College of Arts and Sciences

Compact Plan 2009-2011

America's success in the 21st century will be predicated upon greater access to higher education for its citizens, greater investment in research and discovery, improved understanding of our diverse cultures and common heritage, and a firm grasp of our role on the world stage."

> *Open letter from the Council of Colleges of Arts and Sciences to the next President and Congress of the U.S. (September 2008)*

Submitted by:

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Introduction

This compact plan was prepared with input from all Departments and Institutes within the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS). It describes an ambitious yet achievable plan for strengthening the College over the next three years. In doing so, it both identifies areas of excellence targeted for strategic investment and aligns these areas with the top priorities of the university as articulated in our shared Strategic Plan.

The College of Arts and Sciences was founded in 1990 to bring together the core academic disciplines at USF. From its inception, CAS was the largest college. In 1990 it had 423 faculty and 11,268 majors; today it serves over 15,000 students and 454 faculty organized into 23 departments and 19 Institutes and Centers. It is important to consider that these figures reflect a number of organizational realignments over the years. Currently, CAS is further divided into two Schools; the School of Natural Sciences and Mathematics (SNSM) and the School of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences (SLASS). Together, we deliver approximately 60% of USF Tampa SCH and receive 32% of sponsored research funds (excluding USF Health). More important, we are the vibrant heart of a major research university, custodians of the most enduring human questions and a place where important discoveries of every kind occur every day.

To assemble this Compact Plan, we first solicited input from departments about their goals and aspirations, strengths and challenges. We did not require departments to complete separate compact plans and we maintain that they should not be required to do so in the future. Departmental compact planning can work against interdisciplinarity, and our experience this year reveals the value of setting priorities at the college level.

This plan is organized into five CAS initiatives that we are proposing to make our focus over the next few years. These initiatives are the result of a careful and critical analysis of departmental requests that we conducted in light of USF's aspirations and the changing higher education environment. Following the prescribed structure, we provide for each initiative:

> (1) a brief rationale;
> (2) specific actions and implementation steps;
> (3) a statement of how the initiative aligns with the USF Strategic Plan; and
> (4) processes and metrics for assessing degree of success.

The five initiatives are as follows, each with a brief description:

Initiative One: Realign and Allocate Staff Positions to Maximize Efficiencies, Strengthen Infrastructure and Mitigate Risks. Our goal here is to invest in a variety of elements of infrastructure (namely advisors and administrators) that are critically important to preserving and supporting high quality instruction and research.

Initiative Two: Maintain Targeted Quality and Performance With Declining Resources. This initiative is aimed at ensuring the appropriate level of investment in faculty of all kinds (tenure-earning, visiting, and adjunct), to meet student needs, promote improved progress toward degrees and promote excellence in research and scholarship.

Initiative Three: Become Nationally Competitive in Graduate Education. Our intent here is to take a bold step forward toward changing the distribution of graduate to undergraduate students at USF, and to do so in a way that makes us competitive with our aspirational peer institutions.

Initiative Four: Improve Undergraduate Student Success. Inasmuch as we educate the lion's share of USF undergraduates, we feel a special responsibility to improve their ability to make good progress toward completing their degrees. This initiative is aimed at removing bottlenecks to completion that will result in a much improved time-to-degree and graduation rate.

Initiative Five: Build a Culture of Creative Collaboration Through Innovative, Interdisciplinary Research Clusters. Our aim here is to build upon the good work that has already been done in identifying important research clusters by strengthening them. The success of these clusters depends upon the recruitment of outstanding faculty and on investment in the research infrastructure, namely technicians, equipment, and staff support.

One area in which we did not focus much attention this year is the identification of departmental and college aspirational peers. We plan to make this conversation the focus of our summer evaluation meetings with Chairs and next year's planning process.

Resources Feedback

The College is supportive of data driven decisions especially with regard to the allocation of resources. We have and will continue to work with the Provost's Office to help refine and improve the quality of the data used in the compact planning process. Below are some recommendations to consider going forward:

- The financial data used in compact planning must be aligned with information available from the University's business systems (GEMS, FAST, BANNER), Finance Mart and Infomart.
- Under the Budget section breakout Graduate Assistant salary expenditures
- Under the Staffing section breakout temporary (Visiting Faculty) from permanent commitments
- Student Credit Hour production should breakout data for the summer semester especially if USF is considering a return to the *Privatized Model*
- Trends in Contract and Grant productivity should be based on actual expenditures since the budgets are setup for multiyear periods and have been problematic to summarize in the past
- While compact planning was intended to be completed at the department level, it would be useful to see College level summaries in the resource sections
- An additional section for tuition revenues would be beneficial

Initiative One: ***Realign and Allocate Staff Positions to Maximize Efficiencies, Strengthen Infrastructure and Mitigate Risks***

The College of Arts and Sciences is proposing a model that is designed to reorganize staff positions based upon the type of work they perform and the people and functions they directly support.   Our goal is to gain efficiencies with an equitable distribution of workload, standardization of College business practices and improved allocation, hiring, training, evaluation and management of staff positions.

1. Advisors
All ***Advisor*** positions would be realigned to report to the College office of Graduate and Undergraduate Studies. We would establish centralized locations organized around the new school structure to better serve students. For example a central Science Advising office in SCA could provide a one-stop-shop for all services to science majors. Although these positions would report centrally they would maintain strong connections to departments. (*See Initiative Five for resources request)*

2. Unit Research Administrators
The staff performing post-award administrative functions that directly support PI's and are currently located in departments would be brought under the College Budget Office. Ideally, they would also be physically located in close proximity to the PI's they support. This model is already being initiated with our recently approved ***Unit Research Administrator*** position that will provide direct support to PI's in the School of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences. Chairs in the School of Natural Sciences and Mathematics would likely be receptive to this strategy since it fits with their interdisciplinary research clusters (and especially considering their plans to co-locate some of the faculty clusters in interdisciplinary research space and buildings).

This proposed centralized staffing model could also provide a basis for aligning University restricted funding sources with specific business functions.   For example post-award administrative support positions might eventually be fully supported from indirect cost returns and/or new undergraduate advisor positions might be funded with revenue generated from differential tuition fee increases.

3. Administrative/Instructional Support Staff
Staff that perform administrative and instructional support functions would continue to report to the academic departments. The College is working to refine a methodology that can be used to equitably allocate (or reallocate) staff FTE to academic departments based on their size and complexity. The allocation methodology will take into consideration many variables including but not limited to Faculty FTE, number of course sections, student credit hours, total expenditures (all funding sources), array of degree programs, and the variety of funding sources available to the unit.

4. Sufficient Operating Expense Budgets
Some department budgets have been reduced to the point where there is not sufficient funding for basic operating expenses much less professional development and professional travel opportunities for faculty. We seek to restore these budgets to meaningful levels.

Action and Implementation Steps

1. Discuss and refine the staffing model concept with our department Chairs to generate buy-in.
2. Develop and execute a communication plan to all stakeholders.
3. Make the reporting changes to affected staff positions in GEMS.
4. Develop a model to equitably distribute the workload.
5. Develop and execute plan to optimize the office locations for the newly centralized staff.
6. Reset department expense budgets to acceptable levels.

USF Strategic Plan Alignment

USF Strategic Plan Goals

- *Expanding world-class interdisciplinary research, creative, and scholarly endeavors.*
- *Promoting globally competitive undergraduate, graduate and professional programs that support interdisciplinary inquiry, intellectual development, knowledge and skill acquisition, and student success through a diverse, fully-engaged, learner-centered campus environment.*
- *Enhancing all sources of revenue, and maximizing effectiveness in business practices and financial management to establish a strong and sustainable economic base in support of USF's growth.*

Assessment

Criteria for Success

- Implementation of a cost effective, standardized model for scheduling and delivering advising support to students
- Implementation of a cost effective, standardized model for delivering post award administrative support to PI's
- Equitable distribution of academic support staff to departments based on the size and complexity of the unit (relative to their peers in the College of Arts and Sciences)
- Reduced risks associated with non-compliance issues associated with the management of grants
- Improved time to graduation for students

Means of Assessment

- Calculated benchmark cost ratios for delivering services under the current model and demonstrated cost savings under proposed model (i.e., annual advising costs/major, administrative staff cost/$1M in grant expenditures)

Initiative Two: ***Maintain Targeted Quality and Performance with Declining Resources***

1. Maintain Faculty Strength

High quality degree programs (BA/S, MA/S, and PhD) are built and maintained by the high quality faculty who provide excellence in both instruction and research/scholarship. Nearly every CAS degree program is undersized relative to their aspirational peers with regard to faculty strength (FTE). Moreover, student demand for CAS courses and SCH productivity standards for CAS departments consistently exceed the base budgets and full-time faculty strength for these departments. Hence it is crucial that CAS replace tenure denials from within these strategic programs to maintain their ability to offer effective and high quality instruction. More important, routine replacement of tenure denials is perhaps the single best mechanism to preserve the integrity of the tenure process. Likewise, it is crucial that CAS renew visiting, adjunct and graduate assistant positions. Replacing tenure denials and renewing visiting and adjunct positions will enable CAS to promote student success and sustain enrollment revenue. Finally, additional faculty searches (strategic hiring) are needed to meet departmental curricular and programmatic needs (i.e., replacing some retiring and resigning faculty and/or adding new faculty lines).

2. Maintain Summer Course Offerings

To further promote student success, sustain enrollment revenue, meet SCH benchmarks, and to stay within corridor in both graduate and undergraduate SCH production, CAS must continue to offer a diverse schedule of courses during the summer academic terms (A, B, and C).

Action and Implementation Steps

1. CAS requests (a) replacement of tenure denials in strategic programs, (b) renewal of visiting and adjunct positions for 2009-10, and (c) strategic hiring of new faculty (retirement/resignation replacements as well as new faculty lines) to promote student success and sustain enrollment revenue, meet curricular/programmatic needs, and preserve the integrity of the tenure process. CAS anticipates that the need for contingent faculty will be reduced in subsequent years to the extent that new faculty lines and additional GA/TA stipends are approved.

2. CAS requests sufficient resources (faculty, adjunct and GA) to offer courses over the summer term. CAS is supportive of a return to the privatized model.

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Compact Plan Emphases

Community Engagement *Global Literacy and Impact*
Integrated, Interdisciplinary Inquiry *Research and Innovation*
Student Success

Assessment

Criteria for Success

1. Successful faculty searches to
   (a) Replace tenure denials,
   (b) Hire contingent faculty (i.e., visiting and adjunct faculty), and
   (c) Strategically hire new faculty

2. Predictable availability of summer course offerings for students due to a regularized and systematic funding for summer term instructional needs.

Means of Assessment

1a. No loss in courses offered within affected programs.
1b. No loss in SCH productivity within affected programs.
1c. Improved progress toward degree completion and graduation rates.
2a. No loss in courses offered over summer term.
2b. No loss in SCH productivity over summer term.
2c. Improved progress toward degree completion and graduation rates.

Initiative Three: **Become Nationally Competitive in Graduate Education**

1. Make graduate stipends more competitive

Excellent graduate programs are built with high quality faculty who in turn attract high ability graduate students and post docs. High ability students enhance research productivity, and progress to degree more quickly, both indicators of nationally competitive graduate programs. While most departments in CAS are undersized compared to their aspiration peers, most departments have the core of quality faculty necessary to mount graduate programs attractive to a national student audience. However, our programs consistently lose some of their best graduate student applicants due to low graduate stipends. In addition, the low stipends often limit the pool of applicants. CAS graduate programs have stipends that are generally at or below the Oklahoma State University (OSU) average (50 percentile) yet we are in competition with programs having stipends in the top 25-30 percentile. Increases are definitely warranted and we have not seen significant increases since the late 1990's.

2. Increase the number of graduate stipends

An important mechanism to grow high quality graduate programs is to increase the total number of competitive stipends while investing these in strategic programs. This allows for selective expansion of the number of high quality graduate students in key departments. When the increased number of assistantships are used to support more students but for shorter times (for instance, mainly year one or two in the program) research productivity can be increased along with national visibility. This approach can also enhance the quality of instruction through the use of selected senior graduate students as instructors in certain courses. This provides these students with important teaching experience making them more competitive for academic careers. The cost of additional stipends can be offset somewhat by replacing current adjuncts with these more senior teaching assistants.

3. Support new interdisciplinary PhD programs

Three linked PhD programs in History, Government and International Affairs, and Sociology were approved this year and (as promised in the USF plan) warrant additional faculty to support their development. This is reflected in the CAS hiring priorities.

Action and Implementation Steps

1. CAS requests increasing stipends for teaching assistants in PhD and Masters Programs to approximately OSU+ 20%. (See attached spreadsheet) Estimated costs of increasing stipends for all PhD seeking TA's, Masters seeking TA's and all TA's combined are provided. For comparison, the cost for raising stipends for each entering class (requires recurring increases each year until all stipends reach targeted levels) is also provided (see spreadsheet).
2. CAS requests a 5% increase (approximately 30 additional stipends each year) for the next three years. These will be strategically invested in targeted departments based on

productivity, departmental growth and the need to reduce undergraduate course bottlenecks limiting graduation.

3. We will seek approval for three searches at the assistant professor level in support of the new PhD programs in History, Government and International Affairs, and Sociology. Carry out national search Fall 2009 and complete hiring Fall/Spring 2009/10.

USF Strategic Plan Alignment

USF Strategic Plan Goals

- *Expanding world-class interdisciplinary research, creative, and scholarly endeavors*
- *Promoting globally competitive undergraduate, graduate and professional programs that support interdisciplinary inquiry, intellectual development, knowledge and skill acquisition, and student success through a diverse, fully- engaged, learner-centered campus environment.*
- *Expanding local and global engagement initiatives to strengthen and sustain healthy communities and to improve the quality of life*

Compact Plan Emphases
Community Engagement
Integrated, Interdisciplinary Inquiry   *Research and Innovation*
Student Success

Initiative Impact
Enrollment Planning & Management
Graduate School

Assessment

Criteria for Success

1. Developing competitive stipends
    a. Budgets for graduate stipends in programs increase
    b. Improved applicant pool
    c. Over time; increased research productivity, number of graduates per year and quality of career placements of graduates

2. Increasing the total number of competitive stipends 5% per year for 3 years
    a. Budgets for graduate stipends in programs increase
    b. Increased graduate FTE
    c. Reduced number of adjuncts (replace by TAs)
    d. Reduce unmet demand/bottleneck courses leading to improved rates of graduation
    e. Over time, increased research productivity and number of graduates per year

3. Hiring faculty in support of new PhD programs (History, GIA and Sociology)
   a. Successful faculty search
   b. Long term increases in productivity
   c. Increased Graduate student population in these three departments

Means of Assessment

1. Budget analysis, increase in number and yield of quality graduate applicants (i.e., GRE and GPA and/or applicants, and or research experience success as undergraduates). Over time, the number of presentations and papers by students will increase, time to degree will be reduced to national norms and the number of graduates per year will increase. These graduates will also be more successful in securing prestigious faculty positions.

2. Budget analysis, increase in number of quality graduate applicants (i.e., GRE and GPA and/or applicants, and or research experience success as undergraduates) and reduction in adjuncts with concomitant increase in the number of TA's as instructors across the college. Over time, the number of presentations and papers by students will increase, and the number of graduates per year will increase. The unmet demand in targeted courses will be reduced and graduation rates of targeted groups will also be reduced.

3. Successful hires of faculty in History, Government and International Affairs and Sociology for Fall 2010. Increased scholarly productivity and increased number of graduate students (over a 2-5year time frame).

Initiative Four: ***Improve Undergraduate Student Success***

Our initiative for undergraduate student success takes a holistic approach. Student success results from quality instruction, access to courses, accurate and available advising, and university policies that remove obstructions and facilitate academic progress to degree. We are taking actions that help students achieve overall academic success by addressing four factors that most dramatically influence their academic achievement:

1. Advising
2. Course availability
3. Inability to perform in the major of choice
4. Cumbersome academic policies

Action and Implementation Steps

1. Quantify graduation rates in each CAS degree program.
2. Identify the top five factors that negatively influence the College's overall graduation rates.
3. **Advising**
   a. Develop and implement a centralized model in which only professional advisors are used for academic advising.
   b. Complete a "graduation check" of native (at 4 years) and transfer students (at 2 years) from departments with the lowest graduation rates. Advisors then contact and counsel students who are not making satisfactory academic progress.
4. **Course availability**
   a. Identify "critical courses" essential for progression in each degree program in CAS.
   b. Analyze by department, instructional needs, space, and/or other factors affecting restricted access to "critical courses."
   c. Review and implement alternate patterns for critical course availability.
5. **Inability to perform in major of choice**
   a. Implement a new policy that mandates re-direction of Chemistry, Biology, Pre-medical and Biomedical science majors who have $\geq$ 5 D, F or W grades in major science courses.
   b. Advocate for University-wide policy that delays the registration of students into a course for the third time until all current and entering students have had an opportunity to register for that course. This would need to be given priority by Information Technologies (IT) in order to implement the coding necessary.
   c. Develop a science degree designed for re-directed basic science majors who want to work in health care, but do not want (or cannot) complete extensive basic science courses.

6. **Cumbersome academic policies**
   a. Advocate for a change in the "major" GPA calculation policy at the University level.
   b. Advocate for a University policy change in the number of semesters allowable for students re-admitted to the University.
   c. Review and implement changes in course acceptance for Associate of Arts degrees from outside the state.

USF Strategic Plan Alignment

USF Strategic Plan Goals
Promoting globally competitive undergraduate, graduate and professional programs that support interdisciplinary inquiry, intellectual development, knowledge and skill acquisition, and student success through a diverse, fully- engaged, learner-centered campus environment.

Compact Plan Emphases
Student Success

Initiative Impact
Enrollment Planning & Management
The Registrar
Undergraduate Studies

Assessment

Criteria for Success
1. Increased graduation rates for CAS as a whole <u>and</u> for any department graduating less than 25 percent of their majors each year.
2. Increased access to "critical courses".
3. Decreased number of students in academic jeopardy in CAS departments.
4. Increased quality and availability of academic advising.

Means of Assessment
1. **Increased graduations rates**: Quantify graduation rates in the College and departments: FTIC - 4 year, 6 year; Transfer – 2 year, 4 year
2. **Increased access to critical courses**: Unmet demand reports in "critical courses"
3. **Decreased number of students in academic jeopardy**: Compare by year, the number of students on academic probation, the number of students with ≥ 5 D, F, W grades, and the number of students academically dismissed in each academic program
4. **Increased quality and availability of academic advising**:
   a. Implement the use of the NACADA Academic Advising Inventory Report to evaluate advisor performance
   b. Quantify the number of advisors attending CAS development and training workshops
   c. Quantify the number of accurate academic plans submitted by advisors for re-admission of academically dismissed students

Initiative Five: ***Build a Culture of Creative Collaboration through Innovative, Interdisciplinary Research Clusters***

A common criticism of academia is that while society has problems, universities have departments. CAS has a genuine commitment to forging exciting new interdisciplinary arrangements that will lead to breakthrough advances in both research and teaching. In the School of Sciences and Mathematics (SNSM), their commitment to collaboration and interdisciplinarity is so great that they now organize all of their requests for new resources in accord with five interdisciplinary clusters that they launched this year. In the School of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences (SLASS), articulation and buy-in to interdisciplinary clusters has been a little slower, but a few have emerged and many more are likely to develop later. The SNSM interdisciplinary research clusters are as follows:

1. Materials Science
2. Biomedical Science
3. Global Change Science
4. Computational Theory and Practices
5. Science, Technology, and Mathematics Education

A detailed description of each of these clusters and the activities of their members can be found on the SNSM website. http://sciences.cas.usf.edu/research_clusters/.

In their input to this Compact Plan, the SLASS Chairs identified the following two interdisciplinary research clusters:

1. Global Literacies
2. Environmental Sustainability and Community

In addition, there are at least two "emergent research clusters" that will likely take shape in the near future:

1. Origins of Modernity
2. Film Studies

The SLASS webpage that will provide definition and membership lists for these clusters is currently being beta tested. http://web3.cas.usf.edu/main/schools/SLASS/

Action and Implementation Steps

1. Hire strategically to support interdisciplinary research clusters
We were very fortunate this academic year to hire a number of superb new faculty into the SNSM research clusters. Our hiring request for the next academic year will be similarly organized, seeking to build strength across all five areas.

We plan to request a number of faculty lines in SLASS this year, some associated with departmental needs and others with the emerging clusters.

2. **Facilitate collaboration through concrete support of interdisciplinary activity**
   Here we are referring mainly to providing a Research Coordinator for each school, a dedicated staff person to support the cluster activity, including:
   - the pursuit and administration of interdisciplinary grants,
   - internal and external communication about cluster activity, and
   - the scheduling of research cluster meetings.

   SNSM was launched using a minimalist model of staff and administrative support, but requires dedicated staffing in order to be successful. SLASS, which is three times as big, will certainly need the same.

3. **Strengthen core facilities**
   The history of USF is to take on a high level of research activity without building the necessary infrastructure to sustain this work. While our investments will have to be prudent, we believe it to be critical to judiciously acquire needed equipment (the recent NMR is a wonderful positive example) add technical staff to run and maintain this equipment, and ensure that this equipment and technical staff have appropriate space to do their work. Estimated investments in each of these areas are also included in our plan.

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Compact Plan Emphases
Global Literacy
Impact, Integrated, Interdisciplinary Inquiry   Research and Innovation

Assessment

Our success in building creative collaborations through interdisciplinary clustering can be assessed using the following metrics:

1. Number (or percent) of publications and grants including faculty from multiple departments
2. Formal documentation of collaboration in university publications and websites
3. Number of successful applications for funding in areas corresponding to identified research clusters
4. Changing faculty and student perceptions of barriers to interdisciplinary collaboration (some of this data may have already been collected by the III Task Force)

In each case, we would collect baseline data and assess our progress in creating genuine collaboration over time.