



VCU College of Humanities and Sciences

Pathways for Transformation:

A Six-Year Strategic Plan for the College of Humanities and Sciences

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I. Introduction: A strategic plan for the College of Humanities and Sciences, the heart of VCU

Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) is driven by a strategic roadmap, *Quest for Distinction*, aimed at distinguishing VCU as the nation's premier public, urban, research university. The College of Humanities and Sciences (H&S) is the liberal arts and sciences academic heart of VCU with vibrant educational and research programs. H&S enrolls nearly 60% of the undergraduates and nearly 50% of all students at VCU. As such, VCU's ability to reach its aspirations of quality, vibrancy, and performance relies heavily on the faculty and staff that make up the humanities and sciences. The following strategic plan is aimed at building the necessary foundation in H&S to support the aspirations of VCU in *Quest for Distinction*.

As the liberal arts and sciences intellectual lifeblood of the university, H&S not only attempts to prepare students for a job, but aspires to help them construct a foundation on which they will build a rich and deeply meaningful life and career. The core of that foundation is increasing the intellectual capacity of our students for critical and integrative thinking, quantitative reasoning, oral and written communication, digital fluency, cultural fluency, ethical and responsible citizenship necessary to participate effectively in a democracy, global awareness, a desire for lifelong learning, and a deep knowledge of a student's chosen discipline(s). The broad range of research, scholarship and creative activities conducted in H&S leads to both potential solutions to an array of pressing technological, health, and societal problems, as well to profound insights and reflections of what it means to be human and the connections we have with each other over generations through time and across geographical space.

H&S undertook a nine-month inclusive strategic planning process aimed at articulating both a candid assessment of the strengths and challenges in the liberal arts and sciences at VCU and an inspirational vision for the future for us as the core of VCU. The resulting plan is a blueprint outlining actions over the next six years that would facilitate H&S functioning as the intellectual heart of a premier, public, urban research university.

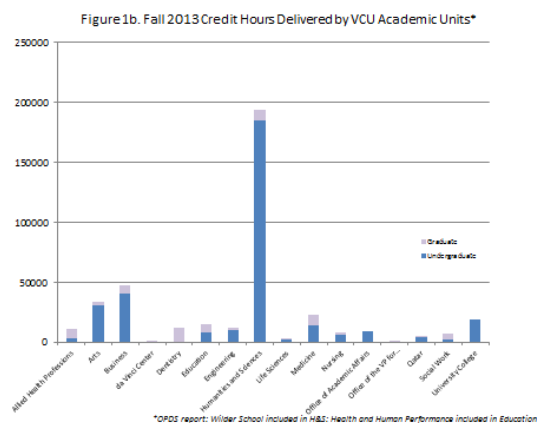
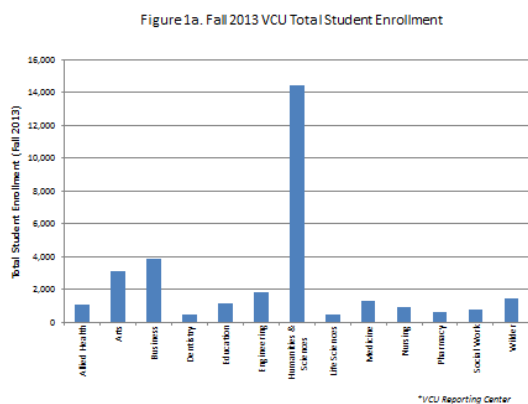
The planning process revealed two integrated passions that characterize the H&S community: a passion for transforming the lives of our students, and a passion for transforming the human condition, and the education of our students, through research, scholarship and creative arts. Our aim is to draw on these passions to provide an educational and research environment that provides for the steepest "slope of the line" in academe—the line representing the educational value added by VCU to students with respect to holistic integration of skills, disciplinary knowledge and personal growth gained over the course of an academic career, and to develop a research and scholarly portfolio consistent with a premier, public, urban research university.

The following H&S strategic plan articulates a roadmap for building pathways that transform our students, fields of study, and our communities. To accomplish this H&S needs to raise its level of excellence by climbing two ladders simultaneously: building on areas with already strong foundations toward higher levels of national distinction, while, in other areas, correcting deficiencies to strengthen a foundation on which to build excellence. A key component of the plan is to commit to using data-driven processes (e.g., Delaware Study) to assess strengths and deficiencies, while also leveraging disciplinary and interdisciplinary areas identified in *Quest for Distinction* such as improving human health. The plan outlines

a set of relatively specific action items in each of the five main themes related to *Quest for Distinction*: Student success; attracting and retaining faculty and staff; advancing the discovery of new knowledge, creative expression, and innovation; contributing to the economic, cultural and civic vitality of the region and the world; and effectively stewarding our resources. We also propose a series of metrics to measure our progress and guide future strategic decisions.

II. The current state of the College of Humanities and Sciences

H&S serves as the academic heart of VCU and the foundation for VCU’s aspirations to become the Nation’s premier, public, urban, research university as articulated in *Quest for Distinction*. H&S serves that role because we have more undergraduates enrolled in Humanities and Sciences majors, and teach more credit hours, than all of the 11 other academic units at VCU combined (see Figures 1a and 1b). We provide a quality education to approximately 14,000 students every year (just under 60% of VCU’s undergraduates and just under 50% of the total students) and we teach approximately 380,000 credit hours annually to students from majors across the university. Apart from the research writing requirement, H&S currently teaches approximately 92% of the second tier of the VCU core curriculum. This is indicative of H&S’s large responsibility as the liberal arts and sciences unit at VCU to impart undergraduate students with the core skills of critical thinking, quantitative reasoning, scientific literacy, information fluency, digital fluency, cultural fluency, oral and written communication skills, ethical and responsible citizenship necessary to live in a democracy, global awareness, and a commitment to life-long learning. These core skills are in addition to the faculty’s role in facilitating deeper knowledge in disciplinary areas. H&S not only teaches a large number of students, but also provides the academic majors for many of VCU’s highest performing students as well. For example, 18 of the 23 students recognized for winning major awards by President Rao in his 2012-2013 annual report to the Board of Visitors were enrolled in or graduated from H&S programs. H&S faculty also produce a substantial body of research, scholarly, and creative work: On the Monroe Park Campus, H&S has the largest amount of externally sponsored projects with a research focus (sponsored projects can be for research, training or service) and a large number of award winning researchers, scholars, and literary artists.



The College of Humanities and Sciences is organized into two schools, 16 departments, and three additional non-departmental undergraduate programs (**Table Ia**). In addition to the extensive role H&S plays in undergraduate education, H&S houses a range of attractive graduate programs (**Table Ib**). In fact the largest and most competitive doctoral programs at VCU are housed in one of the H&S units, the Department of Psychology. Our full range competitive doctoral programs are in demand, receiving approximately 43% of VCU’s total doctoral graduate applications in 2013-2014 (**Figure 2**),

Table Ia: Humanities and Sciences Schools, Departments and Undergraduate Programs

Schools: School of World Studies (Anthropology, Foreign Languages, Religious Studies, International Studies); Robertson School of Media and Culture (Journalism, Public Relations and Advertising).

Departments: African American Studies; Biology; Chemistry; English; Forensic Science; Gender, Sexuality and Women’s Studies; Kinesiology and Health Sciences; History; Mathematics and Applied Mathematics; Military Science; Philosophy; Physics; Political Science; Psychology; Sociology; Statistical Sciences and Operations Research.

Programs: Liberal Studies for Early and Elementary Education; Interdisciplinary Science; Science Technology and Society.

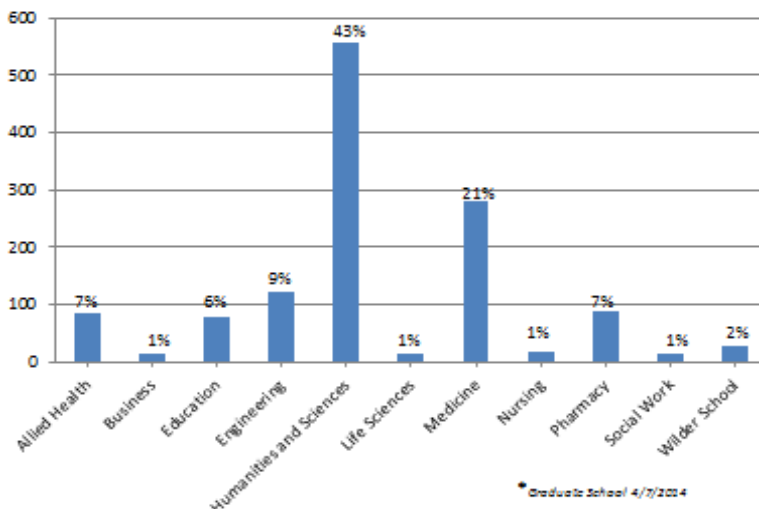
Table Ib: Humanities and Sciences Graduate Programs

Masters: Biology; Chemistry; Creative Writing (MFA); English; Forensic Science; Health and Movement Science; History; Mass Communications; Mathematical Sciences; Physics and Applied Physics; Sociology.

Doctoral: Chemistry; Chemical Biology; Clinical Psychology; Counseling Psychology; Health Psychology; Media, Art and Text; Nanoscience and Nanotechnology; Psychology; Rehabilitation and Movement Science; Systems Modeling and Analysis.

Post-Baccalaureate: Applied Social Research; Gender, Sexuality and Women’s Studies.

Figure 2: Number of Doctoral Applications received at VCU in 2013-2014*



Academic excellence in any liberal arts and sciences unit cannot be attained without excellent faculty. H&S has over 400 full-time (230 tenured, tenure-track faculty; 147 non-tenure track, full time, Term faculty; 41 administrative and professional faculty) and over 200 part-time faculty, supported by approximately 80 staff. This faculty core has developed a growing and vibrant research enterprise that receives significant

external support (over \$16.0M in FY 2014) and significant national and international recognition through major national and international scholarly awards. Current and retired H&S faculty have received a Nobel Prize, a Pulitzer Prize, Guggenheim Fellowships, multiple Fulbright Fellowships, SCHEV Outstanding faculty awards, election into international academy of sciences, major recognition as Fellows of their professional societies and significant awards for their work. Many of our full and part-time faculty have also excelled in professional work outside of academe and bring such real world professional experience into the classroom.

H&S contributes deeply to advancing knowledge a broad range of disciplines. Faculty conduct pathbreaking research into the nature and connections of biological, physical and social systems. Such research programs are leading to potential solutions to a wide range of pressing technological, health, and societal problems such as controlling cancer, determining the health risks of novel tobacco products, creating substitutes for rare earth metals, and preventing violence in schools. H&S humanities scholars and literary artists encourage us to constantly and profoundly rethink, deepen, and reflect upon our understanding of our place in the world and our connections with each other over generations through time and across geographical space. H&S demonstrates a commitment to the power of the interdisciplinary connections across the liberal arts and sciences, and across other VCU units, with five interdisciplinary doctoral programs and a culture that encourages students to take on more than one major or to use minors in order to reach across disciplinary boundaries.

H&S is at the heart of a vibrant urban university that is the only research university in the Richmond region. VCU has an extraordinarily diverse student body, resides in an economically diverse and multi-cultural locale, and is built on an unusual mix of rich academic resources derived from the region, and from its own institutional evolution arising from the integration of Richmond Professional Institute's professional schools with the Medical College of Virginia. The city of Richmond occupies a profound and difficult place in U.S. history where it was the focal point of pivotal moments in the United States' evolution in government, politics, and race relations, making it a particularly fascinating location for healthy and vibrant humanistic, cultural and social debate. There is a deep and broad community in Richmond supporting creativity and the work of visual, performing and literary artists. Additionally, Richmond, largely through MCV, developed a world-class infrastructure supporting life and health science research. Both VCU and H&S built upon these community attributes by attracting faculty and students who care deeply about the community. In many cases, faculty, staff and students choose to come to VCU because of the institution's productive record of investing institutional energy into improving the physical, mental and economic health, education and well-being of the Richmond region's residents. Our alumni confirmed in a recent survey that that the urban vibrancy, intellectual rigor, community engagement, and diversity of the campus was critical to their post-graduation success. Together these attributes represent a powerful foundation on which to build a strategic plan for the liberal arts and sciences.

The success of any academic unit in attracting and training talented and diverse students and producing research that changes and enriches the world, can be boiled down to optimizing three major factors:

1. **The number and quality of faculty.** The alumni survey indicated that students rank the quality of faculty as *the* most important attribute to their academic experience and success after VCU. Additionally, a recent Gallup-Purdue Survey report (<http://www.gallup.com/poll/168848/life-college-matters-life-college.aspx>) indicated that students who said they had interacted with a faculty member who mentored them, engaged with them, and cared about them as a person were more than two times more likely to express a sense of well-being and engagement at work than students who did not form these relationships. Undoubtedly, such engaged faculty-student interactions increase student retention and overall student success. And, the intellectual curiosity and intellectual drive of faculty members is the engine that drives university research.
2. **The quality of the physical infrastructure.** Research, teaching, office and interactive spaces equipped for high quality work are critical ingredients to a successful academic enterprise.

3. **The quality and effectiveness of supporting infrastructure.** Quality education and research require that faculty and students be supported by an appropriate number of high quality staff and efficient and effective administrative processes.

H&S has deficiencies in all three areas and these deficiencies create significant challenges to realizing the vision and aspirations of *Quest for Distinction*. For example, despite growing the size of the teaching/research faculty by over 50 new full-time faculty members over the last five years, the student-to-faculty (full time teaching/research faculty) ratio in H&S is approximately 38:1. Approximately two thirds of the full time faculty growth has been in non-tenure eligible faculty. The student-to-faculty ratio is more than 33% higher than relatively similar units in most of VCU's Quest peer institutions and approximately double that of some truly aspirational institutions such as the University of Pittsburgh and the University of South Carolina (**Table II**). Reaching a student-to-faculty ratio of 25:1 (in the mid-range of Quest Peers, but still far higher than U. Pitt and U. South Carolina) would require an increase of approximately 200 full time teaching/research faculty given current enrollments.

The 14,000 students and more than 600 full- and part-time faculty in H&S are supported in administration, finance and information technology by only approximately 80 staff members, causing challenges in the effectiveness of how we support the research and teaching mission, communicate with students, donors and alumni, in addition to simply meeting the administrative demands placed on us by the University, the Commonwealth of Virginia, and external sponsors of our research efforts.

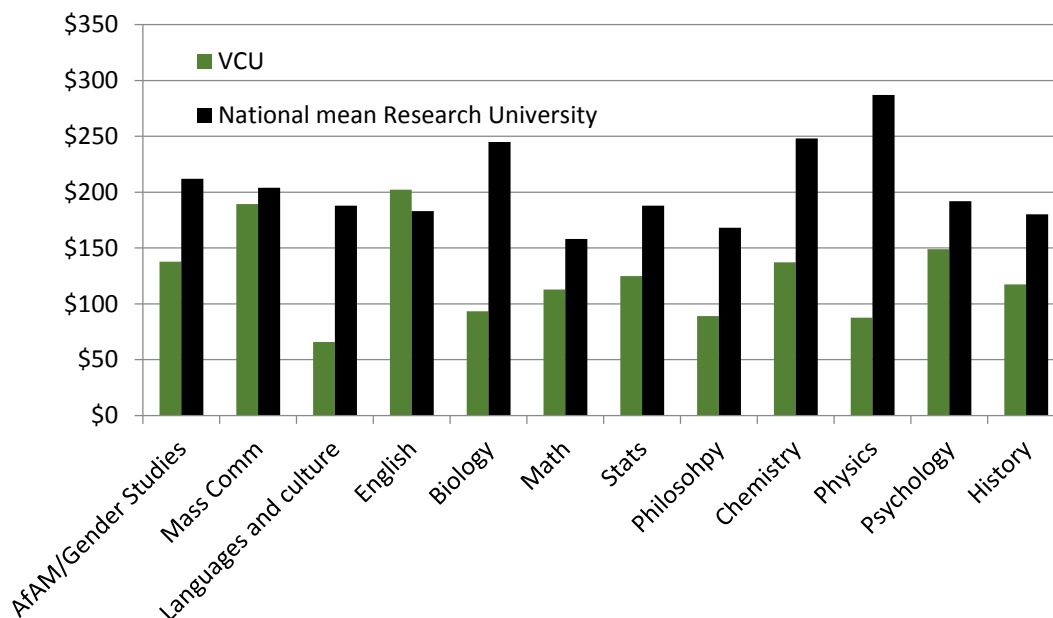
Table II. Comparisons from FY 2012-2013 data between VCU College of Humanities and Sciences with peer institutions. Data not obtained from a standard data set but from researching institutional websites.

Institution	#Under-grad	#Grad	% of Univ. enrollment	# FT T&R faculty	S:F ratio	Research expenditures (or awards) (\$M)	Research expenditures /faculty	#PhD+ MFA programs
VCU- College of H&S (<i>note taken during FY12/FY13: Brandcenter and Wilder School were part of H&S; Kinesiology & Health Sciences was not- current S:F is 38:1</i>)	13,500	1,100	47%	359	41:1	\$15M	\$42,000	11
University of Alabama-Birmingham College of Arts and Sciences (Quest peer)	6,600	630	40%	275	28:1	\$15M	\$56,000	9
University of Louisville - Arts and Sciences (Quest peer)	7,870	800	42%	375	24:1	\$6.5M	\$17,000	12
University of Cincinnati-McKibben College of Arts and Sciences (Quest peer)	6,820	940	20%	421	20:1	\$11M	\$25,000	15
Wayne State University-College of Liberal Arts and Sciences	11,000	1,500	41%	415	30:1	\$20M	\$48,000	17

University of South Carolina, College of Arts and Sciences (Quest peer)	7,416	673	34%	536	15:1	\$50M	\$93,000	22
University of Pittsburgh, Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences	10,683	1,501	46%	746	16:1	\$54M	\$72,000	34

To manage these financial challenges, H&S has evolved to become extraordinarily efficient at delivering instruction relative to *Quest* peer institutions—our initial analysis using data from the Delaware Study (**Figure 3**; 2011 data) suggests that we deliver a credit hour of instruction at as much as one quarter the cost of similar programs at some of our peer institutions, while still obtaining external research funding at similar, and in some case, much higher rates per faculty member (**Table II**). Although we can be proud of our efficiency, it is the result of supporting the work of our faculty with fewer resources than peer and aspirational peer institutions. This lack of support has consequences. For example, deficiencies in support reduces the amount of time that faculty can spend mentoring students or conducting research. Our average class size is high, and we teach many classes that are too large to enable effective engagement of students with professors. Discussions with faculty members that have pursued offers at other research institutions clearly suggest that the resource deficiencies we experience make our best faculty more susceptible to recruitment to more resource rich academic environments. And, the high efficiency of our faculty and our staff in their existing efforts comes at a cost of limiting the time they have to develop new initiatives, new systems or improved processes that facilitate engagement and tracking of our students.

Figure 3: 2011 Delaware Study data on instructional expenditures per credit hour by discipline comparing VCU H&S programs to the average for national research universities.



In addition, H&S would need significant investments in new academic space and support to more effectively deliver our educational programs and to grow highly competitive research programs. H&S occupies over 300,000 square feet, with some departments spread across several buildings. Our space is in variable states of condition, with much of the space in historic buildings that are not optimally designed for academic purposes or interdisciplinary interactions. Moreover, some of the more modern spaces are many cases not designed to support a growing research enterprise (e.g., challenges with chemistry research in Oliver Hall). Most importantly, our existing space is fully utilized. Additionally, the Dean’s Office for

Humanities and Sciences is spread out across the Monroe Park Campus with offices in four buildings, making it difficult for students to navigate the VCU infrastructure. Students in every other division of VCU have a “home” building where they can access student services and connect with other students- yet the majority of undergraduates have no such place, as VCU has never invested in such an infrastructure for H&S. New academic space that can facilitate our vision for transformational student success and research is a key to our strategic plan.

Despite these challenges, the staff and faculty of Humanities and Sciences have exemplified the grit and determination that characterizes VCU and it is this grit and determination that has been central to the rapid rise of the institution’s reputation over the last several years. H&S evolved in a resource-limited situation that forced it toward a collective attitude as being the “engine that could,” or perhaps just “the engine that had to.”

This strategic plan draws on the profound sense of purpose and tentative optimism that characterizes the “the engine” in our faculty, staff, students and alumni, and it is that same sense of purpose of this icon of grit and determination that infiltrates every corner of the H&S community, making this a truly special unit. Our planning process revealed that we share a bond together in a common mission of transforming lives, fields of study and communities. The strategic plan outlined below tries to capture and build upon that shared mission, while also recognizing that the optimism and grit are in danger of being unsustainable if we do not better align resources with our responsibility for providing undergraduate and graduate education and the goals and expectations of the University.

III. The planning process

H&S embarked on a nine-month strategic planning process in August, 2013. A foundation of the H&S process was the belief that strategic plans need to derive from the collective wisdom of the broad academic community. During Fall, 2013, we engaged approximately 2,000 alumni in a survey (see appendix) that provided detailed information on their sense of the strengths of VCU and H&S and the challenges they faced as alums. Also, during the Fall 2013 semester the entire H&S faculty and staff community was asked to participate in a process called Concept Mapping aimed at identifying a quantitative and collective sense of the highest priority action items that can form the foundation for a strategic plan—over half of our faculty and staff (approximately 350 people) participated in this intensive activity. The Concept Mapping exercise identified 125 priorities (or action items) that were then rated by individual participants on their relative importance and impact in helping H&S meet the goals of Quest for Distinction. Most of the "priorities" that emerged from this process represented actions that individuals would like to see taken by the College or the University that would improve the VCU work environment and/or faculty and staff productivity (e.g., increase salaries; lower teaching loads to foster research; increase faculty numbers) and also identified actions that the community felt would have the largest impact on student success, research and community engagement. A summary of the Concept Mapping results is included in the appendix.

Upon completing the Concept Mapping Analysis, small groups (8-12) of faculty and staff, including Faculty Council (the H&S faculty governance body), met with the Dean to discuss how the resulting priorities identified in Concept Mapping could be tied to specific and measurable goals and woven into a strategic plan. Approximately 120 faculty and staff participated in more than a dozen small group meetings. In addition the Dean met with H&S student leaders, and a new H&S advisory board.

The resulting document was first drafted by the Dean in which he used the results of the Concept Mapping and his incorporation of key points and consensus ideas in the small group discussions. The first draft was then distributed to the H&S community, comments received, and the plan completed.

IV. Pathways for Transformation

We titled our strategic plan, *Pathways for Transformation*, as it captures the core ideas that emerged from our strategic planning process. The title derives from three perspectives. First, H&S faculty and staff share a distinctive passion for the transformational role they play in facilitating the development of deeply meaningful lives and careers of VCU's diverse student body and for transforming the human condition through research, scholarship and creative arts. The integration of these two passions—transforming undergraduate and graduate student lives and transforming human knowledge and understanding—was clearly articulated as a defining and shared characteristic of H&S.

Second, the College of Humanities and Sciences, itself, is undergoing a major transformation as we continue our evolution from our RPI roots toward being the core undergraduate and graduate liberal arts and sciences unit of a premier, public, urban, research university.

Third, the academic career of liberal arts and science students most often follows a non-linear, interconnected and sometimes stochastic pathway that evolves during the course of their academic and career development. Many of our alumni expressed that these non-linear pathways have led them to successful and deeply meaningful lives and careers. And, for so many faculty, their best research, scholarship and creative activities follows non-linear pathways, as new information and insights evolve during the course of their work.

Pathways for Transformation aptly draws upon and captures our heart and our future: H&S is committed to transforming lives and fields of study, while at the same, is itself undergoing a significant transformation. Our strategic plan is about creating pathways to facilitate the transformation.

V. Emergence of some resonant values and principles in the planning process

Quest for Distinction builds its plan on the foundation of a set of core VCU values that are shared by Humanities and Sciences faculty: Accountability, Achievement, Collaboration, Freedom, Innovation, Service, Diversity and Integrity (<http://www.quest.vcu.edu/about/mission/>). Yet, during the H&S discussions, there was the emergence of four core principles, built upon these values, but integrated with core ideas related to a liberal arts and sciences education. These principles deeply resonated with participants in the strategic planning discussion and can be thought of as “tests” or “filters” to which we will place any action or priority that H&S might choose to undertake.

- 1. We share the value and principle that a liberal arts and sciences education enhances the general quality of life and provides a pathway for students to become more productive global citizens and members of our society. Such an education is a pathway for students to a deeply meaningful and successful life and career:** We want our graduates to have strong disciplinary and professional knowledge enveloped within a foundation of critical thinking skills and quantitative reasoning, oral and written communication fluency, abilities to frame data-based arguments and to develop intellectually sound conclusions from often incomplete information, a strong sense of ethical and civic responsibility, cultural fluency, digital fluency, and an evolving sense of the multiple connections and complexities that exist among disciplines. These skills and disciplinary knowledge need to be developed with real world experiences that can prepare students for life after they graduate, such as internships and undergraduate research. And, they should instill a commitment to life-long learning.
- 2. Transformational impacts require our full commitment to excellence, but the future excellence of H&S depends upon our climbing two ladders simultaneously: building on existing strengths toward national distinction in some programs, while building excellence in other programs by first creating a strong foundation by correcting existing deficiencies.** H&S has evolved over time into a situation where there are some programmatic areas that with sufficient and strategic investment can quickly move to very high levels of national distinction. Yet, in other programmatic areas serious deficiencies in the number of faculty, staff support, graduate student

support, or space prohibit our ability to offer excellent value-added education in areas of high student demand, or to optimize our scholarly productivity. Thus, to attain excellence we need to invest new or reallocated resources to ensure that our programs have at least a minimal level of resources that enables them to effectively deliver programs with the quality one would expect in a premier, urban, research university, while at the same time, we need to continue a process of identifying areas of opportunity where developing and investing in a critical mass of scholars can lead to national distinction.

3. **A dynamic and inclusive learning and working environment in which individuals of differing cultural and intellectual perspectives, life experiences, and cultural backgrounds are welcomed, valued and supported is critically important.** Such embracing of diversity in all of its forms is a foundation of a strong liberal education and prepares students to be successful in a continually diversifying society.
4. **Time is a finite and extraordinarily valuable resource.** Transforming the lives of students with education and transforming knowledge with research requires immense focus and efforts of faculty and staff. Actions that we take must be placed in the context of the question of whether such actions optimize the use of the finite resource of faculty and staff time toward meeting our objectives in student success and excellence in research, scholarship and creative activities. If not, we need to examine what additional support is needed, or what activities should be stopped or lessened, to ensure that appropriate time is available for teaching and research.

VI. Strategic Aims: The steepest slope of the line

The core of the H&S strategic aims are derived from the integration of the two passions clearly identified in the strategic planning process - transforming student lives and transforming human knowledge and understanding

H&S faculty are committed to the *Quest* goal of attracting an increasingly talented and diverse student body who take maximum advantage of their time at VCU. The strategic planning process revealed unanimity among our faculty and staff in believing that the key aspect of student success is not simply graduating, or even just getting a job after graduation, but in leaving VCU as a graduate with an excited and engaged vision for the next step in one's life journey, empowered with the liberal education skills needed for success over a lifetime, and the disciplinary knowledge needed to make that first step. The value that a university adds to its students can be defined as the difference between the skills, knowledge base, determination, and vision for the future that students have when they enter a university and those attributes when they leave as a graduate. H&S is proud of its impact on students and on research, scholarship and creative activities and that we will continue to have even as the talent and diversity increases among our student body. Given this unanimity of purpose, the vision of our strategic plan is to aim to prioritize our actions and investments in resources in our education mission such that H&S is recognized as providing the highest value-added to our students—we believe that the degree of positive transformation that happens at VCU can be as high or higher than any other university. We aim to be recognized as a destination place for talented and diverse students willing to be transformed by a high quality educational experience in a vibrant, urban, research-based and demographically diverse environment that will prepare them to embark on profound lives and careers after graduation. We aim to provide the steepest slope of the line—the line representing a holistic integration of skills, disciplinary knowledge and personal growth that are gained over the course of an academic career.

Similarly, contributing new understanding to human knowledge and transforming the human condition, and integrating such creation, discovery and scholarship into undergraduate and graduate education, is key to the Humanities and Sciences contribution to *Quest for Distinction*. Our strategic plan recognizes the need to enhance the diverse intellectual environment in Humanities and Sciences through research, scholarship

and creative activities, and to focus our new investments on research areas where we have strength and where we have opportunities to make a difference to people's lives or to advance our fields and garner national recognition for our intellectual efforts. There is not a ranking of liberal arts and sciences units with respect to their research performance. But, our vision is to see significant increases in sponsored research, the quality and recognition/ranking of our graduate programs, and increasing recognition of faculty through national and international awards. Excellent research programs require a critical mass of strong researchers, so targeting our investment, and leveraging that investment in areas where critical mass can be attained through partnerships through other units, will be a focus.

VII. Action Items and metrics that define the plan

The H&S strategic plan creates a six-year roadmap for climbing two ladders simultaneously: reducing deficiencies and building excellence by focusing on a set of relatively specific action items in each of five main themes related to the VCU Strategic Plan *Quest for Distinction*. A key underlying foundation of this plan is a commitment to data-driven processes to assess our areas of excellence; our most pressing deficiencies, and to measuring our progress.

The list below represents a summary of 10 key items in the *Pathways for Transformation* plan. More detail of these actions, other actions, and the metrics to assess them are in the attached tables in the appendix organized by *Quest for Distinction* themes.

- Hire 15 new faculty members per year and achieve peer-competitive salary levels, moving our student to full time teaching/research faculty to 30:1, which would be significant progress towards a long-term stable goal of no greater than 25:1. We should raise at least \$10M in the upcoming development campaign for endowed chairs and professorships to support hiring and retention of excellent faculty.
- Diversify H&S faculty to more accurately reflect our student body.
- Build a new H&S physical home to serve as the intellectual center for H&S, raising at least \$10M in philanthropic funds, and identify and renovate additional space to support excellence in research.
- Increase annual sponsored research by \$15M and creatively support research centers.
- Provide resources and incentives to encourage pedagogical improvement and adoption/creation of best practices the classroom.
- Develop and implement the use of tools, such as student portfolios, to assess the holistic growth in skills, disciplinary knowledge, and personal development of students
- Double the number of our students taking advantage of integrative opportunities such as undergraduate research, internships, entrepreneurship, international experiences, and service learning and raise \$10M to provide financial support to remove barriers that students face in pursuing these integrative opportunities. Also, incorporate faculty participation in mentoring students in these activities into the performance evaluation and reward system,
- Develop algorithms for appropriate staff and advising support for our programs, and make significant progress to meeting those goals
- Improve quantitative rankings and qualitative recognition of our existing graduate programs which will require strategies for to attract the best students into graduate programs
- Implement a unit specific Great Place Initiative program to improve the climate for faculty and staff resulting in reduced staff turnover and increasingly positive scores in campus climate surveys.

VIII: Specific action items and measurements as they relate to Quest for Distinction

Theme 1: Enhance academic quality and student success

Rarely do students enter college knowing the exact pathway for their lives and follow a pre-determined linear pathway to get a deeply meaningful life and career. H&S aims to provide the support and resources needed for students to follow a non-linear, inter-connected and sometimes stochastic pathway that evolves during the course of an academic career to leave VCU with highly engaged and excited visions for their future, and with a set of skills and disciplinary knowledge that will allow them to realize that vision as they mature during their lives and to commit to life-long learning. A key to this is linking liberal education skills and disciplinary knowledge with transformational experiences in research, service learning, international study, entrepreneurship or real world learning such as can occur in internships to unlock a student’s passion and to connect that passion with opportunities for successful and financially viable careers. Faculty play *the key role* as mentors, guides and Sherpas for students to journey along a successful pathway. Our focus to theme 1 of Quest is built on the notion that faculty are the key to reaching our vision of student success.

Humanities and Sciences Strategy	Tactics	Performance Measures
<p>Ensure adequate faculty numbers and quality to effectively deliver transformational academic programs and to mentor students along academic pathways. Also, ensure that schools, departments and faculty have staff support and effective administrative processes to allow them to focus their efforts on transformational education and research. And that our faculty evaluation systems are clear in expectations and rigorous in their evaluation.</p>	<p>Develop and use a data-driven process (e.g., Delaware study; enrollment trends tuition revenue by program) to determine benchmarks for minimal student-to-faculty ratios in academic programs and use data in hiring priorities for the unit</p> <p>Improve student-to-faculty (T/R) ratio in H&S disciplines to be in the range of Quest peer Arts and Sciences units (at least 30:1) by effective hiring of new, talented and diverse tenure-eligible, tenured and term faculty through the development of a six year hiring plan or through enrollment management</p> <p>Increase the number of core curriculum course sections taught by full time faculty</p> <p>Develop a space plan and plan new building to ensure we have the physical space to support the necessary faculty</p> <p>Work with the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, Vice Provost for Enrollment Management and Vice Provost for Student Success and Learning Innovation to explore better use of prerequisites to facilitate student success, and to implement registration tools with better advising to deter students from repeatedly taking classes that they fail. Doing so may facilitate more manageable class sizes and increased mentoring of students</p> <p>Develop algorithms to determine the minimal level of staff and advisor support that is needed to effectively deliver education and support faculty given faculty size and enrollment demand, and develop a plan such that all units have the necessary staff support</p>	<p>4- and 6-year graduation rates</p> <p>2nd and 3rd year retention rates</p> <p>Increased number of H&S students winning national academic awards and percentage of students attending nationally ranked graduate programs</p> <p>Reduction in average class sizes and increase in the number of classes available to upper level undergraduates with under 20 students</p> <p>Reduction of student-to-faculty ratio to 30:1, or to appropriate benchmark numbers</p> <p>Increase in percentage of Tier II courses taught by full time faculty</p> <p>Increase in NSSE student satisfaction scores</p> <p>Improvements of student-to-advisor ratios to appropriate benchmark numbers (for full-time or professional advisors)</p>

	<p>Develop algorithms to ensure appropriate ratios between students and academic advisors</p> <p>Raise philanthropic funding for endowed chairs and professorships as one of three priorities in H&S campaign</p> <p>Work with the Vice Provost for Student Success and Learning Innovation to implement the generalizable education goals of the QEP</p>	<p>Measureable progress on metrics defined in the QEP</p>
<p>Enhance curricular quality through several mechanisms including, adoption and creation of best practice, high quality online learning/distance education, collaborative teaching, and integration of technology into the learning experience. Further integrate “pathways” experiences (research, entrepreneurship, internships, service-learning, study abroad, etc.) into the curriculum including career and internship prospects</p>	<p>Develop incentives with the Vice Provost for student success and learning innovation to develop resources and incentives to encourage pedagogical improvement and adoption/creation of best practices the classroom</p> <p>Implement an education leave program for faculty facilitating the development of new courses, to implement new technological tools or move courses on-line, or to innovate pedagogy in existing courses; ensure that curricular innovation is recognized in annual reviews</p> <p>Integrate career engagement throughout the curriculum through: developing strong relationships with University Career services; developing a stronger alumni network to engage our students; working with the university to track student career success after graduation; and effectively using part-time faculty to bring real world experiences into the classroom</p> <p>Use program reviews to help assess, improve, or potentially redirect curricular programs</p> <p>Develop new net revenue generating programs that meet student demand, and by generating revenue, allow for investments in faculty and program improvement</p>	<p>Number of team taught interdisciplinary courses</p> <p>Number of courses and students in service learning</p> <p>Number of students in entrepreneurship programs (Da Vinci, certificate)</p> <p>Number of students in independent research.</p> <p>Number of on-line courses and students in on-line courses</p> <p>Number of alumni engaging with students Proportion of students who are employed in their discipline or attend graduate school at graduation and in the future</p> <p>Number of new continuing or professional masters courses/programs and net revenue generated</p>
<p>Develop mechanisms to holistically assess undergraduate student success so as to assess the value-added of the VCU experience and to demonstrate the transformational experience of a VCU education</p>	<p>Develop methodologies to implement measuring the “slope of the line” – these might involve the use of broad-based statistical approaches, as well as implementing strategies such as student portfolios that allow us to assess the full growth of students during their time as undergraduates. Such strategies allow for the holistic measurement of the growth of a student’s core liberal arts and sciences skills, integrative thinking, disciplinary knowledge, self -</p>	<p>Quantitative and qualitative metrics that holistically assess the development of generalizable skills, disciplinary knowledge, and self-reflection of VCU students that will form the baseline of future plans</p>

	reflection, and vision for a future career. Implement pilot strategies in a few units.	
Improve the Humanities and Sciences capacity to compete for high quality graduate students	<p>Work with the graduate school to increase the number and compensation for graduate students; to develop new tuition models that can allow for greater support of graduate students on grants, and to increase the proportion of graduate students funded by grants or philanthropic dollars</p> <p>Build the research capacity in our existing doctoral programs through targeted investments and faculty hires</p> <p>Explore the development of select new graduate programs where there is a demand and where we can deliver high quality</p> <p>Track and promote success of our graduate students</p>	<p>Stipend levels</p> <p>Graduate application numbers and yield rates in programs</p> <p>Data on graduation rates and success of students after graduation</p> <p>Recognition/ranking of graduate programs</p> <p>Proportion of graduate students supported on external funding</p> <p># publications and presentations by graduate students at regional and national meetings; awards applied for and received by graduate students</p>
Create a physical home for the humanities and sciences that enables students and faculty to access administrative and academic services and provides an interdisciplinary hub for VCU's largest unit, as well develop plans to renovate space and participate in the Monroe Park Campus STEM building	<p>Undertake an integrated planning process for new College of H&S home</p> <p>Continue the development of a space plan and continue to build and utilize a renovation fund within the H&S budget</p> <p>Make funds for a new building a priority in fundraising campaign</p>	<p>H&S "home" building completed</p> <p>Space plan completed and regularly updated</p>
Recruit a talented and diverse student body	<p>Implement and monitor a plan with strategic enrollment to improve the standardized test scores, GPA of students in H&S and to recruit a larger number of students from out of state and internationally so that we maximize the ability of our student body to take full advantage of VCU</p> <p>Work to develop programs to increase the success of "at risk" students</p>	<p>Increased GPA, SAT and ACT scores of incoming students</p> <p>Number of non-Virginia resident students enrolling in H&S programs</p> <p>Increased student retention</p>

Theme 2: Attract, retain and support faculty and staff.

The core of our approach to Theme 1 is to ensure that the College of Humanities and Sciences increases the quantity and quality of our faculty, and provide them with quality staff support, so that we can reach our goal of providing exceptional transformation education and research. Our actions described in Theme 2 are aimed at specific strategies we much undertake to retain and recruit the best faculty

Humanities and Sciences Strategy	Tactics	Performance Measures
<p>Ensure that compensation for tenure-eligible, tenured, term and part-time faculty, and staff, is competitive with peer institutions.</p>	<p>Use data from the University compensation study, peer universities, and internal databases to continue to reallocate funds to increase faculty salaries to competitive levels and to reduce salary compression. H&S will strive to make all salaries competitive by continuing practices such as equity adjustments and merit-based salary increments as funds can be obtained or made available through reallocation.</p> <p>Explore the possibilities of offering longer term contracts to term faculty as they proceed up the promotion ladder</p> <p>Reallocate or obtain new resources to increase the pay of part-time faculty to competitive levels of peer institutions</p>	<p>Improvement of H&S salaries toward mean of peer institutions or using benchmarks such as the MLA guidelines</p> <p>Increase retention of faculty</p> <p>Increase the quality and retention of part-time faculty</p>
<p>Develop a six year hiring plan and work with Provost to develop resources to improve faculty diversity and to seize opportunities to hire excellent faculty</p>	<p>Assess areas of potential distinction and prioritize new hires in those areas</p> <p>Assess areas where deficiencies exist in programs with high demand; prioritize new hires to stabilize programs and improve their effectiveness</p> <p>Develop succession planning for key faculty with upcoming retirements to ensure continuity of strong research programs</p> <p>Develop budget planning to effectively allocate start-up resources</p> <p>Develop a space plan that integrates with hiring plan</p> <p>Implement strategies to ensure a diverse and talented pool of faculty candidates</p>	<p>Increased number of FT faculty, aiming for a 30:1 student-to-faculty ratio in five years- approximately 100 faculty hires</p> <p>Increased sponsored research dollars</p> <p>National recognition for VCU faculty and programs through significant awards</p> <p>Proportions of tenure eligible, tenured, term and part time faculty</p>
<p>Implement a Great Place Initiative program</p>	<p>Create a position for a director of a great place initiative who acts a key point person for issues of climate in H&S and who organizes programming and initiatives to improve campus climate.</p>	<p>Increasingly positive responses in campus climate in annual surveys.</p> <p>Reduction in staff and faculty turnover</p>
<p>Improve access to resources for faculty and staff development</p>	<p>Refine budgets at the School, Department and College level through continued internal review and reallocations and ensure adequate support for faculty and staff professional development.</p> <p>Ensure professional development is addressed in annual reviews.</p>	<p>Professional development plans incorporated into annual workplans</p>

Theme 3: Advance the discovery of new knowledge, creative expression, and innovation through increasing and diversifying sponsored research and promoting translational research and scholarship that contributes to human health and addresses the most complex global challenges

Humanities and Sciences Strategy	Tactics	Performance Measures
Strengthen H&S Research Centers and Institutes and support the development of new interdisciplinary research centers and research related to interdisciplinary graduate programs	<p>Targeted faculty hiring to build a critical mass of strength around center themes</p> <p>Develop incentives and continuing support for productive centers</p> <p>Incorporate Centers in space planning</p> <p>Work with VP for Research to develop increased opportunities to seed innovative research</p>	<p>Increase Competitive funding</p> <p>National recognition through publications in high-impact journals, and faculty awards</p>
Diversify and increase sponsored research funding	<p>Develop infrastructure in H&S research office to assist faculty in finding funding and in assisting with proposal development. Specific areas to increase involve foundation funding</p> <p>Work to create culture of rewards and pursuit of competitive funding in all areas in the Humanities and Sciences by strengthening Humanities Research Center and developing a similar structure for social science</p>	<p>Research awards and expenditures by a funding of sources</p>
Effectively promote the research, scholarship and creative activities in H&S to attract faculty and graduate students, and to increase competitiveness of faculty for national and international awards	<p>Highlight research activities in newsletters and through VCU news</p> <p>Develop a process for nominating faculty for key research awards</p>	<p>Number and media hits on research stories.</p> <p>Recognition ranking of research programs</p>
Develop an ever-increasing environment of intellectual vibrancy that maximizes interdisciplinary interactions and models an intellectual community	<p>Promote, advertise, and write about the intellectual exchange in the large number of academic and scholarly events that occur every year in H&S (over 300 in FY 14), including encouraging attendance of students and faculty</p> <p>Develop a series of academic events and perhaps infrastructure in the new building to bring faculty and students together in interdisciplinary scholarly discussions, including holding informal events to all for discussion.</p>	<p>Number of academic events</p> <p>Attendance at academic events</p> <p>Identification of new partnerships</p>
Develop new modern research space	<p>Create space plan and plan for new building</p> <p>Work with Provost and VPR to identify and renovate research space</p>	<p>Square footage of research space.</p> <p>Research funding per square footage of research space</p>
Engage undergraduates in research, scholarship and creative activities	<p>Continue to support UROP activities and to promote undergraduate research and to participate fully in undergraduate research symposia</p>	<p>Increased number of students participating in undergraduate research</p> <p>Increased number of students with authorship</p>

	<p>Develop systems to track students who complete undergraduate research</p> <p>Encourage students to engage in undergraduate research earlier, in their freshman or sophomore years.</p>	<p>on an academic publication</p> <p>Increased presentations by undergraduates at regional and national meetings.</p> <p>Increased number of students enrolling in a research-based graduate program</p>
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Theme 4. Contribute to the economic, cultural and civic vitality of the region and the world through collaborative efforts that increasingly define the university as an intellectual, creative, and innovative center

Humanities and Sciences Strategy	Tactics	Performance Measures
Service learning	<p>Full-time (or part-time) position to coordinate focused academic initiatives such as service learning, online education, entrepreneurship, and international/study abroad programs</p> <p>Continue to work closely with the VCU Division of Community Engagement to develop new service learning courses, or convert existing courses to have a service learning component</p>	<p>Number of courses and students in service learning</p> <p>Number of new service learning opportunities</p>
International partnerships and student experiences	<p>Raise significant funding to provide financial support for students to participate in international and study abroad experiences</p>	<p>Number of courses offered for study abroad</p> <p>Number of students participating in study abroad programs</p>
Innovation and Entrepreneurship	<p>Expand/improve communications and support to students regarding opportunities to participate in the Da Vinci program, in the entrepreneurship certificate program and in the entrepreneurship living learning facility</p> <p>Support faculty and student in their efforts to start new companies by implementing strategies to support their efforts</p> <p>Partner with the VCU Innovation Gateway to increase the flow of intellectual property</p> <p>Raise student scholarship funds to support students participating in starting a company and to develop resources for the hiring of an entrepreneur in residence to act as a resource for entrepreneurial students</p>	<p>Number of students in entrepreneurship programs</p> <p>Number of new companies or nonprofit organizations created by H&S students and faculty</p> <p>Number of invention disclosures</p>
Bring the university to the community to solve problems and enrich the intellectual and creative energy	<p>Full-time (or part-time) position to coordinate community engagement activities within H&S</p> <p>Continue a broad range of activities that promote a rich culture of community-engaged scholarship and instruction across our many disciplines, including the VCU Clark-Hill Institute for Positive Youth Development. The work on this project intersects with other initiatives such as Bridging Richmond and the East End Promise.</p> <p>Continue to support the Center for Psychological Services and Development, where doctoral students work closely</p>	<p>University/community projects and leadership activities.</p> <p>Number of public lectures or other scholarly activities.</p> <p>Number/funding of Community Engagement grants, internally and externally.</p>

	<p>with licensed faculty supervisors in integrating established psychotherapy skills and current research to provide a range of psychotherapeutic and assessment services to the community</p> <p>Continue to participate in VCU’s Community Engagement grants program through the Division of Community Engagement</p> <p>Continue support of programmatic components for the <i>ASPiRE</i> living learning community</p> <p>Develop coordinated effort for promotion of public lectures (e.g., as done by <i>Alexandrian Society</i> of the Department of History)</p>	<p>Number of courses/enrollment for <i>ASPiRE</i> courses.</p> <p>Move into the full implementation phase of the Yale National Initiative with Richmond Public Schools</p>
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Theme 5: Be responsible stewards of resources through the implementation of an accountable financial plan, an emphasis on strategic fundraising and alumni support, and a decision support system that aligns existing and new resources with the mission and vision of Quest for Distinction.

Humanities and Sciences Strategy	Tactics	Performance Measures
<p>Develop H&S Advisory Board of engaged, high profile, and successful alumni and community members with a passion for the liberal arts and sciences to help develop our narrative and to help us prepare for a fundraising campaign</p>	<p>Advisory Board created: develop specific task and metrics for advisory board and use them to both help promote H&S and to give us feedback on our strategies and plans to move us forward</p>	<p>Qualitative sense of increasing profile of H&S within VCU and the community.</p>
<p>Initiate a multi-million dollar campaign to support our “transformational pathways” efforts by increasing philanthropic giving to support student pathways, faculty, and new facilities</p>	<p>Develop a fundraising campaign around the theme of “pathways for transformation” that has three focal areas: support for students to explore integrative pathways through scholarships or infrastructure; support to hire and retain excellent faculty through endowed professorships or chairs; support to create a physical home for H&S</p>	<p>Successful completion of fundraising campaign goals</p>
<p>Continue development of a data-driven, transparent processes and tools to guide resource allocation and budget preparation</p>	<p>Commit to a transparent budget and allocation process that is based on data including enrollment, tuition revenue, productivity, existing resources, and priorities</p>	<p>Continued refinement of instruction and resource table for all units in H&S</p> <p>Publication of annual internal budget calendar</p> <p>Completion of Delaware Study Phase II (peer institution analysis)</p>

<p>Streamline administrative processes and create administrative efficiencies through technology, policies or service centers</p>	<p>Identify administrative processes that need improvement and identify areas of administrative staffing deficiencies, and create tactics to improve processes (e.g., electronic processes) or reduce deficiencies (e.g., continue administrative service center direction such as Chemistry/Forensic Science)</p>	<p>Development of Dean's Office/Department ARMICS/Financial Management "Roles & Responsibilities" chart, consistent with university's Finance Handbook</p> <p>Development of Dean's Office/Dept. financial management services and responsibility contracts for FY15</p>
<p>Explore developing revenue generating programs</p>	<p>Assess areas where revenue can be generated because of demand in continuing education or in professional master's degree and provide support for schools, departments and programs to develop revenue generating courses to meet that demand</p>	<p>Number of new revenue generating programs</p>

IX. Concluding Remarks: VCU's strategic plan *Quest for Distinction* is an aspirational plan for VCU to take the place as a premier, urban, public, research university. The *Pathways for Transformation* plan for the College of Humanities and Sciences presented here is targeted at building a liberal arts and sciences unit within VCU - a unit with the largest educational responsibility at VCU- capable of being the core of great university. But, *Pathways for Transformation* is ultimately about helping to build a great VCU, not simply about building H&S. Historically, the Humanities and Sciences disciplines have been under-resourced at VCU with a student:faculty ratio much higher than peers. So, some aspects of the plan involve VCU increasing resources to match the educational demands of H&S and the research expectations of the unit - simply some deficiencies must be corrected if *Quest's* aspirations are to be reached. But, the plan also involves taking action to improve teaching and research and to leverage existing resources. H&S will build on the strength in other VCU units such as the arts, health sciences, education, business and engineering to reach our goals. And, by building strength in the liberal arts and sciences, these other units will be better able to meet their full potential because of being able to leverage a strong foundational core. *Pathways for Transformation* articulates several tactics that when implemented over the next six years will enable H&S make significant progress towards an aspiration of being the liberal arts and sciences core of a premier, public, urban research university. The plan also commits H&S to being data driven in determining strengths, deficiencies and in measuring progress. We collectively feel that by implementing this plan, by using a data driven approach, and by adjusting its tactics over the next six years as appropriate, that H&S can begin to realize its vision as a distinctive liberal arts and sciences unit, with a deep commitment to student success, and with a portfolio of research, scholarship, discovery and creation among the best of urban, public, research universities.