiness training and workforce skill building.
IV. Community	▪ Retain community engagement as a pillar of CHSS's configuration and expand its scope by establishing new collaborative partnerships between CHSS and the many communities within which it is embedded. ▪ Develop appropriate metrics to ensure that the value of community engaged scholarship is recognized.

Strategic Priority I: Faculty and Staff Excellence

Strategic Priority: CHSS invests in innovative, collaborative activities and in the excellence of the staff and faculty of the college.

Rationale: Cultivating innovative research and excellence in scholarship and creative work, teaching, and staff activities is important to CHSS because:

1. These standards of performance raise the scholarly and pedagogical profile, thus building the academic credibility of the college within SHSU and the larger community of scholars and teachers;
2. Faculty who engage in innovative scholarly and creative activities, including interdisciplinary activities, enrich students through new opportunities as they bring their work into the classroom;
3. Innovative researchers and excellent teachers and staff attract new students and new faculty, thus supporting the recruitment and retention goals of the university; and
4. A shared commitment to innovation and excellence unifies faculty and staff and fosters a sense of belonging in all members of the college community.

Consequently, CHSS's strategy for faculty and staff excellence ensures access to resources to support innovative scholarly and creative activities, provides opportunities to pursue excellence in professional development, and recognizes the essential role that staff and non-tenure-track faculty play in CHSS's success.

Goals:
1. Invest in opportunities for excellence in research[1].
2. Develop pathways for collaborative and interdisciplinary teaching, internships, and service.
3. Increase faculty and staff retention by cultivating a sense of belonging in CHSS.
4. Support the essential role that CHSS staff play in the successful functioning of the college.
5. Support the essential role that CHSS non-tenure track faculty play in the successful functioning of the college.

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[1] Excellence in research is determined by departments and is based on discipline-specific expectations..

Strategic Priority II: Student Recruitment and Retention

Strategic Priority: CHSS implements a targeted recruitment strategy and evidence-based retention efforts to ensure that students understand the value of a CHSS degree and can complete their degree(s) in a timely manner.

Rationale: Prioritizing student recruitment and retention is important to CHSS because:

1. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board's (THECB) strategic plan[2] prioritizes meaningful, cost-effective education-workforce partnerships and educational pathways for Texans of all ages and backgrounds.
2. Texas higher education enrollments have flattened since 2019.
3. Traditional students pursuing postsecondary education are among the least college ready ever.
4. SHSU uses two metrics to define student success: retention and graduation.

Consequently, CHSS's strategy for recruitment and retention ensures that students are educated efficiently (i.e., time to degree and retention rates) and that the college has the pedagogical structures in place to support all levels of college readiness.

Goals:
1. Use internal and external resources to understand the various factors that contribute to student retention and timeliness of degree completion.
2. Invest in all faculty who deliver introductory and core courses and in the staff that provide key support for these pedagogical activities. Not only are introductory and core courses essential to improving students' post-secondary skills, they are a primary recruitment tool for CHSS majors and minors.
3. Institute a college-wide recruitment strategy.

[2] https://reportcenter.highered.texas.gov/agency-publication/miscellaneous/building-talent-strong-texas/

Strategic Priority III: Student Career Readiness

Strategic Priority: CHSS equips students with the tools needed to demonstrate the value and relevance of a Humanities and Social Sciences Degree in order to increase students' marketability for employment and, therefore, upward mobility.

Rationale: Prioritizing career readiness is important to CHSS because:

1. THECB states, "The state of Texas is educating, graduating, and preparing more students to join the workforce and drive the economy than ever before – and remains firmly committed to building a Talent Strong Texas for decades to come[3]."
2. The Texas state economy is "powered by our increasingly educated workforce[4]". THECB's strategic goals include:
3. Attainment of certificates and degrees; postsecondary credentials of value; research, development, and innovation that broadens education and creates new jobs; and
4. Modernization of "the state's educational and workforce data infrastructure, including improved collection of occupation-specific data to better inform students, educators, institutional leaders, employers, and the public about the talent pipeline[5]."

Consequently, CHSS's strategy for career readiness includes explicit communication about marketable skills that students develop through college coursework and programs. The college creates opportunities for informal and formal training in career-related topics.

Goals
1. Examine relevant college-level data (e.g., SHSU Analytics, Alumni survey) to understand the role of discipline-specific skills in workplace settings and the ways in which a CHSS education leads to career success.
2. Build faculty buy-in for career readiness initiatives by identifying clear links between a CHSS education and in-demand workplace skills (e.g., problem-solving, communication, adaptability).
3. Develop a database of relevant resources to aid in communication with students about careers and opportunities beyond the classroom/course content (e.g., field-specific training opportunities).
4. Provide student-focused activities that increase engagement with career-readiness training and workforce skill building.

[3] ibid.
[4] ibid.
[5] ibid.

Strategic Priority IV: Community

Strategic Priority: CHSS fosters community engagement.

Rationale: Community engagement as defined by the Carnegie Foundation[6] is important to CHSS because it:

1. Uncovers new resources, deepens relationships, fosters a problem-solving environment, contributes to the well-being of communities, and promotes the college's sustainability and growth.
2. Enriches scholarship, research, and creative activity through collaborative resource and knowledge sharing between academic, public, and private entities.
3. Enhances curriculum, teaching, and learning to prepare engaged and educated citizens.
4. Strengthens civic-mindedness and addresses critical social issues, thus contributing to the public good.

Consequently, CHSS's strategy for community engagement includes cultivating community (local, regional/state, national, global) partnerships and leveraging college expertise to identify and respond to community needs.

Goals
1. Retain community engagement as a pillar of CHSS's configuration and expand its scope by establishing new collaborative partnerships between CHSS and the many communities within which it is embedded.
2. Develop appropriate metrics to ensure that the value of community engaged scholarship is recognized.

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[6] https://carnegieclassifications.acenet.edu/elective-classifications/community-engagement/