

Strategic plan

2014–2019

School of Languages, Literatures & Cultures, College of Liberal
Arts & Sciences, University of Kansas

Mission, values, and goals of the SLLC for the first five years

Strategic Plan

2014–2019

School of Languages, Literatures &
Cultures, College of Liberal Arts &
Sciences, University of Kansas

SLLC Goals

The Strategic Plan for the SLLC derives from the Proposal to Form the School of Languages, Literatures & Cultures, presented to Dean of the College, Danny J. Anderson, by the Action Committee and Subcommittees, 14 March 2014. It outlines the goals needed to build out the School from its constitution in 2014 to its full implementation, foreseen for fall 2019.



Overview

The School of Languages, Literatures & Cultures (SLLC) was formed in September 2014 to strengthen and sustain well into the future KU's long-term prominence in foreign-language education and the study of literature and culture connected with KU's language coverage. Formed at a historical moment when state and federal funding for foreign-language education has sharply decreased while, simultaneously, there is heightened national need for foreign-language education, the SLLC seeks ways to update and strengthen its educational mission. While retaining a commitment to disciplinary integrity and departmental identities, the umbrella structure of the SLLC aims to raise visibility, mentor and educate students and the public, increase efficiency of operation, strengthen its financial position, and move more nimbly in evolving curriculum to meet regional and national needs. The SLLC serves an essential function for twenty-first-century higher education in Kansas, which is, and will continue to be, driven by globalization and the knowledge economy.

The SLLC has a dual structure. On the one hand, it serves as an administrative structure with reporting lines to the Director (who reports to the Dean of the College) for the following departments: East Asian Languages & Cultures, French & Italian, Germanic, Slavic; Spanish & Portuguese, while a core member of the SLLC, reports, because of its size, separately to Dean. On the other, it represents and works with the following units on matters of common interest: the departments of African & African-American Studies, Anthropology, Classics, Linguistics, as well as the area-studies programs. All of these units consult through the Executive Board.

Stakeholders

- The University of Kansas and its students
- SLLC faculty and staff
- College of Liberal Arts & Sciences
- KU partners
 - Office of International Programs
 - Office of Study Abroad
 - Honors Program
 - Area Studies Programs
 - Professional Schools
- International organizations in the region
- Businesses with global connections regionally and nationally
- Government agencies with international interests (KS Chamber of Commerce, Command and General Staff College at Ft. Leavenworth, etc.)
- KU alumni
- KS K-12

Mission, values, vision

The mission statement of the SLLC emphasizes the integral nature of the knowledge of language, literature, and culture and, though in this document (as is frequently the case in the field), “foreign language (FL)” education is used to refer to the interrelated areas of study.

SLLC Goals 1–3 map to Bold Aspirations Goal 1: Energizing the Educational Environment: “Strengthen recruitment, teaching, and mentoring to prepare undergraduate students for lifelong learning, leadership, and success”

The Action Committee and Subcommittees to form the SLLC agreed on the following mission statement, ratified on 7 March 2014. It captures the SLLC’s current view of its activities and its future aspirations:

SLLC Mission Statement

The SLLC serves as a gateway to understanding the diversity of the world, through learning languages, literatures, and cultures, past and present. Through its research and teaching, the SLLC offers students opportunities for deep engagement with a wide range of languages, literatures, and cultures that provide the knowledge and skills to interact with and understand the world.

The SLLC is central to the [mission of the University of Kansas](#), which “is dedicated to preparing its students for lives of learning and for the challenges educated citizens will encounter in an increasingly complex and diverse global community.” By virtue of its inherent diversity, the SLLC is a fundamental contributor to “a multicultural environment in which the dignity and rights of the individual are respected.” Crucially, the SLLC faculty’s “international ties support economic development in Kansas.”

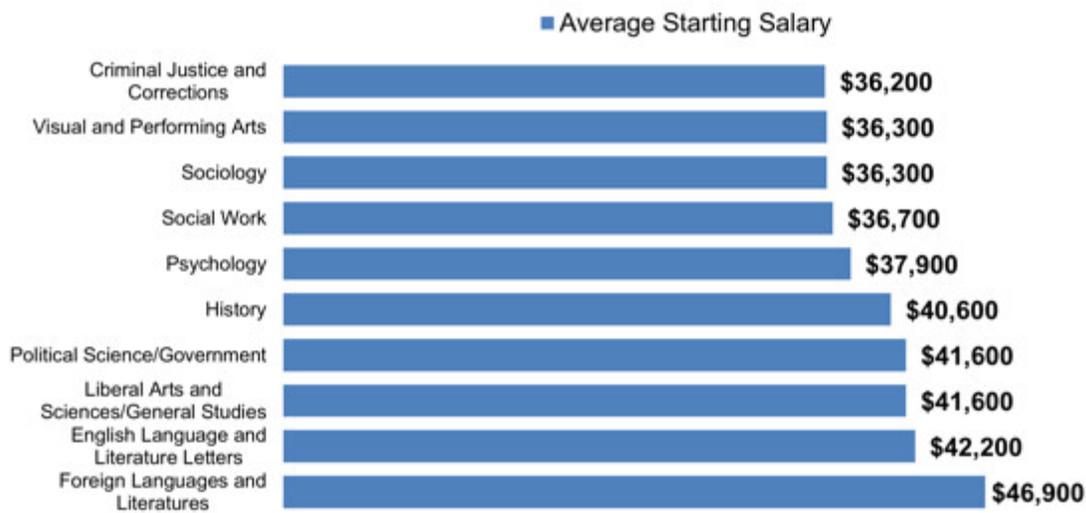
Goals

Goal 1: Educate students, campus & public

Foreign-language education is often misunderstood, largely because the career trajectories of foreign-language majors is more heterogeneous than those majoring in natural sciences or pursuing degrees in professional schools. Foreign-language majors, because of their ability to work in a wide range of international careers, are among the top earners in the job market with liberal-arts education after graduation, according to a [Wall-Street Journal report](#).

2014's Top-Paying Liberal Arts Majors

Foreign languages and literatures for the win.



National Association of Colleges and Employers | WSJ.com

The SLLC serves a broad variety of students throughout the campus. Their gateway to study in the SLLC is usually through a beginning language class, which ideally has a low ratio of student to instructor. Many tenured faculty and senior lecturers instruct undergraduate courses than in other parts of the university, giving undergraduate students better access to faculty. The low ratio allows students an opportunity to feel a sense of belonging in an otherwise daunting, large research university. This factor is especially important in the freshman experience, as it contributes to lowering the attrition of students.

The SLLC will focus on mentorship of students from their entrance to the university to their careers by engaging in the following:

- Developing and maintaining as part of the “team” professional advisors specializing in the SLLC.
- Helping students through effective communication to choose among the SLLC’s resources to find the best fit for their goals.
- Committing faculty to caring and thoughtful mentorship.
- Developing and maintaining experiential learning opportunities to help students apply their language and cultural knowledge outside the classroom.
- Working through the SLLC’s network and partnerships, as well as with other campus agencies, e.g., the University Career Center, to support students seeking post-graduation employment.
- Host visiting speakers, including our own alumni, who will share their life and career experiences with current KU students.

Goal 2: Raise visibility

Individually, FL departments have lacked the capacity to communicate effectively about what they do, why they do it, and what the benefits are for students, the university, and the region.

The SLLC will:

- Use social media and public events to highlight its work.
- Present a single public portal (e.g., website) representing all of the relevant units, giving external observers a survey of KU’s exceptional resources in FL education.
- Collect and disseminate the stories of KU alumni in foreign languages, literatures and cultures.
- Collect and disseminate the stories of KU faculty research and student engagement.

By raising visibility the SLLC will boost campus recruitment by increasing the attraction of KU as the go-to university in the region for international expertise.

Goal 3: Develop innovative curriculum

The SLLC intends to strengthen, re-brand, and revitalize the role that foreign language, literature, and culture play in research and education at KU through:

- **Engagement.** Reinforce the idea that global engagement and literacy comprise a cornerstone of a world-class education.
- **Collaboration.** Identify existing curriculum and faculty strengths that can be marshalled and reworked in the creation of sustainable new initiatives of service to students and the College, showcase the world-class research conducted in our units.

- **New syntheses.** Respond to real-world needs for students' career and life trajectories by seeking opportunities for innovative, interdisciplinary programs of study that include both more commonly-taught languages and LCTLs (e.g., Francophone Studies and Arabic, African studies; Central European studies; connections between languages and professional schools), and reinforce/showcase the existing expertise we have in literatures and cultures, as well as connecting with other areas in the Humanities and Social Sciences.

Aside from partnerships with other schools and parallel courses of study (double majors, minors), the SLLC has discussed the following possibilities using its own resources:

- Second-Language Studies (already in preparation)
- Medieval Studies (already in preparation)
- Literary and Cultural Studies (akin to Comparative Literature, but more broadly defined, and equally inclusive of culture)
- Translation Studies (including languages for the professions, medical translation, machine translation, service learning, literary translation)
- Period studies, ancient to extreme contemporary
- Folklore, folk-life
- Trans-regional Studies (examples: Mediterranean Studies, Central European Studies, Trans-Eurasian Studies, Trans-Atlantic Studies)
- Migration/Diaspora Studies
- Urban Cultures
- Language/cultural competency courses aimed at professional schools

SLLC Goal 3 maps to Bold Aspirations Goal 5: Developing Excellence in People: "Recruit, value, develop, and retain an excellent and diverse faculty and staff"

Goal 4: Create community

The SLLC will knit together the communities of practitioners of second-language acquisition, literary scholars, linguists, philologists, and those involved in the study of specific cultures in the past and present by facilitating guest speakers, professional development through workshops, as well as informal gatherings. The SLLC will foster collaboration across units with the College and schools outside of the College wherever mutual interests can be served. The SLLC will partner with interdisciplinary programs, notably the area studies programs, to pursue curricular and institutional goals of mutual interest and benefit.

Goal 5: Build a sustainable school

A sustainable school will be served best by building financial means to accomplish its goals. For this reason, a combination of external funding, both private and public, as well as fundraising through outright donations will be a focus for the first five years. Among the funding goals for private donations will be the following:

(Endowment funds generate on average 4% spendable cash annually, e.g., \$100,000 in principal generates \$4,000 in spendable balance annually)

- General use funds
- Undergraduate scholarships, awards
- Graduate fellowships, awards
- Study abroad/experiential learning
- Faculty awards
- Speakers fund
- Funding for faculty positions and staffing
- Building fund

The SLLC will assemble an Advisory Board with multiple skills and experience to assist in strategizing for sustainability. The Advisory Board members will provide a broader perspective, which sees academic and broader economic and social contexts of the SLLC. The Advisory Board can also help facilitate connections with external partners that can assist and mutual benefit from a relationship with the SLLC.

SLLC Goal 5 maps to Bold Aspirations Goal 6: Developing Infrastructure and Resources: “Responsibly steward fiscal and physical resources and energize supporters to expand the resource base”

In addition, the SLLC will seek to build strategic partnerships with external agencies and institutions with confluent areas of interest and the ability to engage in mutually beneficial activities.

The SLLC understands that technology, demography, the economy, and political changes will affect its future. The Advisory Board will be charged with forecasting change and helping the SLLC to devise strategies for adaptation and sustainability.