Robert Frank, Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences  
Statement of Goals and Accomplishments, January 2015

It has been two and a half years since I joined the College of Arts & Sciences, yet I continue to marvel at the ongoing vitality, integrity, and commitment of our faculty, staff, students, and alumni. The pages that follow describe a number of recent initiatives and plans that seek to advance the college’s core strategic goals related to education, research, diversity, and organizational strength. But what is perhaps most important and least visible in this sort of report is the enormous credit, gratitude and respect that we must all have for the many people whose work contributes to the strength of this extraordinary intellectual community.

I doubt that there is anyone reading this report who does not recognize the existential challenges facing our work as scholars and teachers in public higher education. Much of the ongoing work in the Dean’s Office and our departments is targeting changes intended to position our institution for both short-term and long-term success. You will have the opportunity to review these initiatives and evaluate our progress in the pages that follow.

But let me take a few lines to address the less visible question of how we have been tackling our challenges. One of the key tenets of our work in the Dean’s Office is that effective leadership must encourage, support, and occasionally provoke healthy change in ways that are neither foreign nor “top-down.” To the contrary, we believe that the only initiatives that will have an impact beyond the relatively brief tenure of any academic leader are those that find ways to mobilize and give voice to the good ideas of people who will collaborate with each other and integrate these good ideas into the culture and future of the college. This type of change management helps organizations move forward in ways that are sustainable because they grow out of and, in turn, reaffirm the strengths and values of the community. I believe that you will see this philosophy at work in the pages that follow as we see that each of our major initiatives draws upon the ideas, talent and initiative of the faculty and staff who, together, make up the College of Arts and Sciences at Ohio University.

Many challenges lie in our future, but together we have launched a series of important strategic initiatives that will set us on a course for success amid the changing landscape of higher education.

**Accomplishments**

**Enrollment.** Our Fall 2014 freshmen enrollment exceeded 1,000 students—the largest entering class since 1995. Total undergraduate enrollment stands at 4,126 students, and graduate enrollment is up 14% to just under 800 students. Our graduate enrollment is based primarily on continuing stability in our established programs and an increase in the Master of Financial Economics program. The college’s freshman-sophomore retention rate improved from 76.4 to 77.2 percent (80 additional students). It is likely that our efforts to better market the college (using our new communication infrastructure) and the yield and retention initiatives taken by our departments have contributed to our
higher enrollment. Our success is particularly impressive given the declining number of high school graduates in Ohio.

**Faculty.** The number of full time equivalent (FTE) faculty stands at 460, up 26 from Fiscal Year 13. These numbers include an additional 9 Group I faculty and an additional 20 Group II faculty added this academic year, with nearly all of the growth in Group II faculty coming from the Ohio Program of Intensive English (OPIE), from temporary positions related to group I replacements, or resulting from the transition of some Group IV visiting faculty to Group II faculty positions. This year, in addition to replacements for retirees or resignations, we are conducting searches for 8 additional new Group I faculty lines, and one additional Group II line. As I noted at the December Data Summit, any future faculty growth will inevitably be coupled with the discussion about growing capital expenses related to much-needed renovation and building projects.

**Student success.** A number of student success initiatives are being pursued within the college. Many of these focus on the quality of undergraduate student advising in the belief that better advising can lead to better student success and retention. Departmental and A&S Undergraduate Student Affairs advisors have been meeting together regularly and discussing strategies for improving advising. These conversations have been informed by the results of an undergraduate student advising survey conducted for the past two years. The good news from the survey is that as a college, satisfaction with academic advising improved over last year. I am hopeful that we will continue to improve as our advising initiatives begin to have broader impacts. For example, the probation rate for first-year Arts & Sciences students dropped from 20% to 17% during the past academic year. Continued efforts to advise students effectively and provide them with academic resources to help them succeed can help to further reduce the probation rate.

This year, student advising has been bolstered with the addition of four specialized advisors: an international student advisor, a career advisor, a retention advisor, and a pre-law advisor. Three of these positions represent partnerships between the college and another unit. The international advisor is focusing on the special needs of that student population and represents a partnership with the Ohio Program of Intensive English (OPIE) in the Linguistics Department. The career advisor works as a special Arts & Sciences liaison with the Career and Leadership Development Center, and the retention advisor is working with students taking introductory biology (BIOS 1700), a gateway course with a high failure rate (see below). This advisor position is currently funded through a partnership with the Provost’s Office. The pre-law advisor fills a university-wide need in this area and provides great synergy with the Center for Law, Justice & Culture as well as the Making and Breaking the Law theme. These advisors will help their respective students achieve greater academic success and provide them with more opportunities to benefit from the resources of the college and university.
The Dean’s Office and the Department of Biological Sciences launched an initiative last year aimed at students who were struggling in BIOS 1700. The program identifies struggling students very early in the semester so that appropriate advising, tutoring, and enrollment changes can occur before students fail the course. We now have three semesters of data on the program, and it is clear that it is having a positive impact. Development of similar programs for math, chemistry and physics courses with high failure rates is under consideration.

High-impact practices (HIPs) represent a set of educational experiences associated with student engagement and success, including service learning, internships and undergraduate research. As demonstrated at each year’s Student Research Expo and department-level undergraduate research presentations, a significant number of Arts & Sciences undergraduate students are working with faculty on scholarly projects. Internship experiences and service learning projects vary by department, but we are working to increase these opportunities. College support for the Center for Campus and Community Engagement has been one route to better developing and promoting service learning, as has been the development of service learning courses by faculty in several of the Themes. In addition, the Arts & Sciences career advisor has been working to connect with A&S alumni and to increase students’ awareness of internships available through the Career and Leadership Development Center. Similarly, our pre-law advisor is working with alumni in the legal profession to enhance the availability, visibility, and quality of legal internships for undergraduate students.

Department operating budgets. Not surprisingly, multiple years of budget cuts created significant disparities in departmental operating budgets, leaving some departments unable to support appropriate faculty development activities related to research and teaching. Department operating budgets were enhanced this year with the goal of better supporting faculty development. Budgets were supplemented with about $650,000 in additional, one-time funds based on a trial formula that considered the number of faculty, staff and students served by each department. Planning meetings held with each department during Fall Semester helped us gain a more accurate, comprehensive understanding of each department’s personnel and operating needs. The information obtained from these meeting will provide the basis for a better understanding of the true operating costs of each department. Continuing this pilot “3-9s” investment will be an important goal as we develop our college and department budgets for the coming fiscal year.

Facilities. Planning has begun for construction and renovation related to three major college building projects. The Interdisciplinary Science Facility (ISF) is potentially a $90 million project to provide updated research and teaching space for many of the activities currently conducted in Clippinger Hall. Ellis ($13 million) and Morton ($28 million) halls are in the queue for future renovation. As I mentioned at the Fall Data Summit, planning to meet the costs of these projects (a conversation that is just beginning) will require significant dialogue and decision-making to determine what the college and university ultimately need. Arts & Sciences also is working with the university to complete
classroom furniture and fixture upgrades in Ellis, Gordy, Morton and Bentley, and work has begun to relocate laboratories from the long-obsolete Ryors and Irvine annexes, moving them to more suitable facilities.

**Curricular themes and other curricular initiatives.** Themes have moved from concept to reality. Students were introduced to Themes during Bobcat Student Orientation last summer, and 10 Themes are offering courses, programs and activities during this academic year. Provost Benoit has dedicated $525,000 in special investment funding to support this work. That money is allowing faculty groups to move forward with curricular development, communication, and collaboration in this university-wide initiative to reinvigorate the undergraduate curriculum. Four team-taught, multi-disciplinary introductory theme courses have been developed and introduced this year. In addition, the recruitment of six new Theme-oriented Group I faculty has commenced. These positions are jointly funded by the provost and college. Three of these searches have been completed at the time of this writing, and the remaining three are well under way. The positions are in archeobotany (Anthropology, Food Studies Theme), rural development (Sociology, Wealth and Poverty Theme), history of science and technology (History, Fire to iPhone Theme), conservation biology (Biology, Sustainability Studies Theme), politics of development in global south (Political Science, Wealth & Poverty Theme), and behavioral economics (Economics, Knowing the Future Theme).

In addition to curricular themes, the college is continuing to support other innovations in undergraduate education, such as the Arts & Sciences Scholars program (aimed at high achieving A&S freshman) and the Difficult Dialogues courses on religion and gender.

**Research and scholarship.** At last count, Arts & Sciences faculty published about 20 books and 600 journal articles per year and delivered over 1,000 presentations at professional meetings. This is impressive productivity for about 300 Group I faculty members! The college supports the scholarly work of the faculty in numerous ways, including start-up funds for new faculty, cost-sharing on grant proposals, support for externally funded fellowships (such as Fulbright Awards), direct and indirect financial support for centers and institutes, and college-level funding for professional development and research proposals. The main rationale for providing additional departmental operating funds this year was to support faculty travel related to scholarship. Excellence in research and scholarly activities was recognized this fall with first-ever college awards for outstanding work in the humanities, social sciences and natural sciences. Finally, a call for proposals for learning communities related to research and scholarly activity was distributed in the fall in an effort to bring together faculty who would like to collaborate on proposal writing or the development of scholarly projects.

External research funding awarded to Arts & Sciences faculty has declined in the past few years, as has the number of proposals for external awards. A decline in funding not only affects the ability of the faculty to carry out specific research projects, but also erodes the flow of facilities and administrative costs (F&A) to the college. A decline in
these discretionary funds impacts (among other things) the ability of the college to cover faculty start-up funding and cost-sharing on grant proposals. In response to this situation, and in order to promote a culture of robust research and scholarship, two groups of faculty began meeting this fall. One group was composed of faculty who depend on external funding to support their work, and the other consisted of faculty less dependent on these funds. We discussed the current college and university infrastructure that supports scholarly work and possible strategies and programs to maintain and enhance this support in the future. The college plans to form an advisory group on research and scholarship as a result of these conversations.

**Administrative infrastructure.** The university’s adoption of responsibility centered management has required major changes in the administrative capacities of the college. Unlike the past, when budgets were simply distributed to the college, we now need the capacity to forecast our revenue and expenses over multiple years. This represents a huge change for the staff handling the finances of the college. With the help of the Provost and VP for Finance and Administration, we now have in place the personnel to handle this challenge. Another significant achievement is the increasingly collaborative relationships between the college and several university units, including Human Resources, Facilities, Enrollment Management and Admissions, Institutional Research, and the Center for Leadership and Career Development. Dean’s Office staff have cultivated strong working relationships with colleagues in each of these units, resulting in better communication and problem solving.

**Communication.** Prior to 2013, the college lacked anything like an effective communication infrastructure—this was a significant lapse for an organization of our size and clearly was limiting the impact and recognition of our work. We had little opportunity to share our successes, communicate our vision, or shape external perceptions of the college. Investments in a director of communication and communication budget have resulted in much greater visibility for the college within the university and for key external audiences like prospective students, parents, alumni, and the general public. A&S Forum has published more than 1500 stories (and disseminated them through college and university networks), with more than 50,000 visitors since its introduction a year and a half ago. The college and department websites are being modernized so that their content can be easily managed and easily measured. All of the college’s websites are being search engine optimized, thereby greatly enhancing our visibility. Additionally, college websites are better integrated with social media and university websites, and many more Arts & Sciences stories are being featured in university publications. The college is now recognized by University Communications and Marketing and the Admissions Office as a key partner in the marketing and promotion of Ohio University.

**Faculty learning communities and teaching practice.** The college is providing support for faculty professional development with the A&S Faculty Learning Communities initiative. Seven faculty-initiated and led learning communities are operating this year. These groups are pursuing teaching and learning topics ranging
from “Global Education and Diverse Classrooms” to “Incorporating Team-Based Learning (TBL) into the Classroom.” -The college offered an ePortfolio Showcase last spring, featuring discussions and demonstrations of electronic portfolios developed by members of a faculty learning community and their students during the past academic year. The college also co-sponsored the Spotlight on Learning Conference with Regional Higher Education last spring and supports the Bruning Teaching Academy’s faculty development program.

**Staff support.** Our new Administrative Staff group is developing a plan to better support administrative and clerical functions across the college. There are several reasons to move in this direction. The current staffing of many departments is too thin, creating situations where several departments are one medical leave or resignation away from catastrophe. No clear path for career advancement for our most proficient and capable staff members is available within the college. The college has no processes to share expertise and experience effectively across units, and we have no system to orient, train and support new staff members and department chairs. A group of staff and administrators has devised a pilot project, launching this year, with a goal to initiate and evaluate a new, more collaborative approach to coordinating our staff activity in ways that address the issues outlined above. Additionally, the first-ever college staff award given this fall is another way that the contributions of the staff are being recognized.

**General Education.** I co-chair the Taskforce on General Education with Greg Kremer, from the Russ College of Engineering and Technology. Last year the taskforce was charged with engaging the university community in a discussion of the common goals for baccalaureate programs at Ohio University. During the 2013-14 academic year, members of the taskforce met with the deans of every college and received and considered input from over 500 faculty members. The resulting document, *Common Goals for Baccalaureate Programs at Ohio University* was endorsed by the Faculty Senate in Spring 2014. This year the taskforce is leading the university community in a discussion about the role of general education in three areas; quantitative reasoning, communication skills (oral and written), and breadth of knowledge. Sub-committees are considering learning outcomes for each of these areas as well as the current state of the curriculum. Past surveys about the general education curriculum have shown that the faculty and students are generally satisfied with the current requirements. However, they also show that the implementation of the general education curriculum could be improved.

**Diversity and inclusion.** The values and practices of diversity and inclusion are at the heart of liberal education and it is no mistake that our college, departments, and faculty play important roles in advancing and enacting these priorities in the university community. A substantial part of our programming and curriculum in the social sciences and humanities focuses on challenges in these areas. The Difficult Dialogues courses, the Love and Hate Theme, and the Center of Law, Justice & Culture are a few good examples, and, of course, the Department of African American Studies and the
Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies program manifest our work as educators preparing students for life in a diverse and changing world. The college has supported opportunity hires that increased college faculty diversity, and number of women in leadership positions has increased within the college office and among the department chairs.

However, it is clear that we should continue to strive toward greater inclusion and diversity with respect to our students, faculty and staff, and to better prepare our students for success in a diverse, global community. For this reason, I have started conversations with a group of interested faculty and a number of possible initiatives emerged. One idea was a program that would promote the development of student leaders with the skills necessary to facilitate conversations across differences in gender, race, ethnicity, and religion. This idea was discussed at a follow-up meeting with representatives from Arts & Sciences, Student Affairs, International Affairs, the Associate Provost for Diversity and Inclusion, and the College of Business. Another meeting is planned, and I am hopeful that additional ideas related to student and faculty recruitment and career success will be discussed by the Arts & Sciences group in addition to a student diversity leadership program.

**Fund raising and alumni relations.** I am pleased to report that the college has exceeded its $15 million goal for The Promise Lives Campaign and that we did it six months ahead of schedule! The university’s scholarship matching program has been very popular with our alumni, who have established eight scholarship endowments of at least $25,000 each. In addition, the Arts & Sciences general scholarship endowment established with the matching program has accumulated $96,000 since its inception about a year ago. The college held its biennial Distinguished Alumni Banquet and Celebration last October, honoring three alumni for lifetime achievement and one young alumni for his commitment to the college. Last spring, the college hosted an emeritus faculty luncheon that was attended by about 80 people. Maintaining our relationship with emeriti is an important goal for the college. We continue to struggle with the question of how we can further enhance our critically important alumni relations work and are actively exploring the possibility of collaborating with other units at the university to see if we can make progress in an affordable way. These are important long-term investments in the college’s future that involve difficult funding decisions, but clear and critical obligations to our successor generations.

**Better communication and planning with regional campuses.** Executive Dean of Regional Higher Education Bill Willan and I launched an effort to improve communication and planning with the regional campuses last fall. Better coordination is essential given conflicts that can arise with the scheduling of online courses, differential tuition, upcoming accreditation, and the role of regional campuses in offering college credit courses in Ohio high schools through the state’s College Credit-Plus program. A taskforce composed of representatives from Arts & Sciences and the regional campuses has drafted guidelines for sharing information, approving courses and
instructors, and communicating effectively. One of the recommendations is that a standing committee would be formed to facilitate communication and problem solving. I am optimistic that a better, more productive relationship will emerge from the work of the taskforce.

Goals for Future

Continue and accelerate work on diversity initiatives.
Continue development of resources for faculty & staff professional development in the domains of research, teaching and service.
Continue work on improving student success.
Continue work on revisions of departmental workload policies.
Continue work to improve college facilities.
Develop a long term financial plan that incorporates debt from capital projects.