

# Strategic Initiative Action Items Accomplished 2022-2023

## Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

- Worked with EDI office and other Schools to pilot a collaborative hire and work process that involved hiring three associate deans to assist all three Schools. The Associate Deans hosted a series of in person town hall meetings and an online survey to understand faculty needs.
- In the first formal school-level department chair training in the history of the school, Chairs were introduced to, among things, social science research about inequity in the distribution of service among faculty and given examples of tools that have proven effective in managing service equitably and transparently on other research university campuses.
- Faculty Equity funds were used to increase the lower bound of off-scale salaries within the school. More than 40% of faculty received salary adjustments.
- Analyses of staff salaries from Human Resources were reviewed and salary adjustments to address equity were requested quarterly.

## Establish Research Centers, Institutes, and ORUs

- Staff vacancies were redistributed to academic departments and interdepartmental programs. These staff members will absorb much of the administrative burden currently experienced by department chairs and faculty, thus releasing time for research.

## Undergraduate Programs and Skill Sets

- The new Data Science and Computing major was approved by the Academic Senate and will launch in Fall 2024.
- Faculty worked on two additional majors, a BS in Biochemistry and a BA in Biology. A major in Ecology, Evolution and Conservation Biology is also being explored.
- The school continued its collaboration with the Office of Leadership, Service and Career to offer 'Experience by Degrees' panels to connect current undergraduates with industry representatives and alumni.
- The medical education effort identified courses and competencies that support students' preparation for medical school. These courses and competencies apply to many careers in healthcare and can serve as the basis for meaningful pre-health certificates in the future.

## **Modernizing Curriculum Through Innovative Pedagogy**

- SNS faculty hosted a successful STEM Education Research Seminar Series with support from a donor. This raised the visibility of STEM Education Research on our campus.
- We provided feedback to CETL as they developed pedagogical training for graduate students and participated in their Course Design Bootcamp.
- Several departments now include instructional staff and advisors in meetings related to teaching.
- SNS supported several on-campus workshops on pedagogical innovation and assessment. Notably, SNS faculty organized, and the school supported, the Central Valley Region Interdisciplinary Symposium of Research in Education in July 2022.
- After analysis of student demand for summer classes, nearly all SNS summer courses were offered online in summer 2022 and summer 2023. This had a positive impact on enrollment.
- A new 'Health Scholars' Living Learning Community was developed and implemented. Funded by the Chancellor, Health Scholars receive \$5,000 and are guaranteed access to courses that medical schools typically require. Health Scholars had the highest yield of any enrollment incentive programs on campus.
- DUE eliminated the practice of dismissing students after their first semester for low GPA.
- We continued to standardize school-level annual academic planning and included it in the first-ever formalized, SNS Department Chair training. One significant outcome was an increase in undergraduate class section fill rate from 77.99% of available seats in AY21-22 to 81.15% of available seats in AY22-23. Kudos belong to our Department Chairs and our Curriculum Manager.
- SNS supported the deployment of undergraduate Learning Assistants in eleven lower division courses across four majors (Math 5, 21, 22; Bio 1, 2; Chem 1, 2, 10; Phys 8, 9, 18) to facilitate proven active learning in medium to large classes. According to IRDS, students who took courses with a learning assistant were significantly more likely to pass (84%) compared to students who took a course without a learning assistant (82%). That translates into 86 students who did not fail and are therefore more likely to be retained.

## **Graduate Education and Reaching R1 Status**

- A team of two graduate students and a faculty member participated in CETL's Course Design Institute to develop a new SPARK course.
- We created an SNS Graduate Student Council. Representatives of each graduate group, including Environmental Science, meets with the Dean each semester to create an open channel for communication, feedback and, for the Dean, an opportunity to learn about graduate student experiences and culture.

- To improve on-campus transition/orientation process for graduate students, in August of 2022 we piloted an off-campus, community building event for incoming SNS PhD students and their graduate program chairs. There was not strong interest in running the event in 2023.

### **Advancing Faculty Success**

- We continue to hold a faculty and staff lunch each semester to promote stronger informal connections between faculty and staff.
- SNS Faculty awards were created and launched Spring 2022. Awards in the following categories were announced at the fall picnic at the Vista: Exceptional Service, Building Collaborations for Research and Teaching, Undergraduate Research Mentoring, Community Engagement, Partnership with Staff, Developing Academic Programs & Tracks, Innovations in Undergraduate Education, Contributions to Inclusive Excellence in STEM, Supporting Shared Research Infrastructure.
- SNS academic personnel team has continued to refine their ongoing faculty ‘Lunch and Learn’ series to help faculty learn about things such as personnel actions, administrative processes that affect them.
- Teaching Faculty hires have increased, and our assistant dean CFO continues to work with department chairs on plans to increase these hires.
- Several departments have established award committees to nominate faculty for prestigious national and international awards and honors.

### **Staff Development and Success**

- A new ‘Impact Award’ program recognizes staff whose work has a measurable, positive impact on people and process improvements within and beyond the confines of our School.
- SNS Staff Personnel team revamped their onboarding checklists for new staff hires.
- The school continues to support our SNS Staff Council, which delivered excellent professional development exercises at our monthly staff breakfasts.