

STATE OF THE COLLEGE SUMMARY

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Summary of State of the College Speech - 2013
Interim Dean Raymond D. Duvall

Interim Dean Duvall invites you to contact him at cladean@umn.edu with your comments, questions, and reflections about this proposed 2013-2014 agenda.

The state of the College of Liberal Arts is strong. Faculty and students set standards of excellence through their extraordinary accomplishments; many of our programs are highly ranked; and we continue to add exceptional scholars to our faculty.

These strengths will serve us well during a time of transition: internally, we are changing leadership, and our external environment is changing, too. We are moving from an era of solid financial and cultural support for liberal arts education to one in which its value is challenged almost daily. And we may be transitioning into a strange new world of instructional pedagogies and attendant uncertainties about how a liberal arts education is to be delivered.

These and other changes have produced questions about which we have substantial disagreement within the college:

- Is our future better defined by a reinvigorated commitment to the intrinsic value of liberal arts education or by an increased attention to career preparation for our students?
- To what extent are new pedagogical technologies desirable, or perhaps even inevitable?
- As we become increasingly dependent on undergraduate tuition, how do we reconcile the undergraduate-education mission of a public university with our R-1 research- and graduate-education mission?
- How should we adapt to the changing frontiers of knowledge, without becoming unproductively attentive to academic fads — rushing into the next “new thing”?

Part of our task must be to maintain, in the college's many forums, an active dialogue about these points of tension. How we address them will shape the College of Liberal Arts for decades to come. Collectively engaging them is among our most important responsibilities.

In this context of both strength and challenge, Provost Hanson has charged me, as interim dean, with two tasks: one financial, one academic.

Our financial task

CLA has a structural deficit. While not trivial, it represents only three to four percent of our total tuition revenue and thus is a problem at the margins, rather than a debilitating crisis. I believe we can make progress toward resolving it by strategically targeting opportunities for increasing revenue.

We will increase the number of students taking CLA classes, using retention and recruitment strategies that are more student-centric. We must:

- Tell the CLA story in ways that better emphasize our distinctive characteristics, and that describe a CLA education in terms that are relevant to today's students;
- Build on disciplinary strengths to align our programs with students' changing academic preferences;
- Create summertime academic opportunities;
- Create new interdisciplinary programs with broad appeal.

We must also work to generate greater gift-giving and external grants.

Our academic task

While our charge for this year is on one level about finances, it is more fundamentally about who we are academically.

The provost has charged me to move ahead with *CLA 2015 Report* recommendations to make strategic program investments. And, since CLA cannot be all things, we must

prioritize — balance any investment by some disinvestment. We will set these priorities together, determining collegially what, in the long run, will most effectively distinguish our college and best serve our students.

Signature programs on which we are already making progress and which will be priorities this year include:

Humanistic Commons: We will focus on extending this innovative, interdisciplinary program to the upper divisions and to graduate education.

Human Rights Academy: This collaboration with the Humphrey Institute and Law School will make us one of the first schools in the country to offer a professional master's degree in human rights.

Second-language acquisition: The second-language requirement is a CLA signature. This year we will work on strengthening second-language instruction, and integrating it throughout our curriculum.

Other areas of focus are: growing the Heller-Hurwicz Economics Institute, further consolidating the cognitive and behavioral sciences, inaugurating a newly emerging consortium on the pre-modern world, and fostering deeper integration of the statistics department with the quantitative social sciences.

All of these projects grew out of faculty-led initiatives, are expressly interdisciplinary, and have significant scholarly benefits across multiple departments. They are models of the kind of work I propose we undertake together this year as we re-imagine and take steps toward creating a more robust CLA.