



# WEBER STATE UNIVERSITY

Lindquist College of Arts & Humanities

## Performance and "State of College" Report (Jul 1, 2016 – Feb 1, 2018) Scott Sprenger, Dean of the Lindquist College of Arts & Humanities

### *Introduction*

The PPM requires a performance review of college deans every two years. As part of the review process, the Provost's Office has requested a report (below) on the state of the college and my professional activity as dean since arriving on July 1, 2016.

### *The Role and Philosophy of Dean*

While the dean's role is essentially to manage the college's resources and operations, it is also to actively collaborate with faculty and staff on the improvement of conditions and outcomes while strategically planning for the college's future.

From a governance perspective, my top priority is to work with all faculty and staff on shared priorities and aspirations in a spirit of mutual respect and transparency. It is also to clarify a shared vision and planning process that strategically positions the purpose and value of the arts and humanities for the university, the local community, the broader national context and, above all, for the lives and careers of our students. One of my chief goals as dean is to make sure that all of our departments maintain cutting edge curriculum while developing advising strategies, professionalizing pathways and employer networks so that all of our students are prepared for a promising career trajectory upon graduation, should they choose not to pursue graduate or professional school.

### *Administrative Responsibilities*

I am grateful to share day-to-day responsibilities with, and to be well-supported by, associate dean, Becky Jo Gesteland, the dean's office staff, and the college's five department chairs and two M.A. directors. At the same time, the dean is ultimately responsible for the direction and oversight of the Lindquist College, which includes: the dean's office staff, the Council of Chairs, the advising office staff, the director of the Val A. Browning Center and staff, the college's three buildings, performing arts venues and art gallery, the college's and departmental budgets and accounts, college IT, undergraduate programs and curriculum, the hiring of faculty and staff, the College tenure and promotion process, the college's faculty development program, the

college's advisory (AHA!) board, alumni and fundraising activities, the Office of Cultural Affairs, and the Hurst Artist-in-Residence board. As a member of several university committees, subcommittees and task forces, I attend and/or actively participate in the university senate, the university dean's council, the provost's academic planning task force, the digital literacy task force, the committee on salary and benefits, the committee on public/private partnerships, the committee on student transitions, and the College "working group #3" (on college-specific career resources and pathways).

### ***Initial Impressions***

My time at Weber State University has been extremely positive. Despite ongoing resource challenges, I have observed since my arrival an across-the-board commitment by faculty and staff to the university and its open-access mission and a deep devotion to helping students realize their goals and aspirations. This underlying ethos is palpable in everything we do, and I am sincerely honored to be a part of the college and WSU community.

### ***Two Initial Challenges***

**1. Turnover:** By the time I arrived on campus in July of 2016, the dean's office had lost key employees, including the budget specialist, the development director, and the Office of Cultural Affairs presenter. These departures translated into a significant loss of experience and institutional memory from which it has taken time to recover. The Department Chairs, Associate Dean, Becky Jo Gesteland and PR/Marketing Director, Christie Denniston were instrumental in helping me to gain initial footing. But it took several months to find the right budget specialist; the advancement office has only recently filled the development director position; and there is currently no salary to hire a presenter. Last summer, the director of the Val A. Browning Center (VBC) retired, leaving another key position (and budgeting gaps) to fill. Based on a 360 review of the VBC that I had done by external consultants during fall 2017, we are currently restructuring the VBC budgets, staffing/operations and director's role. We hope to soon put the VBC on a sustainable path into the future.

**2. Fiscal.** Upon arrival, I was presented with news of a decline in freshman enrollments and a corresponding budget shortfall. Thanks to a rapid and effective response by the provost's office and colleges, the enrollment numbers eventually improved, but the "new normal" of enrollment volatility triggered a flurry of campus-wide strategic planning and a corresponding creation of committees, sub-committees, task forces, etc., to remedy the longer-term structural problems. I am currently serving on a number of these committees and task forces, and they occupy a large portion of my time and energy. At the college level, there were also some budget shortfalls, areas of fiscal concern and salary inadequacies. I am working on remedies; but with historically static budgets and other institutional constraints, progress will necessarily take time and persistence.

## Strategic Planning

Given the turbulence in higher education, a state funding model that privileges STEM and vocationally-oriented degrees, and a general nationwide decline in liberal arts and humanities enrollments, it is imperative that we in the Lindquist College have an evidenced-based campaign to demonstrate the value and purpose of our disciplines to students, parents, administrators, legislators and employers and that we have an effective strategy for steering the college successfully into the future. Although the natural tendency is for us to think about our professional existence departmentally, I believe that we are ultimately stronger if we think about ourselves sharing a common purpose and destiny as a college.

To this end, the dean's office launched a college-wide strategic planning process in fall of 2017 in order to identify college-level opportunities and challenges, prioritize our college-level goals and objectives, and to devise a modest and sustainable plan of action. At the beginning of this school year, we divided the labor into 7 working groups—each of which corresponds to one of the 7 priorities.

The strategic planning document can be seen here: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0Bz64Rj7ZI0T2SmxRRm5FdIRIVjQ/view?ths=true>

The 7 college working groups - each of which is devoted to one of the 7 priorities - are listed here:

<b>I. Student Access &amp; Recruitment</b>	<b>II. Student Retention</b>	<b>III. Develop College-Specific Career Resources, Services and Strategies</b>	<b>IV. Continuous Development and Updating of Curriculum (Major, Gen Ed &amp; Interdisciplinary)</b>
Hai Crimmel [ENGL]	Toni Asay [ENGL]	Isabel Asensio [FLANG]	Craig Bergeson [FLANG]
Aubrey Jones [FLANG]	Genevieve Bates [MENG]	Matt Choberka [DOVAD]	Christy Call [ENGL]
Susan McKay [ENGL]	Claire Hughes [Writing Center]	Tricia Cook [Lindquist College]	Dianna Huxhold [DOVAD]
Jean Norman [COMM]	Levi Jackson [DOVAD]	Nicola Corbin [COMM]	Susan McKay [ENGL]
Thom Priest [DPA]	Mark LeTourneau [ENGL]	Susan Hafen [COMM]	Angelika Pagel [DOVAD]
Mali Subbiah [ENGL]	Becky Marchant [ENGL]	Levi Jackson [DOVAD]	Sally Shigley [ENGL]
Eva Szalay [FLANG]	Debbi Murphy [Lindquist College]	Scott Sprenger [Dean's Office]	Laura Stott [ENGL]
John Trimble [FLANG]	Sylvia Newman [ENGL]	Aubrey Jones [FLANG]	Michael Wutz [ENGL]
Sara Vause [ENGL]	José Otero [ENGL]		
Kyra Hudson	Ryan Ridge [ENGL]		
Brooke Kelly [ENGL]	John Schwiebert [ENGL]		
	Eva Szalay [FLANG]		
<b>V. Improve Faculty/Staff Recruitment and Retention</b>	<b>VI. Public Image of the Arts &amp; Humanities</b>	<b>VII. Technology, Space &amp; Infrastructure</b>	
Bryce Allen [DPA]	Austin Hull [Browning Center]	Bryce Allen [DPA]	
Mike Ault [COMM]	Matt Choberka [DOVAD]	Carey Campbell [DPA]	
Diego Batista [FLANG]	Tamara Goldbogen [Arts Learning Collaborative]	Paul Crow [DOVAD]	
Electra Fielding [FLANG]	Russell Burrows [ENGL]	Austin Hull [Browning Center]	
Jenny Kokai [DPA]		Mark D. Maxson [DPA]	
Alexander Lancaster [COMM]	Micah Bauer [DOVAD]	Jessica Greenberg [DPA]	
Molly Morin [DOVAD]	Jan Hamer [ENGL]	Drew Tyler [COMM]	
Sarah Steimel [COMM]	Robin Haislett [COMM]	Jason Manley [DOVAD]	
	Christie Denniston [DEAN]		

Throughout the fall of 2017, the 7 working groups were tasked to meet at least twice to discuss key actions, implementation strategies, and the potential costs and impacts associated with implementation. At the college retreat in January 2018, the 7 working groups shared progress reports, which we discussed and critiqued as a college. The reports are now in my hands for rollout and allocation considerations.

Developing a new strategic plan and working groups was a significant undertaking during my first year. And while the progress for now is uneven across the groups, we have a clear set of initiatives and a direction into the future. Over the course of the next two years, we will need to: 1) assess progress and make adjustments according to unfolding conditions, 2) integrate our college-level efforts with university planning (I anticipate a convergence and some necessary shake out), 3) be prepared to adapt our plan if the structural/financial conditions around us change dramatically or if new opportunities arise.

### ***Accomplishments, Changes, Challenges and Remedies***

**1. Faculty Hiring:** In 2016, we were extremely fortunate to hire five excellent tenure-track faculty members and five superb contract or VAP faculty who correspond to the wishes for excellence and diversity stated in the strategic plan.

**2. Dean's Office Staffing:** In August 2017, Kate Johnson took over as our dean's office administrative assistant; Chrissy Stice, our new budget expert, has worked diligently over the past months to help us understand and rationalize college accounts, budgets and processes; Mark Ashby is our new college IT/Tech specialist and, by all accounts, he is excellent. And as mentioned above: we are thrilled that the Advancement Office has assigned our college a new development director; I look forward to rebooting a serious fundraising campaign to support our plans.

**3. Faculty Development:** In addition to encouraging new faculty members to participate in the beginning-of-the-year university faculty development program, we launched a college-level program last year, with two "new faculty" retreats and the drafting of a 5-year development plan (FDP) by each faculty member. The purpose is to help new faculty make professional aspirations known to all, to think strategically about how to align professional goals with institutional requirements, to integrate the three areas of tenure review for better efficiency, and to identify campus resources to support the 5-year plan. The new FDP document can be seen here:

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Ui6LwE89z6-yKgJG-Du\\_qkQLTuX-cLWScBWxFTBBklg/edit](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Ui6LwE89z6-yKgJG-Du_qkQLTuX-cLWScBWxFTBBklg/edit)

**4. Faculty/Staff Development Funding.** We made a change to the funding process last year in order to manage a growing structural shortfall between supply and demand. Given the funding gap, and in the absence (for now) of new funding, we

needed urgently to rationalize the allocation of these limited resources by balancing fairness and impact. Two widely used "best practices" were introduced: 1) the requirement of a brief funding proposal, and 2) the creation of two deadlines during the year in order to evaluate the relative quality of the proposals vis-à-vis other proposals. We just completed round 2 of this year's funding process. It appears to be working for faculty while allowing the dean's office to better forecast the budgeting.

**5. Faculty Research/Accomplishments:** In order to better recognize the high level of scholarly and creative activity in the college, Christie Denniston and I are planning to create a handsome electronic publication or college magazine featuring faculty and student accomplishments. We are anticipating a fall 2018 rollout.

**6. Student Accomplishments:** In addition to the frequent stories we run in our college newsletter and website on student accomplishments, I instituted in fall of 2016 a Lindquist College "dean's list" for students who maintain a 3.7 grade point. Each semester, I send a letter to the dean's list students applauding their accomplishment. We also publish the list on our screens in the VBC and E-Hall. The response by students has been positive. We will soon be expanding our approach to publicizing student accomplishments with the help of an online tool called MeritPages. More soon.

**7. Student Recruitment:** Because recruitment and retention emerged as the top priorities during the college planning process, we launched initiatives during spring and fall of 2017 to test the waters. For example, the Lindquist College held an Open House for local area high school counselors in March during which faculty members and chairs gave brief presentations, and student ambassadors offered campus tours. We also held a lunch meeting in February with dual-language immersion (DLI) high school students. Other recruitment initiatives are currently being developed at the departmental level with concurrent enrollment students and potential transfer students from neighboring states.

**8. Curriculum: A Process Change and Current Proposals:**

a. Associate Dean, Becky Jo Gesteland, became in fall 2017 an *ex officio* member of the College Curriculum Committee in order to keep the dean's office apprised of major curricular changes before they are entered into Curriculog and land on my desk without prior warning. We made this change in order to rationalize the process and to provide more time for meaningful discussion before the crush of Senate deadlines.

b. Curricular proposals currently being discussed or underway:

1. BA in Spanish Translation and Interpretation (FL)
2. Digital Media/Film Studies (College, BA)
3. Associate of Workplace Communication (Comm and English, AA, AS)
4. Arts Administration (DPA, minor)
5. Sound Recording/Production (DPA, minor)
6. Global and/or Environmental Communication (BA)

8. Designing Your Life (a 1-credit career strategy course that I am developing in conjunction with Working Group #3)

**9. Advising.** Debbi Murphy and Tricia Cook did terrific work leading out on new strategic planning initiatives for blending career and academic advising. At the same time, with 2 advisors for 2000 students, we were significantly understaffed (the NACADA standard is 1 advisor for around 350 students). Fortunately, the provost's office addressed this shortfall with funding to hire an additional advisor with the specific requirement to implement a new retention strategy (the Starfish initiative). Debbi Murphy decided to take on Starfish with the third advisor, Nick Berg, assigned to backfill Debbi's prior work and to help Tricia with advising and career initiatives. The hiring of Nick additionally corresponded to an important strategic planning item to hire a Spanish-speaking advisor.

**10. Scholarships/Waivers:** The historical generosity of the state and private donors for student scholarships and activity waivers is nothing short of astonishing. At the same time, there are increasing pressures on these resources both at the college and university levels. Changes may be necessary over the course of the coming year to address the potential shortfall. We will know more after this year's allocations.

**11. Fundraising:** There were many challenges this past year on the development front due to the loss of Carol Biddle during summer of 2016, the transfer of her senior-level salary to another college, the loss of Yulia Goff in early winter, and the extreme challenge of finding an appropriate replacement. Despite these setbacks, I managed nonetheless to meet several times with many of the key donors to the College and University and have submitted promising funding proposals, including for a \$2m Design Lab. We used college R&R and one-time provost's office funding to pay for several big capital improvement projects across the college. In January 2018, I submitted a \$240k RAMP grant for an artist-in-residence for a 4-part town/gown "migrating mural" project. Finally, Eric Amsel, Katherine French-Fuller and I are writing a large Mellon grant to support first-gen/first-year students in liberal arts disciplines.

**12. Graduate Programs:** Without going into detail, our two graduate programs are healthy. Both programs are well managed by able directors, both are generating adequate resources to cover their costs, and graduating students are satisfied with their education and professional outcomes.

**13. Teaching and Pedagogy:** During fall 2017, we started a reading group in the dean's office and Council of Chairs to study the insights of *How College Works* (Harvard UP, 2015) and Becky Jo and I read several chapters of Ken Bain's *What the Best College Teachers Do* with new faculty. Both works offer innovative, low-cost and sometimes very simple strategies to improve student learning. Both also tie retention in the humanities and liberal arts to excellent teaching in introductory or "gateway" courses.

**14. Internships and Professionalizing Experiences:** It is worth repeating that one of the main strategic planning items is the development of a college-appropriate career strategies, programs and resources. Some of the actions taken to advance this agenda include:

- a. Hiring Tricia Cook who brings additional career service experience to the college advising office and has been working with Debbi Murphy and Amelia Williams to better harmonize academic and career advising.
- b. Amelia Williams was appointed as a career services liaison to the Lindquist College in 2016. She has been helping us to develop internship programs, resources and career pathways for each department or area.
- c. In fall 2017, I appointed 4 new department faculty internship coordinators (in addition to Comm's existing coordinator). The group meets several times a semester to develop internship opportunities for students and to move the internship agenda forward. During this past year, we have invited experts from other campuses in Utah to share their work. We are currently implementing an innovative internship plan that will work for WSU students, most of whom have a job unrelated to their degrees or career aspirations.
- d. I am working with faculty to identify and/or develop minors or clusters of "professionalizing" coursework, which in combination with their humanities or arts major, will create a clear and viable pathway into the labor market and/or professional or graduate school.

**15. College AHA! Board:** The purpose of this board (composed of donors and "friends of the college") is to advise the dean's office and to help with public relations and fundraising. In order to keep the board members informed of "cool stuff" happening in the college, I have been calling on faculty and students to do brief presentations at board meetings. To date, each of the departments has showcased its outstanding work and fundable projects. We also hold a couple of special receptions and events for the AHA! Board to keep them connected to the Lindquist College. This has been especially challenging this year for the dean's office without the assistance of a development director.

**16. Office of Cultural Affairs / Val A. Browning Center:** The VBC and The Office of Cultural Affairs have been in flux over the past couple of years due to budget challenges and staffing changes. Frank Bradshaw and Christine Denniston planned and managed the OCA events for the 2016/17 school year. And last year, Christine and I planned the line-up for this coming year, including: "Civic Jazz," "An Evening with Cornel West" and Parsons Dance. In consultation with the stewards of the Browning Trust, the financial source of OCA, and on the basis of recommendations by the external consultants, I have decided to reduce the number of OCA events to three per year and to choose performers and speakers of whose excellence and name recognition can both amplify the image of our college and university while making themselves

available to work with students in a residency or via master classes. We are also working with the Summit Artist in Residence (AIR) Program at Powder Mountain to have them share their artists for campus visits, short residencies and public lectures.

**17. Changes to Hurst Artist-in-Residence Program:** In order to rationalize the selection process of our college's artists in residence while including the ideas of our college's departments, I decided to form an advisory board with: one representative from each academic department, one AHA! board member, the director of Ogden Symphony Ballet (with whom we are a community partner) and the director of the Summit AIR Program. This board meets twice per year to represent their respective interests, to bring forth ideas and to help vet the artists for on-campus residencies.

**18. Technology/Space:** Space constraints are an ongoing issue for the Lindquist College. I am aware of these and am doing my best to address them by talking about the challenges with university leadership and donors and by looking for alternatives off campus.

**19. PR/Marketing/College Communications:** This is a strong area of the dean's office due to the expertise and untiring efforts of Christine Denniston. The dean's PR/marketing office has developed a branding guide that should be used by all in advertisements and public communication. There are also three strategic areas of focus in the coming year: 1) A redesign/relaunch of our college website, which is the primary gateway to reach prospective students. The redesign will ensure that our website is mobile-enabled with tracking analytics, 2) a college-wide brochure that unites all of the college's departments into one cohesive document and 3) a faculty accomplishments brochure to be shared with key influencers locally and internationally. During the 2016/17 year, I launched the College Paths 2 Careers Blog: <https://telithaelindquistcollege.wordpress.com/> that faculty can use when students inevitably ask: "What can I do with my degree?" The site provides a long list of links to market evidence for the professional value of studying the arts and humanities.

**20. International.** This is a vastly underdeveloped area on our campus. Around 30% of WSU students have a second language and foreign experience. More foreign-language speakers will be arriving on campus next year (in Spanish) and in 2021 (in Mandarin and French) thanks to Utah's Dual-Language Immersion program. I have been brainstorming with allies on campus to develop smart pathways for these students with innovative curriculum, partnerships with other colleges on campus, and advanced-level study abroad programs and/or overseas internship programs.

**21. The Venture Program** (this is a national humanities program offered free of charge to under-represented, non-traditional students). After placing the program on a 1-year hiatus to correct a budget shortage, the Venture Program was re-launched this fall with the financial and managerial help of Continuing Education.

**22. College Improvement Projects.** Each department received significant R&R and one-time funding to undertake infrastructural improvement projects, such as design lab equipment, the purchase of new filmmaking equipment, new computer labs, and so on. Your department chairs should be reporting on these projects at departmental retreats.

**23. Support College Events.** One of the joys of the dean's position is free tickets to all of the events. I have enjoyed attending and supporting faculty and student events. And I am happy to do welcomes and/or introductions when asked.

**24. Alumni relations.** We recently featured three of our Lindquist College students in the WSU magazine due to dean's office/development efforts. I continue to meet with recent alums to connect (or reconnect) them with the college both in order to gain insights into career pathways and long-term cultivation for contributions.

**25. Interdisciplinary.** The Lindquist College continues to lead out on interdisciplinary initiative and community engaged learning. We have offered the most WSU courses; our faculty continue to develop the most CEL designated courses; and I organized and aligned two of the three Office of Cultural Events events this year (Civic Jazz, An Evening with Cornel West: Civility in Modern Times) with the Community Engaged Learning Office's annual theme of "civility."

**26. Public Humanities/Outreach.** Since my arrival at WSU, I have been named to the board of directors of Utah Humanities (the state chapter of the NEA) and to Weber County's Creative Alliance. I work with both organizations to promote the arts and humanities in our community, to forge ties among stakeholders in the arts and humanities community, and to coordinate events with local and statewide arts and humanities institutions. I was the university forum speaker at BYU-I (titled: "Beyond the Major: Or How to Get the Most Out of College"), and I published a piece on Gen Ed and the value of the liberal arts for the Salt Lake Tribune.

**27. Free Arts Tickets for Students.** One idea that I pitched to the student fee board was to offer free tickets to all WSU students in exchange for \$75,000 in student fees to support the wages of student workers in the VBC who, in turn, support our performing arts programs. The effects of free tickets would be significant in greater student participation in arts events, better community, better learning, and perhaps - indirectly - better retention. The idea would also solve a \$75,000 shortfall in student labor costs in the VBC. The proposal is currently under review.

**28. Teaching.** Teaching is my first professional love, and I hope to get back to it soon. In spring 2016, I offered a college leadership series (inherited from predecessors), but

the course did not carry due to low enrollments. I am currently redesigning the leadership course into a course called "Designing Your Life." I plan to teach it next fall, along with an Honors course on contemporary events. I also hope to teach a French literature course or offer a short-stay study abroad in France in the coming years.

**29. Research.** In 2017 I co-published a book chapter on the global liberal arts titled "Study Abroad, Abroad: Leading the Global Liberal Arts in Paris," at the American University of Cairo Press; I will be presenting a paper titled "Balzac and the British Gothic Novel" at Oxford University in spring 2018, and I am completing a book manuscript on Balzac for Michigan State University Press, due in fall 2018.

Thank you for reading this report. I thoroughly enjoy working with the faculty and staff of the Lindquist College, and I am grateful for the opportunity to serve as dean.

Scott Sprenger  
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