



College of Liberal Arts and Sciences Strategic Plan 2020–2025

Final Report

Letter from the Dean

Dear colleagues and friends,

Over the past five years, the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS) has carried out an ambitious strategic plan, one rooted in our mission to serve students, drive discovery, and contribute to the public good. I am proud to report that, despite extraordinary challenges, we've accomplished a great deal and made meaningful progress on every goal we set.

The College implemented this plan during one of the most complex periods in recent memory. A global pandemic upended our teaching and research environments. Political and social unrest called us to reflect and act on our values. Evolving student needs, particularly around wellness and belonging, required new support systems and creative solutions. Most recently, we've faced increasing pressure on federal research funding, uncertainty around diversity and inclusion efforts, and serious budget constraints within the University and the state.

And yet, through all of this, our faculty, staff, and students rose to the occasion with resilience and innovation. The accomplishments outlined in this report are a direct result of their dedication and talent. Together, we launched high-impact academic programs, expanded research and scholarship, strengthened community partnerships, and raised the profile of our college and its contributions on campus and beyond.

This report offers a summary of progress toward our 2020-2025 Strategic Plan. It also marks a turning point as we look toward the future. In the 2026 academic year, we will begin a new strategic planning process that aligns the College's priorities with the [University's 2024-2034 strategic plan](#). By doing so, we will chart a path forward for how CLAS can continue to lead at UConn, empower our community, and serve the state of Connecticut.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to this work. I hope you share my Husky pride in all we have accomplished and my optimism for what comes next.

Sincerely,



Ofer Harel
Dean, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
University of Connecticut



Goal 1: Climate, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Build and continually support an academic environment and workplace where diverse faculty, staff, and students feel valued and thrive.

Over the past five years, CLAS has worked to build a more collaborative, adaptable, and supportive academic environment that prepares our community to thrive in a rapidly changing world. Our efforts have emphasized professional growth, academic innovation, and strong onboarding and mentorship programs that help attract and retain top talent across disciplines.

The College launched new academic programs aligned with the evolving needs of students and society — including a Master of Arts in Intersectional Indigeneity, Race, Ethnicity, and Politics — and created the Department of Social and Critical Inquiry to strengthen interdisciplinary teaching and research. In 2021, we also welcomed eight new faculty as part of an antiracism cluster hire, with appointments across the humanities and social sciences. These efforts help elevate scholarship and perspectives that have long been underrepresented in higher education.

CLAS has strengthened its recruitment, hiring, and onboarding practices to attract a broad pool of talented faculty and staff. The College has also expanded mentoring and career development opportunities to support long-term success. For faculty, we improved orientation and expanded

opportunities to connect with leadership and peers, including individual and group mentoring to support career development. We also launched leadership fellowships in the Dean’s Office, giving early-career faculty insight into academic administration and opportunities to lead community-focused projects. For staff, initiatives such as our annual Staff Excellence Day, peer mentoring networks, and CLAS-led professional development programs have fostered stronger connections and a culture of support.

CLAS also invested in internal funding opportunities to support inclusive and student-centered teaching, cross-disciplinary collaboration, and community-engaged research. We launched faculty research and teaching conversations on topics like team teaching, cross-divisional funding, and effective group work. These sessions foster dialogue and shared learning across departments and disciplines.

Throughout this period, CLAS has actively incorporated feedback from climate surveys and listening sessions, using it to inform College-wide priorities and shape local efforts. As we look to the future, CLAS remains committed to building an environment where every member of our community feels valued, supported, and empowered to succeed.



Goal 1: Selected Outcomes

Recruitment

Faculty and staff hiring during the strategic plan period moved closer to reflecting the population demographics of the state of Connecticut.

Faculty Hiring

	AY20	AY25
Female	43.46%	45.58%
Self-Reported Minority	20.76%	26.37%

Staff Hiring

	AY20	AY25
Female	68.57%	66.67%
Self-Reported Minority	10.9%	21.00%

Internal Funding Support

Between AY21-AY25, the College funded more than 50 faculty- and staff-led projects that strengthened community support, inclusive teaching, and equitable access across the College.

Examples include:

- ▶ Advancing Mathematics Teaching Through Equity-Minded Inquiry and Transformative Teaching: Supported inclusive teaching in foundational math courses through TA training, student peer review, and a summer institute for faculty.
- ▶ Bridge to Regional Campuses — The Urban Scholars Peer-Mentoring Program: Connected undergraduates from regional campuses with Ph.D. mentors at Storrs for hands-on research and cross-campus collaboration.
- ▶ Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Education and Research at UConn: Highlighted ASL scholarship and strategies to foster accessibility and inclusion for students, faculty, and staff.
- ▶ Avery Point STEM Faculty Learning Community about Disability: Piloted professional development for STEM faculty focused on disability and accessibility in teaching.

Faculty Mentorship

In AY23, CLAS launched individualized and group mentoring programs to expand professional support and career development for faculty in tenure-track and non-tenure-track positions. Programs were hosted by the College, with mentoring groups meeting monthly throughout the academic year.

Between AY23-AY25, the College engaged:

- ▶ 125 faculty mentees
- ▶ 18 faculty mentors

In the News

[Campus Change Mentoring Program Grows from CLAS Faculty Fellowship](#)

Through the CLAS Leadership Fellows Program, a faculty member developed a mentoring initiative to support students transferring from regional campuses to Storrs. Piloted in CLAS, it was adopted by the Dean of Students Office and expanded University-wide in 2025.

[Faculty Work to Improve Accessibility and Destigmatize Disability Across CLAS](#)

Launched in 2022, the College's Accessibility Fellows Program funded faculty-led projects to study disability and improve accessibility in higher education. Outcomes included new faculty workshops on accessible course design, advocacy for captioning services, and projects supporting graduate students with disabilities.

[New Department of Social and Critical Inquiry Established in CLAS](#)

Launched in AY25, the new department brings together American studies, Asian and Asian American studies, Native American and Indigenous studies, and women's, gender, and sexuality studies. It advances teaching and research on social justice, culture, and identity, and underscores the College's commitment to inclusive scholarship.

Goal 2: Innovative Scholarship

Promote interdisciplinary research by building on a foundation of core disciplines and engaging novel intersections to address major challenges to knowledge, well-being, and our world.

CLAS faculty continue to lead in research, scholarship, and creative work at UConn. Even through the COVID-19 pandemic and amid changes in federal priorities, research activity in the College remained strong. Faculty increased grant submissions, secured external funding, and earned national and international recognition across a wide range of fields.

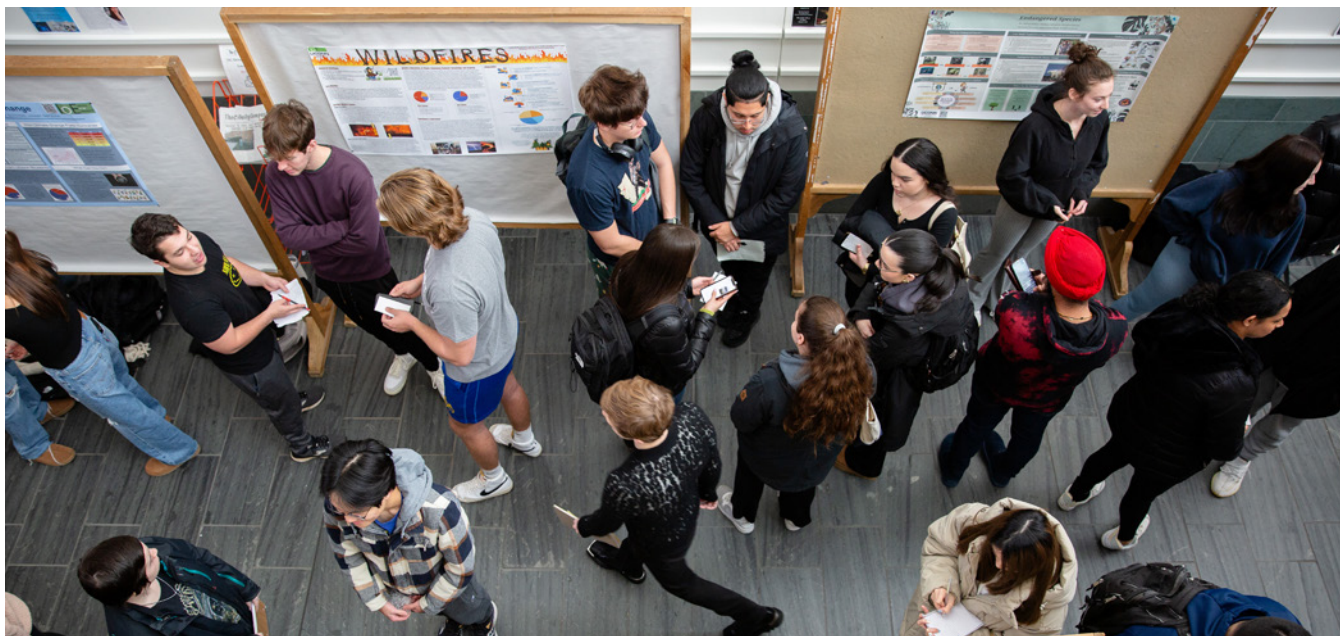
Faculty hiring was a major strategic focus during this period. Starting in 2020, the College launched six cluster hiring initiatives and recruited 40 faculty members who have since made significant contributions to teaching, research, and interdisciplinary collaboration across departments. These faculty bring expertise from the humanities, social sciences, and sciences to address complex societal challenges such as climate change, misinformation, and equity in emerging technologies.

The College invested in internal funding opportunities to support new research projects and foster collaboration across departments. These opportunities helped faculty build momentum; form external partnerships with government, nonprofits, and international organizations; and strategically upgrade shared research equipment and infrastructure.

CLAS strengthened its support for external funding during the strategic plan period. Grant submissions and awards increased among CLAS faculty, supported in part by centralized assistance from CLAS Grant Management Services and other administrative offices. The College also hosted research-focused discussions, professional development sessions, and peer mentorship groups to assist faculty and graduate students with research planning and grant writing.

Fundraising to support research, academic programs, and student success also grew over the past five years, driven by strong partnerships with the UConn Foundation and the generosity of CLAS alumni and donors. In the 2024-2025 academic year, the College raised \$10.7 million — the highest total of any academic unit — supporting scholarships, faculty research, endowed professorships, and other strategic priorities.

Looking ahead, CLAS will continue to build on its research strengths by investing in faculty, expanding access to funding resources, and strengthening the infrastructure needed to support long-term success.



Goal 2: Selected Outcomes

Research Expenditures

During the strategic plan period, the College saw significant growth in research activity. By AY25, research expenditures were nearly 50 percent higher than in AY20, demonstrating strong momentum in externally funded research across disciplines.

50.3M

AY20 Research Expenditures

73.5M

AY25 Research Expenditures

Faculty Fellowships and Awards

Between AY21 and AY25, CLAS faculty earned an increasing number of prestigious awards and fellowships, reflecting both faculty excellence and strategic investments in grant support.

Examples include:

- ▶ National Science Foundation (NSF) Faculty Early Career Development Program (CAREER) Awards: 13 recipients
- ▶ National Institutes of Health (NIH) Career Development (K) Awards: 3 recipients
- ▶ National Academy of Sciences (NAS): 2 faculty elected
- ▶ American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) Fellows: 9 faculty selected

External Research Fellowship Funding

The College increased external faculty research fellowship funding by approximately 35% between AY21-AY25 compared to the previous five-year period.

\$1.0M

Total funding, AY16-AY20

\$1.3M

Total funding, AY21-AY25

Fundraising

Between AY21-AY25, the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, in partnership with the UConn Foundation, raised **\$51.5 million** in philanthropic support.

Hiring Initiatives

Beginning in AY20, CLAS hired 40 tenure-track faculty across 19 academic units through targeted cluster hires aligned with strategic priorities.

Clusters include:

- ▶ Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning: 7 hires
- ▶ Catalyzing Antiracist and Decolonial Futures: 8 hires
- ▶ Diversity Science: 3 hires
- ▶ Environment and Human Interactions: 7 hires
- ▶ Health Disparities: 8 hires
- ▶ Native American and Indigenous Studies: 7 hires

In the News

[The Study of Big Data: How CLAS Researchers Use Data Science](#)

CLAS researchers are using high-performance computing and large datasets to tackle global problems like climate change, suicide prevention, gun violence, and planetary formation.

[The Research of Our Environment: How UConn Researchers are Working to Save the Planet](#)

Faculty across multiple fields are advancing sustainability and climate justice, from restoring Long Island Sound to investigating insect decline and inequitable environmental policies.

[The Research of Difference: How UConn Researchers are Tackling Anti-Racism](#)

CLAS faculty across fields are confronting racism through public-facing research, exploring topics like health disparities, anti-Asian violence, and Black women's wellness.

Goal 3: Teaching, Learning, and Student Success

Enhance through experiential learning, mentorship, and innovative pedagogy the College’s opportunities for undergraduate education.

Between 2020 and 2025, CLAS made significant progress in advancing teaching, learning, and student success. Guided by strategic objectives, the College focused on developing relevant academic programs, strengthening student support systems, and expanding opportunities for engagement both inside and outside the classroom.

CLAS streamlined its academic offerings and introduced several degrees in high-demand fields. These programs align with workforce needs and rising student interest. In addition, the College launched several accelerated graduate programs that allow current UConn undergraduates to earn a master’s degree in fields that serve the public good, saving both time and tuition costs on their path to an advanced degree.

CLAS continued to serve as the academic core of UConn’s General Education curriculum, even as undergraduate enrollment grew and instructional resources remained limited. The College played a key role in planning and implementing the new undergraduate Common Curriculum, which launched in the 2025-2026 academic year. To support a growing student population, academic units expanded experiential learning opportunities,

including internships, undergraduate research, study abroad, and honors programming. These efforts — combined with stronger collaboration between the CLAS Academic Services Center and the University’s Center for Career Readiness and Life Skills — have helped better prepare students for graduate study and professional careers.

To support students more holistically, the College improved advising practices, launched new mental health and wellness partnerships, and strengthened connections with career development services. Many of these efforts were informed by student feedback and focused on reducing barriers to success, particularly for underserved populations. CLAS also piloted a new course and peer mentorship program to support students transitioning from regional campuses to Storrs, an initiative adopted University-wide in AY25.

Looking ahead, CLAS will continue to invest in inclusive teaching, support timely degree completion, and adapt academic offerings to meet evolving student needs. In light of ongoing budget pressures, the College will also review program offerings to ensure alignment with areas of high demand, maximize student impact, and prepare graduates for success in an increasingly uncertain world.



Goal 3: Selected Outcomes

Funding for Enhanced Teaching

Between AY21-AY25, the College awarded more than **\$245K** in teaching enhancement and team teaching grants, supporting new pedagogies, instructional technologies, and hands-on learning opportunities.

Scholarships Growth

Over the past five years, the College increased both the total amount raised for scholarships and the number of scholarships awarded to students, making a meaningful impact on student success.

Scholarship Fundraising

The College raised **\$25.2M** for student scholarships between AY21-AY25. Much of this supported endowed funds that will be awarded over many years, ensuring student success for years to come.

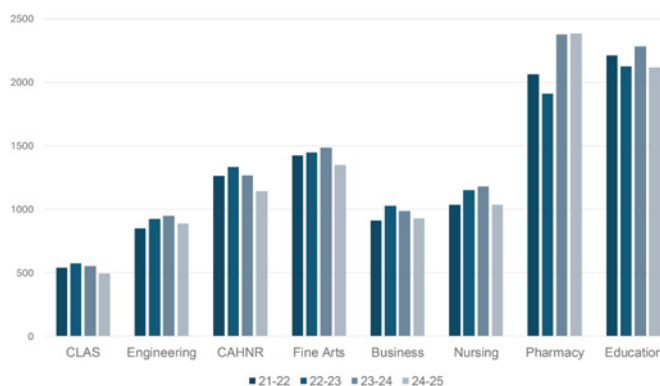
Scholarships Awarded by the College

	AY20	AY25
Awards	707	955
Amount	\$790k	\$1.7M

Instructional Impact

As undergraduate enrollment grew, CLAS maintained strong student outcomes. First-year retention remained steady at 92% at Storrs and 89% across all campuses, while we continued to deliver UConn’s most cost-efficient instruction per credit hour.

Cost of Undergraduate Student Credit Hours



New Academic Programs

Between AY21-AY25, CLAS launched new courses and academic programs in response to student and workforce needs, creating new opportunities for engaged learning in cutting-edge areas.

One key growth area was in the field of data science. CLAS faculty played a key role in launching UConn’s interdisciplinary **Master’s in Data Science in fall 2022**. The program is designed to meet the growing demand for data professionals equipped to address complex societal challenges.

Beginning in fall 2023, the College also introduced a **Bachelor of Science (BS) in Statistical Data Science** and a **Bachelor of Arts (BA) in Applied Data Analysis**. The interdisciplinary degrees provide opportunities for students to explore data generation, analysis, visualization, and ethics.

In the News

[For Undergraduates, Early Research Experience Pays Off](#)

New research training programs in CLAS give undergraduates the opportunity to gain hands-on experience, build lasting relationships with faculty, publish their work, and prepare for careers and graduate study.

[Internship Program Connects Top Data Science Students with UConn Sports Teams](#)

Launched in fall 2023, the Sports Statistics Experiential Learning Program pairs CLAS data science students with UConn athletic teams, where they develop career-ready skills and contribute real-time analytics to improve team performance.

[Economist Reimagines Writing Courses in the Age of AI](#)

A CLAS-funded project piloted a new writing curriculum in economics that integrates AI tools, with the goal of improving instruction in one of UConn’s largest majors and informing writing practices across disciplines.

Goal 4: Broader Impacts, Service, and Visibility

Support existing and new initiatives that impact the welfare of Connecticut and highlight the advantages that we provide.

CLAS has expanded its service and outreach activities, deepening connections with communities, nonprofits, government partners, and alumni. These efforts have elevated the College’s public impact and fostered meaningful collaboration across sectors.

A key achievement during this period was the College’s role in supporting UConn’s agreement with Connecticut’s five federally recognized Tribal Nations, establishing a framework for ongoing collaboration and consultation. CLAS faculty also contributed to statewide K-12 education efforts in Black and Latino history, Asian American and Pacific Islander studies, and Holocaust and genocide education, working with teachers and policymakers to make public school curricula more inclusive and representative of diverse histories and perspectives.

Alumni engagement grew through the launch of College-wide mentorship programs and networking events, including the Bryan and Alice Pollard Mentoring and Networking Night. These new initiatives offer students expanded career support from alumni and

help foster a stronger sense of belonging. In spring 2025, the College also launched the CLAS Alumni Awards, an annual program recognizing distinguished graduates who have made exceptional contributions in their professions and communities. The awards strengthen alumni relations while celebrating the lasting impact of a CLAS education.

CLAS faculty and students significantly increased their public presence, serving as media experts and earning coverage in high-profile national and international outlets. Faculty also contributed to UConn Magazine, further extending the College’s visibility among alumni and donors.

On campus, CLAS representatives played a key role in shaping UConn’s standards for community engagement. In AY25, they contributed to the inclusion of community-engaged teaching, research, and service in promotion and tenure guidance, helping faculty document these contributions and ensuring their continued recognition within the University for years to come.



Goal 4: Selected Outcomes

Leveraging Alumni Networks

During the strategic plan period, the College launched two alumni mentorship programs to strengthen student support and engagement.

Established in AY21, the **Women’s Leadership Collective** connects undergraduate students with alumnae mentors in their fields of interest. In AY23, the College also introduced the **First Generation Mentorship Program**, which pairs first-generation students with alumni who share similar experiences.

Between AY21-AY25, the College engaged:

- ▶ 110 student mentees
- ▶ 108 alumni volunteers

Clinical Services

CLAS clinics provide essential services while training students in clinical programs.

The **Speech and Hearing Clinic**, housed in the Department of Speech, Language, and Hearing Sciences, provides speech-language pathology and audiology services to communities across Connecticut.

Between AY21-AY25, the clinic:

- ▶ Delivered 30,418 total appointments
- ▶ Served 6,934 individual clients

The **Psychological Services Clinic**, housed in the Department of Psychological Sciences, provides mental health services to UConn students, adults, teens, children, and families in eastern Connecticut.

Between AY21-AY25, the clinic:

- ▶ Served 45-60 individual clients annually through 12-14 graduate student clinicians
- ▶ Supported several UConn programs, including the Center for Students with Disabilities and the Student Athlete Success Program

In addition, 62 Ph.D. alumni of the clinic are currently practicing in Connecticut, further demonstrating the clinic’s impact on the state.

Community Engagement Funding

Between AY21-AY25, CLAS funded projects with strong service and visibility components, supporting faculty and students working in communities across Connecticut. Learn about some of them below.

In the News

[Opening Eyes and Minds: UConn Experts Help Transform Connecticut K-12 Curricula](#)

CLAS faculty are shaping K-12 curriculum by contributing to new state mandates in Black and Latino history, Asian American and Pacific Islander studies, Holocaust education, and human rights. Their work ensures that public school students see their communities reflected in the classroom.

[High School Students Get Experience at UConn Chemistry Early College Experience Day](#)

Chemistry is one of several CLAS departments that engage K-12 students to spark interest in college-level science and support future college readiness.

[UConn Policy Institute Releases First Statewide Report on Police Use of Force](#)

In its first statewide report on police use of force, the Institute for Municipal and Regional Policy analyzed data from 60 departments to inform policy, improve accountability, and support mental health-informed public safety in Connecticut.

[UConn Humanities Project Helps Bloomfield Preserve Its Cultural Mosaic](#)

UConn historians are preserving the stories of Connecticut towns through a community-based oral history project.

[Pandemic Journaling Project Reminds Universities of their Impact](#)

The faculty-led project collected nearly 27,000 entries from more than 1,800 people worldwide, highlighting how universities can document public health crises and their impact.

Challenges and Future Directions

The five-year period of the CLAS Strategic Plan was marked by profound shifts in higher education, both nationally and globally. During this time, the College navigated a series of unprecedented challenges that reshaped the way we teach, conduct research, and support our community.

From the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic to ongoing political polarization and global uncertainty, the broader environment has tested our resilience. Student wellness has emerged as an urgent institutional priority, requiring new models of support, engagement, and flexibility. Faculty and staff have responded with creativity and care, adapting their work to meet rapidly evolving needs.

Artificial intelligence (AI) also emerged as a transformative force in higher education. CLAS identified AI early on as a strategic area of growth and has since explored its applications across research, teaching, and operations. As we look to the future, AI will remain a key focus area in both academic innovation and workforce development.

In recent years, we have also contended with challenges specific to our sector. Uncertainty around federal research funding and diversity initiatives has increased pressure on institutions committed to academic freedom and inclusive excellence. Within the University, deepening financial challenges have resulted in ongoing budget constraints and staffing reductions, requiring the College to do more with fewer resources.

Despite these challenges, CLAS made significant progress toward its goals. Our community remained grounded in its core values: strengthening the College's academic foundation, advancing research, expanding access and belonging, and deepening our impact in the communities we serve.

Looking ahead, the College will begin the next phase of its strategic planning in 2026. This new plan will build on the foundation laid between 2020 and 2025, align CLAS with the University's broader strategic priorities, and help define a clear and focused direction for the liberal arts and sciences at UConn.

