

CONNECTICUT COLLEGE



Building on Strength:

A NEW PLAN FOR CONNECTICUT COLLEGE

REPORT ON PROGRESS | SUMMER 2020

The year 2019-20, the fourth year of *Building on Strength*, was a historic year for Connecticut College and for all of higher education, with the global coronavirus pandemic causing ordinary in-person instruction to cease in March 2020 and requiring all activities at the College — including Commencement — to be completed remotely. Most accomplishments listed in this report thus took place over not a 12-month but a 9-month period between June 2019 and February 2020. The many actions taken by the College to mitigate the effects of COVID-19, while extensive, are not included.

New actions on the strategic plan since the May 2019 progress report are shown in red typeface. *Completed items are indicated with a green check mark* ✓

1. Enhancing Academic Distinction

Goal 1: Education

Become a recognized leader in integrative education promoting the intellectual, social, professional, and civic development of every student. ❶

OBJECTIVES

- *Ensure the success of Connections*
- *Advance and strengthen the College's centers for interdisciplinary scholarship, teaching, and learning* ❷
- *Deepen faculty and student engagement off campus and around the world* ❸
- *Broaden educational opportunities through new institutional partnerships* ❹

SPECIFIC ACTIONS

- Increase resources and staffing for continued development of Connections ❺
- Create Global Commons to integrate world languages, off-campus learning, and local and global engagement opportunities ✓ ❻
- Develop new resources to support departments in their work toward full participation
- Clarify curricular requirement for learning about social difference ✓ ❼
- Enrich STEM opportunities by establishing a program in engineering in partnership with U.S. Coast Guard and Worcester Polytechnic Institute ✓
- Expand opportunities for interdisciplinary teaching and learning, including potential precollege and master's programs
- Enhance support for the five centers for interdisciplinary scholarship and consider new centers of distinction (e.g., in informatics)
- Extend educational partnerships with the city of New London ❽
- Develop exchange programs with new global partners (e.g., Universidad de la Tierra in Mexico, Ashesi University College in Ghana) ❾

- Strengthen academic advising across four years
- Continue improving classrooms to support new forms of teaching with technology

DETAILS OF ACTIONS TAKEN BETWEEN MAY 2019 AND JUNE 2020:

- ❶ Presented the College's innovative curriculum to enthusiastic audiences at the Times Higher Education U.S. Student Success Forum; at the Association of American Colleges and Universities' annual meeting; and at the Council of Independent Colleges' annual Presidents Institute.
- ❷ Received extraordinary \$10 million gift from anonymous donors to bring the College's Academic Resource Center to a new level of excellence and establish Conn as a national leader in academic development and skills-building for life.
- ❸ Received New York Times Award for Innovation in Education Abroad for Walter Commons initiative to advance student knowledge of study abroad.
- ❹ Established institutional partnership with the Watson Foundation, making Conn students eligible for \$30,000 postgraduate grants to support independent international research. | Created new memorandum of understanding with U.S. Coast Guard Academy to leverage resources, foster collaboration, and enhance educational exchange. | Created Mellon-Global Islamic Studies Teaching Fellow position through new institutional partnership with Brown University. | Established partnership with Tufts University to link students in our museum studies certificate program to the M.A. in Museum Studies at Tufts. Two members of Class of 2020 were admitted to Tufts for Fall 2020. | Established partnership with D'Amore Kim School of Business at Northeastern University, facilitating admission for Conn students to the MS/MBA dual degree program. Three students admitted for Fall 2020. | Created new Bodenheim Fellow position in collaboration with The Day to enhance the teaching of journalism at Conn. | Created public series "Conversations on Race" in partnership with

The Day. [See also *Full Participation below.*] In partnership with the Community Foundation of Southeastern Connecticut, launched a Civic Scholars summer program to foster student engagement with nonprofit organizations in New London. [See also *Campus Living below.*]

- 5 Presented inaugural All-College Symposium, with students in the College's 13 Integrative Pathways and four Centers for Interdisciplinary Scholarship showcasing how their engagement in courses, jobs, and local and global communities shaped their future paths. | Offered 34 First-Year Seminars, 46 ConnCourses, 13 Thematic Inquiry courses, and 12 Senior Reflection seminars as part of Connections. | Introduced two new pathways in Data Analytics and Communication in Spring 2020. | Approved additional pathway in Food, focusing on how existing and historical food systems shape environmental and cultural landscapes. [See also *Sustainability below.*]
- 6 Established the Charles Chu and Henry T. K. Kuo Fellowship for Chinese Language Study, through a generous gift from an alumnus. | Hosted the first annual New University in Exile Consortium summer retreat for scholars. | Expanded outreach and support for first-generation and low-income students applying for scholarships for study abroad and international internships. In Fall 2019, students secured approximately \$40,000 in external funding from the Gilman International Scholarship program, the Fund for Education Abroad, and other sources. [See also *Financial Strength below.*]
- 7 Implemented new graduation requirement in Social Difference and Power for the Class of 2024. [See also *Full Participation below.*]
- 8 Ran second annual Global New London Summer practicum for students, in partnership with four community-based organizations.
- 9 Deepened student exchange program with Ashesi University in Ghana by hosting two Ashesi students at Conn in 2019-20 and sending one Conn student to Ashesi. | Featured Ashesi University President Patrick Awuah at virtual commencement for Class of 2020. | Hosted Spring 2020 exchange student from Pakistan through U.S. Department of State's Global Undergraduate Exchange Program in Pakistan.

Goal 2: Research

Open new channels for groundbreaking research, scholarship, and creative work.

OBJECTIVES

- Enhance funding, spaces, and technology for knowledge creation
- Multiply opportunities for student/faculty collaboration
- Enrich campus intellectual dialogue

SPECIFIC ACTIONS

- Develop new resources for student and faculty scholarship and conference travel ①
- Establish high-profile scholar-in-residence program
- Upgrade research facilities, labs, and other spaces in which faculty and students conduct their work
- Create new program in digital scholarship ✓
- Raise funds for new endowed chair positions
- Improve conditions for obtaining external grant funding ②
- Expand resources for research computing and scientific instrumentation

DETAILS OF ACTIONS TAKEN BETWEEN MAY 2019 AND JUNE 2020:

- ① With a gift from Susan Eckert Lynch '62, created the Sophomore Research Program for Pathways and Centers. In its inaugural year, seven students presented independent research projects. | Received \$157,000 grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to support the Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship Program. | Made first grants under the Richard H. Goodwin Environmental Research Fellowship to support two students' 2019-20 honors thesis research. | Celebrated Jocelyn Navarro '19 in receiving the National Science Foundation's Graduate Research Fellowship, which supports outstanding graduate students in NSF-supported science, technology, engineering and mathematics disciplines. | Increased student support for post-baccalaureate fellowships via enhanced advising through the Walter Commons.
- ② Received \$326,801 grant from the National Institutes of Health to support Associate Professor of Chemistry Tanya Schneider's research. | Received \$70,000 grant from the American Chemical Society's Petroleum Research Fund to support Assistant Professor of Chemistry Jacob Stewart's research. | Received two grants from National Endowment for the Humanities to support summer research of Profs. James Downs and Luis Gonzalez. | National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) Fellowship of \$60,000 to support Associate Professor of History Eileen Kane. | NEH-Mellon Fellowship for Digital Publication of \$60,000 to support Professor of Religious Studies Sufia Uddin. | Received \$60,000 Senior Fellowship from Ford Foundation to support research of Sandy Grande. | NOMIS Fellowship at the University of Basel of approximately \$100,000 to support Assistant Professor of Art History and Architectural Studies Anna Vallye. | Received \$25,000 grant to support Assistant Professor of Anthropology Joyce Bennett's residence at Harvard University's David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies. | Held September 2019 grant writing workshop for humanities researchers. | Held April 2020 workshop "How to Write for the National Science Foundation."

Goal 3: Arts

Advance the College's distinction in the creative and performing arts.

OBJECTIVES

- *Attain national leadership in collaborative arts practice oriented toward social change*
- *Enhance facilities and technology to match the excellence of the College's programs*
- *Develop academic offerings based on signature programs and centers*
- *Leverage artistic resources along the Northeast corridor*

SPECIFIC ACTIONS

- Renew Palmer Auditorium and other spaces for the arts as part of campus master plan ①
- Establish robust artist-in-residence program ②
- Build new partnerships with nationally known arts institutions
- Expand the mission and program of the Ammerman Center for Arts and Technology ③
- Cultivate internships with distinguished alumni
- Create new summer arts initiatives to promote excellence
- Explore feasibility of master's in digital arts
- Bolster campus connections to Lyman Allyn Art Museum ④

DETAILS OF ACTIONS TAKEN BETWEEN MAY 2019 AND JUNE 2020:

- ① Launched Palmer Auditorium renovation with October ceremonial groundbreaking to honor donors Sherman Fairchild Foundation and Nancy Athey '72 and husband Preston Athey. | Built new black-box theater in 33 Gallows Lane to support performance during the renovation. | Began redesign of Hillyer Hall into Stark Center for the Moving Image.
- ② As part of centennial celebration of Merce Cunningham, hosted guest artists in the fall and spring from the Cunningham Foundation and the former Cunningham dance company.
- ③ Launched new Visiting Fellow Program in the Ammerman Center for Arts & Technology with Elisa Giardina Papa as inaugural visiting fellow. | Hosted [Re]Generation Summit to connect artists, educators, researchers, and activists working toward social change. | Upgraded Ammerman Center facilities with new hardware and software for student and faculty research.
- ④ Offered three "Art History for All" classes at the Lyman Allyn Art Museum (taught by Professor Joseph Alchermes, Professor Karen Gonzalez Rice and Professor Emeritus Barbara Zabel). | Seniors in Museum Studies course AHI 456 curated an exhibition of photographs by womxn scheduled to open at the Lyman Allyn Art Museum in May 2021.

2. Enriching the Student Experience

The next priority of Connecticut College's strategic plan builds on the previous one. To achieve greater distinction and integration of student learning, we will commit to creating experiences outside of the classroom that extend intellectual enrichment, build a stronger sense of community, and prepare students for meaningful lives and careers.

Goal 1: Life and Career

Cultivate the talents of all students to lead lives of meaning and purpose.

OBJECTIVES

- *Establish the premier liberal arts career program in the country* ①
- *Increase access to high-quality internships and other career-enhancing experiences* ②
- *Educate students about the relationships among health, well-being, and success*

SPECIFIC ACTIONS

- Establish task force on careers to evaluate the state of advising for life after college ✓
- Take steps to relocate career office to central campus ✓ ③
- Expand expertise in emerging fields in technology and business ④
- Fully integrate career education into four-year curricular and advising structure ⑤
- Create new career modules for academic courses across the curriculum ⑥
- Tap alumni and parent network for competitive paid internships
- Increase resources for internships

- Make Connecticut College a critical stop for recruiters in key industries
- Establish job-shadowing program during winter and spring breaks ⁷
- Develop an intensive summer career workshop for students on campus and beyond
- Integrate new programs related to well-being into career education and across the co-curriculum

DETAILS OF ACTIONS TAKEN BETWEEN MAY 2019 AND JUNE 2020:

- 1 Received national recognition of our career program from U.S. News.
- 2 Held largest-ever Fast Forward program in January 2020 with 30 students from all class years participating in a week-long career intensive. | Held Arts & Entertainment Career Exploration Week in February, featuring alumni panels on careers in visual and performing arts, design, production, and television, and a showcase of Class of 2020 arts-related internships. | Celebrated Ahmed AboHamad '21 in receiving the 2019 Nada Anzak Award for his excellence as an intern at the Harvard Stem Cell Institute.
- 3 Formally opened the new Hale Center for Career Development in a dedication ceremony during the fall meeting of the Board of Trustees.
- 4 Launched a new “finance cohort” advising program for first-year students seeking careers in finance, leveraging the talents of Conn alumni, along with courses by Bloomberg, Investopedia, and Wall Street Prep.
- 5 Created and implemented a new Career Action Program, including a seven-week career preparation course, with the Class of 2023. Career course was offered to a select group of incoming members of the Class of 2024 in summer 2020.
- 6 Offered 22 Career Informed Learning courses involving 30 Conn alumni as content mentors. | Offered 8 new “languages for the professions” courses in Arabic, Italian, French, Chinese, Japanese, Latin, Spanish, and German, through the Walter Commons.
- 7 Created job shadowing program in January 2020 with 20 alumni offering opportunities to 29 students.

Goal 2: Campus Living

Stimulate a more vibrant, four-year residential living and learning experience.

OBJECTIVES

- *Implement phased strategy for upgrading campus housing*
- *Redesign campus social spaces to facilitate greater contact among students, faculty, and staff* ¹
- *Expand high-quality social activity, leadership, and mentoring opportunities across four years*
- *Increase student engagement with New London and the surrounding regions* ²

SPECIFIC ACTIONS

- Renovate and expand the College Center at Crozier-Williams
- Develop comprehensive initiative for intergroup dialogue and leadership ³
- Increase permanent funding for student clubs and organizations
- Establish robust weekly, monthly, and annual roster of student activities
- Advance plan for improving residence halls as part of campus master plan ⁴
- Explore new options for apartment-style living
- Continue expanding spaces and programs that enhance the first-year residential experience
- Develop centralized transportation system to support intellectual, social, and community engagement beyond the campus

DETAILS OF ACTIONS TAKEN BETWEEN MAY 2019 AND JUNE 2020:

- 1 Completed architectural design phase for renovation of the College Center at Crozier-Williams.
- 2 Created a first-year learning community, in Plant House, focused on engagement in New London. | In partnership with the Community Foundation of Southeastern Connecticut, created a Civic Scholars summer program to foster student engagement with nonprofit organizations in New London. Some Plant House residents participated. [*See also Education above.*]
- 3 Launched Agnes Gund '60 Dialogue Project with \$1 million gift as a platform to foster intergroup dialogue and anti-racist education. Highlights from 2019-20 included a new First-Year Seminar “Conversations on Race” and public lectures by Derald Sue and Ibram Kendi. [*See also Full Participation below.*]
- 4 Renovated Plant common room through the gift from Class of 1969. | Completed comprehensive upgrade of heating and cooling in the Plex.

Goal 3: Athletics

Heighten the competitiveness, success, and integration of the College's athletics programs.

OBJECTIVES

- *Make strategic investments in infrastructure and operating support for varsity athletics* ①
- *Develop club, intramural, and recreational programs for everyone*
- *Strengthen connections among athletics, academics, and the co-curriculum*

SPECIFIC ACTIONS

- Develop plan for upgrading athletics facilities as part of campus master plan ✓
- Establish task force on athletics to evaluate team staffing, funding, and performance ✓ ②
- Employ new assessment methods to review program effectiveness ✓
- Provide enhanced professional development for coaches ③
- Expand Camel Athletics Club to increase engagement of alumni athletes ④
- Augment funding and oversight of club and recreational sports
- Connect athletes to new initiatives in intergroup dialogue and leadership

DETAILS OF ACTIONS TAKEN BETWEEN MAY 2019 AND JUNE 2020:

- ① Appointed Mo White as new director of athletics, the first woman to hold the position in Conn's history. | Completed athletics master plan to foresee the renewal of fields, facilities, and waterfront over the next 20 years. | Undertook extensive landscape renewal project to create greater visibility and access to Conn's unique campus waterfront. [See also *Sustainability below.*]
- ② Developed Action Plan for Competitive Success to elevate student-athlete satisfaction through coaching excellence, recruitment, facilities, and alumni and parent support. | Achieved largest ever fundraising total for athletics operating budget.
- ③ With support of a generous trustee, retained Coaching to Connect to work with coaches in men's and women's ice hockey, women's field hockey, and men's basketball, to enhance individual and team performance.
- ④ Held well-attended Camel Athletics Network events in Washington, D.C., Boston, and New York City, to introduce alumni athletes to the Action Plan and the Master Plan for Athletics. | Launched Tim Armstrong '93 \$250,000 fundraising challenge and \$50,000 fundraising challenge in honor of the 50th anniversary of men's basketball at Conn.

3. Supporting a Diverse, Just, and Sustainable Community

The culminating priority of the strategic plan builds on the previous two through a vision that both acknowledges pressing needs and speaks to longstanding values of the institution. To enable a truly just and sustainable institution, we will commit to policies and practices that ensure equity, protect precious resources, and enable all people to flourish in their lives at the College.



Goal 1: Full Participation

Empower an increasingly diverse community of students, faculty, and staff to thrive in their work and contribute to the flourishing of others. ①

OBJECTIVES

- *Develop new policies and programs in support of full participation*
- *Enhance resources to enroll and retain students from historically underrepresented groups*
- *Support and retain an increasing number of faculty and staff of color*
- *Foster a culture of respect and recognition for all employees*
- *Improve the accessibility and safety of the campus*

SPECIFIC ACTIONS

- Develop comprehensive initiative for intergroup dialogue and leadership ²
- Establish new programs for development and recognition of staff excellence ✓
- Assess and eliminate structural barriers for student success
- Leverage financial aid to expand the socioeconomic diversity of the student body
- Revise policies for opportunity hiring to assist with diversity goals
- Address systemic and cultural impediments to retaining international and domestic faculty and staff of color
- Increase endowed resources for the Center for the Comparative Study of Race and Ethnicity (CCSRE)
- Relocate the Center to central campus ✓
- Enhance support for, visibility of, and connections among campus centers and programs focused on identity and inclusion
- Expand staffing and programming to promote inclusive pedagogies across the curriculum ³
- Develop new resources to support departments in their work toward full participation
- Clarify curricular requirement for learning about social difference ⁴
- Launch pre-orientation programs to boost student success
- Improve dining options to include halal and kosher food ✓
- Generate near- and long-term accessibility plans in conjunction with campus master plan ⁵
- Explore the possibility of a second, accessible pedestrian bridge

DETAILS OF ACTIONS TAKEN BETWEEN MAY 2019 AND JUNE 2020:

- 1 Appointed 11 new tenure-track faculty members in 10 disciplines, 64% of whom are faculty of color. | Celebrated national recognition of one of those new faculty — Milne Assistant Professor of Biology Maria Rosa — as a 2020 Emerging Scholar by *Diverse Issues in Higher Education* magazine.
- 2 Launched Agnes Gund '60 Dialogue Project with \$1 million gift as a platform to foster intergroup dialogue and anti-racist education. Highlights from 2019-20 included a new First-Year Seminar “Conversations on Race” and public lectures by Derald Sue and Ibram Kendi. [See also *Campus Living*

above.] | Trained approximately 20 faculty and staff in intergroup dialogue pedagogy. | Created public series “Conversations on Race” in partnership with The Day. [See also *Education above.*]

- 3 Redesigned the major in Dance to emphasize a broader range of movement styles, including the four Africanist techniques taught by faculty specialists.
- 4 Implemented new graduation requirement in Social Difference and Power for the Class of 2024. [See also *Education above.*]
- 5 Made 90-year old Fanning Hall accessible for the first time in its history by installing a four-story elevator as part of the Hale Center renovation.

Goal 2: Sustainability

Become a beacon of sustainability through careful stewardship of the College’s physical, natural, and human resources.

OBJECTIVES

- *Solidify the institutional commitment to environmentally responsible and socially just practices* ¹
- *Establish principles to guide future campus development reflective of College values*
- *Leverage the natural assets of campus and region to advance the College’s priorities*
- *Improve decision-making, conserve resources, and enhance outcomes through the use of new analytical tools*

SPECIFIC ACTIONS

- Undertake a campus-wide master planning process ✓
- Take steps to heighten the College’s national profile on sustainability ²
- Redouble efforts to spread sustainability across the curriculum ³
- Expand revolving fund for resource efficiency ⁴
- Enhance capacity of arboretum as a vehicle for teaching and research in the natural sciences
- Open campus access to the Thames River for scholarship and recreation ⁵
- Explore potential to develop a sustainable food initiative based on local assets ⁶
- Consider developing a sustainable residential facility as part of master planning effort
- Execute space-utilization study to inform capital planning ✓
- Audit administrative structures to ensure efficient and maximal use of talent

DETAILS OF ACTIONS TAKEN BETWEEN MAY 2019 AND JUNE 2020:

- 1 Created President's Sustainability Advisory Council to guide further sustainability action on campus. | Conducted sustainability literacy and culture survey to evaluate campus knowledge and guide programming in the Office of Sustainability. | Announced ambitious new goal to achieve a 45% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030. | Completed installation of fuel cell on campus to reduce College's reliance on purchased power. [See also *Financial Strength* below.]
- 2 Held second annual sustainability campaign, Putting the Liberal Arts Into Climate Action.
- 3 Offered two modules on sustainability for incorporation into Fall 2019 First-Year Seminars. Eight seminars made use of the material. | Offered group independent study course in which eight students, working with faculty, staff, and alumni mentors, designed a solar array for installation in the Service Building at Connecticut College. | Approved new pathway in Food, to encourage work towards a more just and sustainable food system at the local, regional, and national levels. [See also *Education* above.]
- 4 In collaboration with the Student Government Association, expanded Sustainability Revolving Fund to over \$100,000. Allocated funds went toward a second lighting efficiency project in the Athletic Center and a future solar power project for Admissions.
- 5 Undertook extensive landscape renewal project to create greater visibility and access to Conn's unique campus waterfront. [See also *Athletics* above.]
- 6 Appointed Eric Vukicevich as the Goodwin Visiting Scholar in Botany and Visiting Professor of Sustainable Agriculture to expand and integrate the Sprout Garden more fully into the curriculum, campus, and greater New London community. | Through collaboration between Office of Sustainability and Dining Services, tested a "Meatless Monday" concept while educating students about the environmental impacts of meat.

Goal 3: Financial Strength

Protect and grow the College's financial resources. ①

OBJECTIVES

- Double the size of the College's endowment
- Strategically deploy operating resources to ensure strong enrollments
- Explore new programming to diversify revenue streams

- Strengthen and expand philanthropic support for College priorities

SPECIFIC ACTIONS

- Plan and launch a capital campaign in support of the strategic plan ✓
- Fortify annual giving and gifts to endowment
- Increase alumni engagement and participation
- Develop a long-term budget addressing capital improvements and deferred maintenance
- Create revenue-generating initiatives that take advantage of the campus in summer
- Seek collaborative partnerships to improve operations and achieve efficiencies ②
- Explore new ways to make a Connecticut College education affordable ③

DETAILS OF ACTIONS TAKEN BETWEEN MAY 2019 AND JUNE 2020:

- 1 Convened FSCC-appointed task force on faculty resources and Board-appointed Futures Committee to evaluate opportunities to reducing the cost of instruction while delivering an exceptional Connecticut College education. | Organized site visit with President and senior leadership to Rhodes College in Memphis, TN, to do comparative analysis of staffing and operations. | Completed installation of fuel cell on campus to reduce College's reliance on purchased power. [See also *Sustainability* above.]
- 2 Launched CTW OneSource automated e-procurement platform with Trinity College and Wesleyan University. | Implemented Salesforce, the premiere customer relationship management platform, to support a more efficient and professional Advancement organization.
- 3 In connection with the textbook affordability working group, published the College's first open educational resource textbook, Form and Content: An Introduction to Formal Logic by Professor Derek Turner. | Expanded scholarship support for first-generation and low-income students seeking international study and internship opportunities, through grants from the Gilman International Scholarship program, the Fund for Education Abroad, and other sources. [See also *Education* above.] | Raised over \$90,000 from generous alumnae and alumni to support students with unforeseen educational expenses as a result of the coronavirus pandemic.