

Four Priorities for the Future

By Dean Gary Sandefur



When I became Dean of Letters & Science this past August, I established four priorities for the coming years: preserving and building on our traditional strengths in undergraduate education; enhancing our research pre-eminence; strengthening diversity in our classrooms and workplaces; and fostering a climate in which faculty, students, and staff can achieve their personal best. These fundamental objectives pose significant challenges in an era of shrinking state and federal support for public higher education. To achieve these priorities, we need to forge strong and comprehensive partnerships with alumni and friends, legislators, and others.

Undergraduate Education

Most undergraduates enter UW-Madison through the College of Letters & Science, and our academic programs serve as the underpinnings for much of undergraduate education across campus. Simply put, the quality of our undergraduate programs is central to academic quality for engineering and business majors as well as liberal arts majors.

For many students, Letters & Science plays a larger role. Our faculty, classrooms, and affiliated organizations plant the seeds of transformation that have led generations of undergraduates to self-discovery, self-confidence, and often a life passion. This role is a vital element of our educational mission to produce future leaders.

We must continually strengthen and renew our academic programs in traditional and emerging fields of study in order to fulfill our mission and guarantee the value of the Letters & Science degree for alumni and for future generations. We will continue to support top-ranked departments and to help additional departments to improve their rankings. We will work to retain faculty and staff who stand among the leading researchers in their fields, who share their techniques and results in undergraduate classes and research mentorship programs, and who inspire students to use their knowledge to make a positive difference in the world.

And we will continue to create learning communities, service learning, internships, and other innovative programs to help students make the most of their undergraduate education.

Research Pre-Eminence

Letters & Science faculty are researchers as well as educators. The two activities are inseparable, and the college's research vision has been expansive throughout its history, reaching beyond the biological and physical sciences to nurture the creative and performing arts and to encompass research in the arts, humanities, social sciences, and policy studies. Within this environment, Letters & Science research faculty and programs have fostered the interdisciplinary cross-fertilization that has produced breakthroughs such as the integration of biology with psychology, the use of chemistry in the study of genomics, or the adoption of social science methods for use in historical research. The college's interdisciplinary institutes have contributed to the development and sophisticated evaluation of public policies at the local, state, and national levels.

Many of our departments rank among the best in the world, but we cannot be complacent. Our ability to preserve and enhance our research pre-eminence rests on our ability to retain top faculty and staff and develop new ways to fund research in the face of dwindling federal support for competitive research grants. For that reason, we will focus on building support for Letters & Science faculty and research through partnerships with the business sector and through individuals and organizations that are in a position to support our work through gifts.

Diversity

Training our students to be leaders requires that we provide the experience, knowledge, and skills that will allow them to work effectively in an increasingly diverse country and interconnected global community. Similarly, we must ensure that all individuals, regardless of social and economic background, have access to higher education. And we must address and remove the subtle and the blatant barriers to women's full participation in all fields of study. The University of

Wisconsin-Madison and the College of Letters & Science have a long way to go to achieve the diversity we desire. If we are to succeed, we will need to collaborate with other schools and colleges within the university and with organizations, K-12 schools, and communities beyond campus.

We also must address the very real economic barriers faced by moderate- and low-income students. Recent cuts to the federal Pell Grant program have undermined an important source of financial aid at a time when students face tuition increases imposed to compensate for declining state support for higher education. While it is true that Wisconsin continues to have comparatively low tuition, we must acknowledge that tuition increases are likely to continue in future years. For that reason, it is imperative that we do everything within our power to increase government resources for need-based financial aid and to develop additional scholarship funds from private sources.

Climate

The future success of the College of Letters & Science depends on people and on our ability to establish an environment in which all members of the college community — faculty, staff, students, alumni, and friends — feel welcome and valued. We cannot preserve academic excellence and research pre-eminence if we fail to attract and retain a talented and engaged group of classified staff, academic staff, students, and faculty members. Nor will we succeed in our efforts to strengthen diversity without an atmosphere of mutual respect between people of different cultures, backgrounds, and ideas.

For these reasons we will advance the priorities for undergraduate education, research pre-eminence, and diversity in ways that promote a respectful and supportive academic and work environment. As we do so, we will strive to find creative solutions to the stresses and challenges of striving for excellence despite uncertain budgets. And we will work with our alumni and friends to find ways to support professional development and to recognize and reward the contributions that people in all employment categories make to our college.

West Wing Dedication Set for Alumni Weekend



Badgers returning to campus for Alumni Weekend May 6-7, 2005, will have a special treat

when the Department of Geology & Geophysics dedicates its new five-story addition. Known as the "West Wing," the new facility is a significant step forward for the department.

The growing numbers of undergraduates who are majoring in geology and geophysics and taking geology courses will gain new classrooms and study areas. Faculty and students will have a wonderful new teaching facility in the William B. (BS

'49, geology) and Maureen Miller Lecture Hall, which is named for the Wisconsin natives whose gift made it possible to implement state-of-the-art multi-media technology and lecture hall design.

The West Wing also boasts the C.K. Leith Library, an expanded facility made possible through gifts from David Leith and Jeanie Leith Lamphier in honor of their grandfather, who was a pioneering geologist. The library will provide space for additional journals and computer workstations where students can work online or use the library's CD-ROM/DVD resource collections.

The addition's third floor provides space for faculty and laboratories in the Center for Geomicrobiology and Mineralogy.

A second phase of the project will create more space for the Geology Museum.

West Wing construction was funded by a partnership between the Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation (WARF), the College of Letters & Science, the Department of Geology & Geophysics, and gifts from faculty, alumni, and friends of the department. Bob Dott, Cam Craddock, and other emeriti professors, joined all current faculty members in the building campaign. In addition, the Geology and Geophysics Board of Visitors, with significant leadership from Ken Ciriacks (BS '58, geology) and Jay Nania (BS '84, MS '87, geology and geophysics), played a significant role in helping to raise over \$1 million for the project, which was completed without any state funding.

To learn more visit:
<http://www.geology.wisc.edu/home.html>