Executive Summary

The Data Collection Committee was charged with gathering information needed to assess the current state of the College and to determine the gaps that exist between where CLAS is now and the five-year vision for the College. In response, the committee conducted a SWOT/C analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats/challenges) based on a synthesis of quantitative and qualitative data obtained from existing sources, including the offices of Institutional Research and Effectiveness, Institutional Equity, the Vice President for Research, and the UConn Foundation, as well as from student, faculty, staff, and department head surveys distributed in December 2019.

The committee was organized into five subgroups: Teaching, Research and Scholarship, Broader Impacts, Climate, and Alumni Relations. Subgroups drafted domain-specific SWOT/C analyses and this information was integrated to produce a report submitted to the dean and the Planning Committee in late January. While the committee felt their analysis was limited by factors including the scope of the charge, short time frame, issues with data access, and in some cases lack of recent, representative, and/or comparative data, their efforts produced a wealth of information.

Summary of Findings

Teaching, Research, and Scholarship

• Students and faculty value linking classroom learning to real life situations, but few programs report requiring experiential learning and service learning.
• Faculty are interested in collaborative teaching with colleagues across UConn, but are concerned about support to achieve research goals while maintaining quality, rigorous teaching.
• Non-tenure track faculty play a critical role in teaching and mentoring students, and many maintain active research programs and engage in department and university service.
• The metrics of research and scholarship productivity must capture and value work in the breadth of CLAS departments, including the humanities, social sciences, and STEM disciplines.
• CLAS performs well on grant metrics, but compared to aspirant institutions, STEM productivity lags in some departments. Half of our faculty report having funding, but two-thirds report needing more.
• Balancing differential teaching responsibilities, department service, lack of adequate administrative support, high fringe rates, and reductions in support for graduate students while maintaining high scholarly productivity is seen as a major challenge.
• Responders cited research areas including, but not limited to, big data; climate change, sustainability, and environmental science; influencers of health and health disparities; human rights; and language and brain science as areas for potential strategic investment.

Broader Impacts

• The professional activities of CLAS faculty and students have a significant impact on local and regional communities, but tracking and reporting of broader impact activities varies greatly.
Current reward structures within UConn and CLAS often focus on the quantity of scholarly activities rather than on the scholarly, economic, and social benefits of this work to society.

UConn's impact is perceived to be locally and regionally focused. Thus, an opportunity exists to increase impact at the national and international levels.

Some departments perceive unclear expectations and lack of support for alumni relations and development work from the UConn Foundation. CLAS could improve that relationship over time.

Climate

- There are staff, faculty, and students among us who report that they believe their work has been devalued because of their gender, race, or ethnicity.
- Some students feel isolated from their departments, and staff report tensions between themselves and the faculty; students, faculty, and staff all report wanting more communal spaces to collaborate and interact.
- Faculty, staff and students alike report that increasing the diversity of CLAS faculty, staff, and students and creating an inclusive environment for all individuals should be top priorities.