



# College of Communication and Fine Arts

2023–2028 Strategic Plan

Creative culture  
thrives at the College  
of Communication and  
Fine Arts at the  
University of Memphis.



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## Context

Over the last five years, the College of Communication and Fine Arts (CCFA) undertook a series of initiatives to implement our strategic plan. While the pandemic had negative effects on our more aspirational objectives, we realized key achievements such as an 8.5% overall increase in enrollment with exponential growth in Art and Design (31%) and Architecture (13%). Increased funding for need-based scholarships and enhanced targeted recruitment enabled this growth. Furthermore, we expanded our academic offerings through new graduate certificates such as Arts Entrepreneurship and Vocology.

Plan implementation also created improvements to our internal culture and research outputs. We prioritized an inclusive academic environment, with cultural competency training integrated into faculty and staff development. Efforts to increase student and faculty diversity showed promising results, despite the pandemic's challenges. Crafting an environment where research is valued and promoted, we invested our own resources through seed grants and by creating interdisciplinary projects which resulted in the establishment of the Institute for Arts and Health, among other scholarly achievements. We secured over \$2M in external funding with several faculty members participating in NIH and NSF grants, indicating national recognition.

The opening of the state-of-the-art Scheidt Family Performing Arts Center (housing three large rehearsal spaces and a 900-seat performance hall equipped for both theatrical and live acoustic performances) and the inaugural Central to the Arts Festival celebrated and enabled our partnership with and outreach to the community.

Building on the successes of our most recent strategic plan, our new CCFA strategic plan is ambitious and forward thinking and aligns with the overall university strategic priorities presented in ASCEND.



## College Mission

We nurture the talents and develop the skills of artists, architects, communicators, scholars and innovators of the future through being an inclusive and interdisciplinary academic and research College while also infusing the campus and the broader community with the transformative power of the arts and communication.

## College Vision

Our students are prepared to be impactful leaders in their disciplines and have the industry knowledge and soft skills necessary to pivot into new careers created by our ever-changing society. CCFA accomplishes this through collaboration with industry partners (including alumni) for experiential learning, internships, and curricula guidance, as well as, through engagement of exceptional faculty and students in life-changing, interdisciplinary research, creative activity and scholarship.



## Key Priorities

The following are key priorities in our strategic plan:

- Develop cohesion and inner connectedness within CCFA.
- Explore new curricula development and potential reconfiguration of departments, specifically (but not exclusively) to create interdisciplinary programs that are based on industry demands.
- Create centralized efficiencies—from staff functions to course work.
- Develop additional resources to increase our competitiveness for gaining and retaining students, faculty and staff (from compensation to course release time to building maintenance).
- Meet students where they are, creating relationships to help them persist.
- Conduct a comprehensive review and adjustment of curricula to ensure competitiveness and alignment with students' needs.
- Create better relationships with alumni for feedback on and connections to student career pathways.

# CCFA Strategic Plan (2023-2028)

The following are CCFA objectives and strategies as they align with UofM goals. Additional details—such as tactics, leaders, deadlines, and outcomes—will be developed upon plan approval as the first step of the implementation process.



## GOAL 1: AGGRESSIVELY PROVIDE ACCESS

Grow enrollment while simultaneously improving student preparedness by pursuing a diversified and far-reaching recruitment strategy that emphasizes our University's compelling value proposition.

### A. Strengthen our ability to compete with other universities for students.

1. Provide enriching student experiences through offering open lectures and excellent arts programming campus-wide.
2. Secure additional external funding for graduate students.
3. Increase the number of endowed scholarships specific to CCFA majors.
4. Ensure students have access to experiential learning (paid internships) across CCFA disciplines.
5. Explore renaming the College to more accurately describe the disciplines.
6. Invest in and promote emerging technologies, giving students access to workforce preparedness (See also Goal 4.A.4).

### B. Diversify student sourcing.

1. Increase strategic recruitment from regional community colleges, area high schools, and youth development nonprofits.
2. Develop the departmental and college resources and infrastructure (protocol, assigned leaders, and digital campaigns) for regional and national social media promotion.
3. Expand CCFA events into the community as a means of recruitment (inclusive of continuing the Central to the Arts Festival and AMUM educational programming).
4. Host more on-campus events and tours for prospective students and parents to foster relationships between faculty and students and allow students to "see themselves at the UofM."

5. Explore international University partnerships to create a pipeline of students to our graduate programs.
6. Expand dual enrollment opportunities regionally.
7. Work more closely with related AP offerings in local high schools to offer course credits and for general recruitment.

### C. Attract undecided (enrolled) students to CCFA degree programs.

1. Utilize alumni to demonstrate the variety of potential careers through formal events/talks and less formal 1:1 connections for career networking.
2. Clearly articulate to transfer students what credits count for which degrees and work with them to develop a completion plan.
3. Revise catalog/degree requirements to aid transfer students to graduate in two years.
4. Work with community colleges to align their programs in a manner that will smooth the pathway for transfer students.
5. Work with the ACAD coordinator to adjust to the ACAD to include some CCFA sections of the course (and hold conversations about the possibility of changing it to a one credit seven-week course).
6. Map majors to career possibilities and publicize across campus.





## GOAL 2: CREATE OPPORTUNITIES TO SUCCEED

Foster an exciting, all-encompassing student experience that encourages students to persevere, grow and thrive while laying the foundations for future success and creating an enriching lifelong bond with the University.

### A. Increase student knowledge about and interactions with career fields.

1. Integrate career competencies into all degree program coursework.
2. Increase the connections with industries to secure funding to provide undergraduate and graduate students with paid internships.
3. Collaborate with Career Services, alumni, fellow departments, and outside organizations to increase new networks of professional opportunities for students (e.g. student partnership for exhibitions, communications vehicles, community architecture projects, and more).
4. Develop and/or promote existing workshops on professionalism and portfolio development for students.

### B. Foster an atmosphere of holistic student health by promoting services that aid overall student well-being and enables students to be part of our community.

1. Provide enriching arts programming to students campus-wide to provide them with positive, efficacious cultural experiences. (See also Goal 1. A. 1.)
2. Train staff and faculty to create a student-focused environment where students are offered consistent support in an inclusive environment.
3. Increase staff, faculty, and graduate assistant knowledge of resources for students through use of a frequently updated faculty and graduate assistant Canvas module.

4. Develop consistent and effective communication pathways with students—social media, physical bulletin boards, newsletters, etc.—to communicate about groups, clubs, counseling services, and events (especially those offered within the CCFA).
5. Create networking events across majors for students with participation from staff, faculty and alumni.
6. Create and promote interesting, comfortable, and inclusive physical places for students to come together for study sessions, camaraderie, and basic needs.
7. Encourage faculty and staff involvement in student organizations, including helping students create RSOs.
8. Explore the feasibility of creating a program for students with financial needs where students can request funds to purchase needed technology and other resources necessary to thrive and persist.
9. Publicize the Center for Writing and Communication, Educational Support Programs, and other on-campus resources (i.e. resources for students with disabilities) as mechanisms for students to prepare for professional communications.



## GOAL 3: OUTCOMES-FOCUSED ACADEMICS

Deliver a rigorous, practical, well-rounded and supportive academic experience through innovative programs and teaching methods that focus on student success and prepare our students for the workforce and graduate education.

### A. Expand academic experiences to prepare students for the workforce and graduate education.

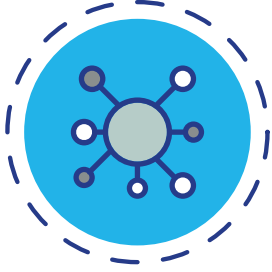
1. Explore the creation of a multidisciplinary degree program.
2. Collaborate across the departments to create curriculums that encourage students to take classes across the College.
3. Explore feasibility of creating a CCFA-wide requirement that students take one upper-level elective course outside of their major within CCFA.
4. Build on the ability of students to conduct practicums with industry via RSOs.
5. Add capstone courses or seminal work products to programs in the College lacking such work and enhance these courses by incorporating experiential and service learning where possible.
6. Promote and incentivize accessible design of study abroad courses.
7. Increase professional collaborations between faculty and students.
8. Expand Visiting Artists, Scholars and Professionals programs to bring working professionals to campus.
9. Help students connect with each other for peer-to-peer aid with digital portfolios.
10. Incorporate digital media skills into interdisciplinary curriculum (i.e. Adobe suite, Canva, etc.).

### B. Increase the access to CCFA coursework and other resources.

1. Provide micro credential programs with pathways for 4-year degrees.
2. Reexamine all of our prerequisite requirements for upper-level courses to increase access to CCFA courses to students across departments.
3. Explore authorizing some existing courses as general education courses.

### C. Conduct departmental evaluations of current degree offerings to evaluate program production and how each meets industry demands.

1. Explore developing new programs that show a direct link to industry needs.
2. Explore low-producing programs to revise or sunset.
3. Develop an analysis of return on investment per degree areas for alumni in the postgraduate 5-years.



## GOAL 4: STRENGTHEN RESEARCH ENTERPRISE

Perform life-changing, interdisciplinary research and scholarship that is supported by world-class infrastructure and conducted by highly motivated researchers addressing the community and society's greatest challenges.

### A. Increase external funding for research in existing centers/institutes to address societal challenges.

1. Seek federal and foundation grants for the Institute of Arts and Health, creating additional positions for sustainability.
2. Conduct programmatic development of Center for Arts Integration in Business Performance to offer corporate and nonprofit training, generating external revenue and building staff for sustainability.
3. Develop consistent supports for all CCFA research centers and help for new centers to emerge.
4. Ensure internal coordination of which departments are applying to which funders.
5. Seek funding for emerging technologies (such as a digital fabrication lab).

### B. Increase undergraduate and graduate research outputs.

1. Establish interdisciplinary research labs/institutes and groups to increase graduate and undergraduate involvement in faculty research.
2. Increase student participation in existing research groups, forums and projects, particularly for undergraduate students.

3. Host more College workshops/events designed to support grant writing efforts of faculty, to encourage interdisciplinary collaborations, and to participate in such resources existing elsewhere in the University.
4. Explore creating additional graduate degree programs that support the R1 designation.
5. Increase graduate funding to utilize graduate assistants in a research capacity and to guarantee 5-years of support for doctoral students.

### C. Provide additional support for faculty and student research.

1. Work with the Grants Accounting Department to align grant writing resources.
2. Expand eligibility of research seed grants and other internal support to include non-tenure track faculty.
3. Gain additional capacity by adding one professorship annually thereby reducing teaching loads to create time for research.
4. Explore creating a pre-tenure course release to aid capacity for research.
5. Create a pre-award coordinator position to increase external grant applications.



## **GOAL 5: RECRUIT, RETAIN, REWARD AND RECOGNIZE OUR PEOPLE**

Cultivate a respectful, supportive culture for our exceptional faculty and staff that recognizes and rewards excellence and success and that provides ample opportunities for personal growth, professional development, promotion and leadership.

### **A. Reward and retain excellent faculty and staff.**

1. Improve staff and faculty communication mechanisms to improve efficiencies and create greater transparency in the College.
2. Promote nonprofit offerings, such as workshops, events, and groups, that will help new members to integrate into our Memphis community.
3. Provide faculty (tenure and non-tenure track), staff and teaching graduate assistants professional development (from software training to conferences and more), ensuring that there are equal opportunities for participation.
4. Develop staff and faculty mentorship connections.
5. Ensure mid-career staff and faculty have access to continuing professional development.
6. Advocate for support in addressing faculty and staff salary compression and equity issues (including merit pay).
7. Explore additional opportunities to acknowledge outstanding faculty and staff performance.
8. Create a leadership development academy to invest in cultivation of future academic leaders.

### **B. Recruit exceptional faculty and staff.**

1. Develop more strategic recruitment from HBCUs and associations for affinity groups.
2. Assist with the onboarding and connection to legal resources for international employees.
3. Create a recruitment tour that highlights the College offerings and opportunities and takes potential members off campus to showcase Memphis amenities.
4. Review entry pay level for our competitor schools and explore adjusting compensation and resources for research start-up funding.
5. Complete AMUM's accreditation with the American Alliance of Museums to showcase the AMUM's excellence.



## GOAL 6: EXEMPLIFY OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

Optimize operational efficiency and effectiveness through the establishment of high standards and expectations to maximize resource utilization and to uphold accountability.

### A. Partner with Physical Plant and the COO to improve the working and learning conditions.

1. Prioritize repairs to the heating and cooling systems.
2. Advocate for window replacements to improve efficiencies and environmental safety.
3. Ensure safe ventilation systems throughout the Art building are safe for students and faculty and staff.
4. Renovate the CFA building, inclusive of developing a creative technology and fabrication lab, expansion of AMUM space, and revisioning the TV studio (with consideration for the needs of other users of this building).
5. Improve building and classroom access to provide a more secure and safe learning environment (for example, an appropriate use of key fobs and other security technology).
6. Ensure success for students with physical disabilities by improving and updating access.

4. Create a Strategic Plan Implementation Committee that will develop overall deadlines, facilitate the development of departmental work plans and KPIs, and continuously monitor the plan to celebrate successes and overcome challenges.
5. Improve student ability to persist through consistent administrative support that is easily accessible (see also Goal 2.B.).

### C. Develop stronger relationships with students and alumni.

1. Develop a formal alumni network / group to institutionalize the ability for alumni to resource the College in a variety of ways.
2. Consistently solicit, analyze, and act on alumni and student feedback.
3. Develop and implement a plan for more consistent alumni contacts and engagement (events, career development support, and more).

### B. Create CCFA cohesion and operational efficiency (including strategic plan implementation).

1. Examine CCFA department configurations and conduct reorganization where needed.
2. Create a CCFA communications and recruitment team.
3. Restructure our advising process and resources to improve the information and resources for students and create more administrative advising support to reduce the advising workload for faculty.



## **GOAL 7: GENERATE AND STEWARD FINANCIAL RESOURCES**

Increase funding and improve resource allocation to fuel growth through better alignment of internal priorities and external funding opportunities, through funding diversification and through application of financial best practices.

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### **A. Cultivate and maintain donor relationships.**

1. Strengthen relationships with local foundations.
2. Continue to implement and improve an alumni giving program.
3. Increase the number of grants that departments apply to, setting internal departmental goals on a minimum number of yearly grant applications.
4. Capitalize on naming opportunities and sponsorships to secure major donors.
5. Continue and strengthen the planned giving program.

### **B. Adhere to the new RCM budget model.**

1. Explore ways to improve efficiencies under the RCM budget model.
2. Develop new sources of revenue for the College (i.e. new revenue producing programs, a continuing education program, event sound management, etc.).

### **C. Aid CCFA academic goals through targeted fundraising.**

1. Raise funds for one additional Endowed Chair by the end of FY 2028.
2. Raise funds for five additional Endowed Professorships by the end of FY 2028.
3. Raise funds for 50 additional Endowed Scholarships/Awards by the end of FY 2028.
4. Raise an additional \$6.35M for the endowment by the end of FY 2028.



## Implementation

The first step in implementation of this plan is to develop further plan details such as priority items to sequence first, implementation leaders, outcomes and deadlines. Below we outline the process for this work.

## Implementation Groups & Tasks

An overarching Implementation Committee (that has representation from the Planning Committee and will include students) will be created. This body will:

- 1** **Develop an analysis of which objectives have existing momentum to build on and which should be prioritized because they enable other important objectives or lend capacity to other objectives. This will result in a list of prioritized objectives. The Planning Committee named some possible priorities:**
  - Restructure the advising program to take weight off of faculty advisors.
  - Improve our relationships with alumni by developing alumni networks in each unit, creating additional paid internships and other alumni support activities.
  - Focus on student recruitment to increase enrollments.
  - Improve the avenues for faculty / student collaborations.
  - Improve communications that showcase the breadth and depth of College offerings and career paths (on and off campus).
  - Prioritize revision of curricula.
  - Ensure safe learning and working spaces.



**2** Assign objectives to existing committees (such as Research Committee, CCFA Graduate Council, CCFA Undergraduate Council and reforming the Student Advising Committee or expanding the Music Department’s student committee) and to other leadership groups (such as the advising team).

- Develop an Implementation Plan template for the committees to utilize as they draft the details (include spaces for tactics that support each strategy, leaders, outcome measures, and deadlines).
- Develop work tools and cadence for these committees, such as deadlines for completion of their implementation plans and implementation review methods (such as student focus groups) and timelines.

**3** Explore creating a paid student internship to help create plan outcomes and conduct other supportive implementation work.

**4** Prompt the creation of an alumni group to provide guidance on implementation.

**5** Prompt the Dean to utilize the contract with Hanover Research Group to help hone in on specific tactics (such as recruitment and marketing tactics) and to consider the adjustment of that contract to include grants in subsequent years.

**6** Review reports from above mentioned committees bi-annually and suggest alterations/improvements.

**7** Annually assign plan objectives to the committees.



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