



October 10, 2023

**To:** Dr. Kimberly Kostelis, Provost & Vice President for Academic Affairs  
**From:** Dr. Robert S. Wolff, Dean, Carol A. Ammon College of Liberal Arts & Social Sciences  
**Subj:** Academic Program Planning Report

Since the meeting with the Department Chairs and President Toro on September 12, the Dean's Office and the Ammon College Leadership Council have guided the Academic Program Planning (APP) process. The Leadership Council consists of the 15 Department Chairs in the Ammon College, Co-Coordinators of the International Studies Program, Director of the Honors Program, Associate Deans, and Ammon College Leadership Fellows. The professional Academic Advisors assigned to support the College also attend meetings and contribute to its deliberations.

After the September 12 meeting concluded, I met with the Department Chairs to discuss reactions, field questions, and develop a plan. The APP process has been the focal point of Leadership Council meetings on September 19, October 3, and October 10. Department Chairs consulted with their colleagues. We also solicited responses via a survey, which remains open. Additionally, my meetings with departments this fall have focused upon academic planning, including where appropriate discussions of course waitlists and caps, streamlining degree pathways within the major, sharing resources via cross-listed courses, marketing strategies, high-impact practices, experiential learning opportunities, workforce readiness, and more. Meetings with departments after September 12 addressed the APP process directly.

As the charge for the Academic Program Planning process indicates, for five years Central and the Ammon College have been actively seeking opportunities to operate more efficiently, increase enrollment, improve retention, and identify alternative revenue sources, while at the same time promoting equity and access for students from the communities we serve. Our 5 recommendations below combine specific suggestions and broader projects.

**1. Collaborate with the other Central Schools in the development of interdisciplinary graduate and undergraduate programs in Climate Change Studies.**

- A Hanover Research "benchmarking report" commissioned by Central in 2020 identified opportunities for Climate Change certificates, minors, and graduate degrees.
- A 2023 survey conducted by two faculty members, one from the Ammon College and the other from SEST, reviewed over 100 undergraduate and graduate programs at institutions of higher education in the U.S. and beyond.
- This review recommends a "hierarchical stacking model" that, for example, would allow graduate students to combine certificates in a core area and two areas related to occupational and scholarly interests with a capstone to complete a master's degree. A similar model can be employed for an undergraduate degree.
- Climate Change programs would draw upon faculty from across Central, exemplifying our commitment to interdisciplinary research, and serve multiple sectors of Connecticut's economy, government, and civic life.
- A strong academic commitment to addressing Climate Change as it affects the state, nation, and world, will set Central apart from other institutions of higher education in Connecticut.

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## 2. Finalize plans for a forensics laboratory and expand partnerships with Connecticut Law Enforcement

- Major crimes have significant and far-reaching impacts on victims and their communities. Clearing cases depends upon adequate forensic training for detectives. Connecticut law enforcement agencies, however, do not have access to adequate training facilities, and must pay for detectives to be trained in a neighboring state. Simultaneously, undergraduate criminology students at Central do not have access to a forensics laboratory, despite workforce opportunities that would be open to them with the training a lab provides.
- Working with partners in law enforcement and state government, Central will seek funding for a forensic science laboratory on campus, which in turn will provide an alternate source of revenue and enhance student recruitment. This will build upon our existing [detective certificate programs](#), developed in conjunction with the Connecticut State Police.
- Through the efforts of the Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice, including its Institute for the Study of Crime and Justice, Central can develop additional professional development and educational opportunities including training and/or certificates for first line supervisors, crime/intelligence analysts, and internal affairs. These opportunities will make Central the premier higher education focus for law enforcement in Connecticut and the region.
- A Forensic Lab on campus can serve as the foundation of an undergraduate Forensic Science major, providing students with the ability to learn in state-of-the-art facilities with hands-on-learning experiences and from experts in the field. Central would be the only state university to offer this major.

## 3. Engage in difficult conversations about the role of mathematics and statistics in student success.

- A focused review of more than 100 active CLASS undergraduate students with 120 or more earned academic credits identified the Skill Area II MATH/STAT requirement as a significant barrier to degree completion. This is especially problematic for disciplines such as Psychological Science, which requires STAT 215 (with a C- or better) for its research sequence, PSY 301-302.
- Given the national trend away from remedial courses, which have limited efficacy, toward co-requisite models, the Department of Mathematical Sciences should consider eliminating MATH 099 Elementary Algebra in favor of a sequence similar to that adopted when Central eliminated ENG 099 Remedial English. Remedial courses are costly both for students who do not earn college credits despite paying tuition, and institutions, which must staff courses that students often repeat.
- Nationwide, institutions are also experimenting with different pathways toward meeting requirements in mathematics and quantitative reasoning. For example, most of our [peer institutions](#) teach discipline-specific courses in statistics geared toward the needs for student success in both that discipline and the workforce. Like other institutions, Central should experiment with a variety of innovative strategies to meet its [General Education Objective](#) for “strengthen[ing] quantitative skills.”
- To this end, we propose a [pilot](#) course that teaches a 3-credit psychological statistics course within the Department of Psychological Science, with a prerequisite of MATH 099 (or equivalent) only. The course will count in lieu of the MATH/STAT requirement in Skill Area II. The department will collect data to determine whether this approach measurably improves student success in research methods and overall.

**4. Expand programs and initiatives that promote equity and access by improving recruitment and retention.**

- We are collaborating with academic departments and Academic Affairs to expand existing Dual Enrollment and Concurrent Enrollment (DECE) programs, while introducing new options in response to district demand. As part of a Next Generation Grant, faculty in the Criminology department have developed a concurrent enrollment section of CRM 110 at Vinal Technical High School. They are planning to expand this to other schools within the CT Technical High School system in the spring. Cromwell High School has approached the Communication department about offering DECE courses in TV Production and Media Studies. Music is working to develop a DECE program to work with New Britain High School in the areas of ensembles and music technology. Similarly, Journalism is working with high schools in Granby and Manchester. Sociology and English are also working to develop new partnerships and summer bridge programs.
- The Dean's Office continues to expand its direct role in supporting student success.
  - Since Fall 2022, the Dean's Office has worked with The Learning Center to contact and support early alert students. When CLASS majors fail to respond to the initial early alert contact from TLC, the Dean's Office contacts them via their CCSU email account, including both the reporting faculty and the student's primary adviser in the conversation. These emails encourage students to contact the reporting faculty member, their adviser, or the Dean's Office for additional support in getting back on track. Students who fail to respond to multiple early alerts are also contacted via non-CCSU email and telephone.
  - Starting in fall 2023, this "intrusive" approach has been expanded to include CLASS students on extended probation. Extended probation students who are at highest risk of dismissal are referred to the Academic Dismissal Prevention and Support Initiative (ADPSI) social worker, who works in coordination with the Dean's Office to monitor and support these students' progress. Additionally, the Dean's Office contacts all CLASS faculty with extended probation students enrolled in their courses and asks for updates and alerts; faculty have been responsive in contacting the Dean's Office if these students accumulate multiple absences, and/or miss assignment deadlines. The Dean's Office then immediately reaches out to these students via CCSU and private email, telephone, and even ResLife when necessary.
  - Since spring 2022, the Dean's office has regularly reviewed all CLASS students with at least 120 credits to help these students find a path towards graduation. We have recently expanded this project to include students with at least 90 credits to see if we could identify barriers earlier. Our reviews have identified students who are good candidates for the Bachelor of General Studies, as well as those who could benefit from course substitutions and/or appropriate waivers. As a result, we have been able to facilitate the graduation of a number of students.
- Initiatives in academic departments have also expanded to provide support.
  - The review of students with at least 120 credits identified that some students may face challenges in finishing the foreign language requirement. Students wait until their junior and senior year at Central to continue learning languages started in high school, thereby losing what they may have retained. We are targeting outreach to all students with 2 years of a high school language to help them understand their placement and waiver options and to help them register for a section of 112 this spring as appropriate. World Languages has also expanded their General Education Humanities course offerings to stimulate greater interest in learning a foreign language, and the department continues to innovate with HyFlex options to provide greater flexibility in students' modality needs.

- Because it is important that students complete their WRT requirement early in their academic career, our Developmental Writing and Composition coordinators have devised a more comprehensive system to track and reach out to students placed in WRT 100 and WRT 105 to facilitate their registration. We have also targeted students before and during Summer Orientations to take the Writing Placement Exam as soon as possible. Finally, we are working on deploying a new online version of the Writing Placement Exam that is easier for students to complete.
- Multiple departments have agreed to offer new Late-Start semester courses, which start two weeks after the regular start of the fall and spring semesters, and we have expanded our Second 8 Week course options. Both were in response to students' needs for greater flexibility. The Late-Start courses allow students who may face unexpected delays to their confirmation, registration, or financial aid. Our S8W courses are particularly beneficial for student athletes who may need to recover additional credits in a semester to meet NCAA benchmark eligibility requirements.

**5. Foster expanded summer and winter programming.**

- Develop additional summer programming for in-service teachers in partnership with the School of Education and Professional Studies as well as the School of Engineering, Science, and Technology. For example, World Languages, Literatures, and Cultures currently offers a Summer Institute for Teachers of Spanish, which is structured as an entrepreneurial account through Continuing Education. Other departments that have expressed interest in this approach include Journalism and Music.
- The Art and Design department currently offers a Saturday Art Workshop for Children program that runs for 7 weeks in the spring. This could be expanded into additional summer and/or winter programming. It could also be expanded with additional collaboration with other programs with a concentration in the Arts. There is also the possibility of a summer artist-in-residence program that would provide housing via the forms.
- The university could consider a plan to make use of some of our facilities and spaces for conferences and/or corporate meetings. Our dorms as well as the construction of the new WoodSpring Suites hotel across near our campus might make Hilltop Cafe attractive for hosting such events.

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