

RCAH

RADICAL
RECIPROCITY
2030



A LIBERAL ARTS
COMMITMENT TO
COMMUNITIES AT
MSU
& BEYOND

Strategic Plan for the
Residential College in
the Arts and Humanities
at Michigan State University



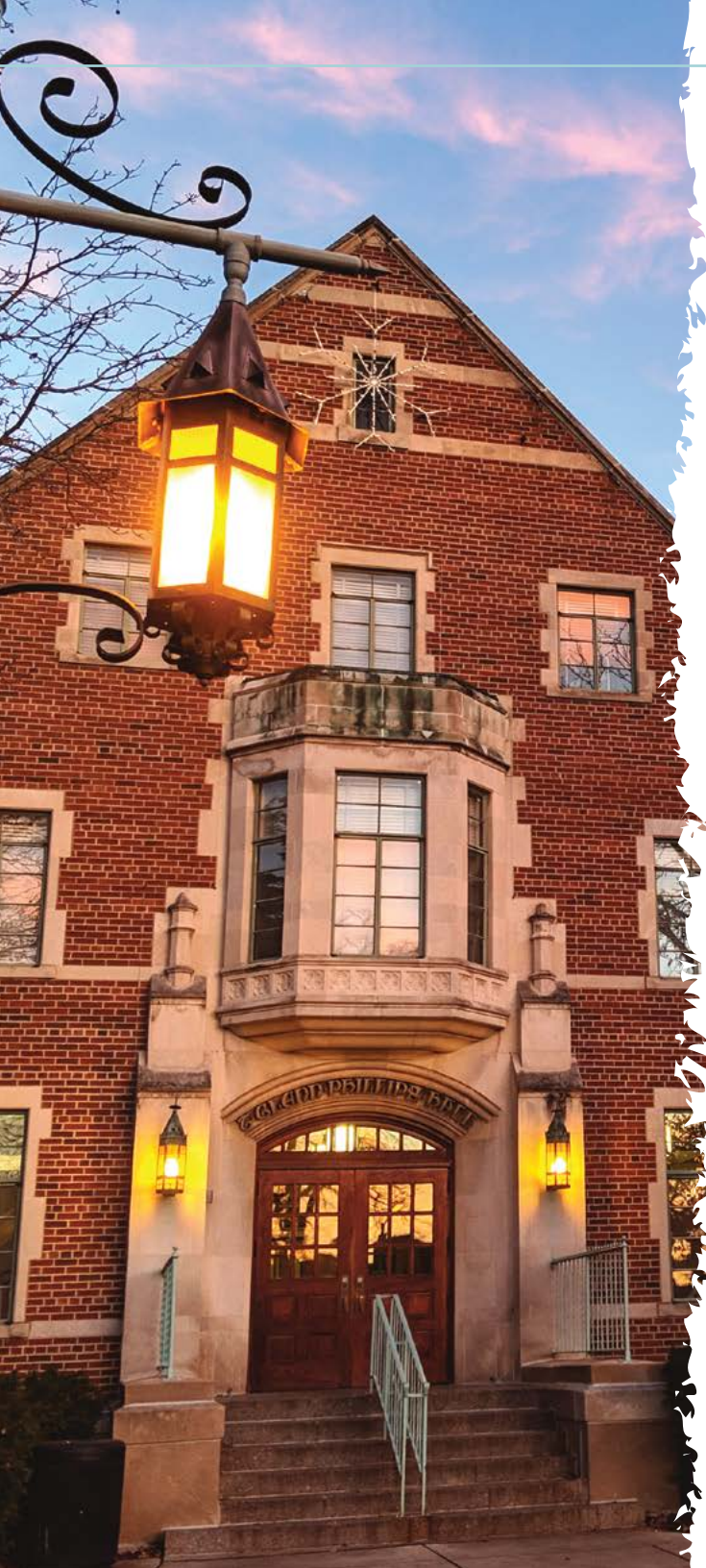


"Many words are walked in the world. Many worlds are made. Many worlds make us. There are words and worlds that are lies and injustices. There are words and worlds that are truthful and true. In the world of the powerful there is room only for the big and their helpers. In the world we want, everybody fits...We fight so that they may live. We sing so that they may live."

*—Zapatista's Fourth Declaration
from the Lacandon Jungle*

Since its inception in 2007, the Residential College in the Arts and Humanities (RCAH) has been celebrated as a place where students "live their learning." Long meant to encapsulate RCAH's residential college roots—as well as its mission to enable students, faculty, and staff to apply their learning to transform the world—this phrase signals that RCAH has always been more than a college where students simply live and learn about the arts and humanities.

Rather, RCAH practices socially engaged and community-based arts and humanities. The College is a world among many worlds: It is a world where we learn, where we teach, and, as the Zapatistas say, where "we sing so that we may live."



REDEFINING RESIDENTIAL

In our name, then, “residential” means that we *live* the arts and humanities—in our residences, in our communities, in our workplaces, in our classrooms, and in learning spaces around the world. Residential denotes our geographical location in Snyder-Phillips Hall, but it also refers to being cross-campus—and it names our local communities.

Residential for RCAH, holistically, refers to the many worlds in which we find ourselves working in solidarity. “Living your learning” requires a broad understanding of the arts, the humanities, community engagement, social justice action, innovation and changemaking, and artistic practice. Crucially, RCAH now requires a commitment to mutually constructing a post-pandemic college and university in which many, many worlds coexist. It is a form of radical inclusivity. RCAH is *the place* for you. Or, as we often tell people who are searching for college but cannot find the right blend of rigorous academics, meaningful residential experiences, valuable experiential learning, and successful outcomes after graduation: “There is a home for you at MSU. RCAH.”

GRASPING THINGS AT THE ROOT

We take this mutually constructive, lived identity and commitment to a just and equitable society very seriously. This commitment challenges us to respond to and reconcile MSU’s land-grant responsibilities with what we now call “radical reciprocity.” For us, radical reciprocity refers to a shift in the unidirectional knowledge flow to ensure that communities serve as experts and coproducers of knowledge. Radical reciprocity emerges as a sustained engagement with multiple communities as experts and coproducers of knowledge. We intentionally employ the term radical, or pertaining to the root, which allows us to get to the systemic roots of oppressive and exclusionary practices.

“Radical,” which Angela Davis points out “simply means ‘grasping things at the root,’” enables us to uproot the rhizomatic, systemic oppression and exclusionary practices. To do this, however, calls us to continually evolve and reimagine our public mission. K. Wayne Yang, writing as *la paperson*, notes that one type of university accumulates and a second type critiques. We aspire to be a third sort of college that makes, as Yang describes, a strategic, “decolonizing machine out of colonizing scraps.”

Furthermore, borrowing from Grace Lee Boggs, this strategic plan is a more “(r)evolutionary” guide. It both reimagines and retools our college’s commitment to create change. In this active process, we engage in sustained, reflective, thoughtful, and historical critique, making art in many forms and innovating new ideas, knowledge, and practices—all deep within the roots of systemic change. Like all good strategic plans, this one has just a few simple goals (and a host of strategies) that are meant to live—that is, to be both *lived* and *living*—and change over time.

Here, then, is what we want to do.



MISSION AND VISION

“When I dare to be powerful—to use my strength in the service of my vision—then it becomes less and less important whether I am afraid.”
—Audre Lorde

MISSION STATEMENT

The Residential College in the Arts and Humanities (RCAH) is a student-centered college that mobilizes the arts and humanities through our wide range of programming to create collaborative, community-engaged methods for addressing the complex societal problems facing our local and global communities and to reimagine and build a more just, equitable, and sustainable world.

VISION STATEMENT

As a degree-granting college at Michigan State University, The Residential College in the Arts and Humanities (RCAH) is an educational space built on the ongoing transformative work of radically reciprocal teaching and learning. A residential college in the fullest sense, we build community among our students, faculty, staff, and the people around us, wherever we are living. We are grounded in—and push the boundaries of—the arts and humanities to create space for and deepen multiple ways of knowing that can be mobilized for equity and social justice. We strive to be accessible and accountable to communities as experts and coproducers of knowledge. Our transdisciplinary efforts address inequities that undermine the potential of a socially engaged and community-based university and a more just society.

VALUES

“It is not enough to adhere to these values, however—we want to see our beliefs in practice.”
—adrienne maree brown

VALUE 1 RCAH SEEDS CHANGE

“(R)evolutionary college” describes RCAH and our faculty, staff, and students who seek positive social change by engaging in the arts and humanities to root out inequities. We apply multiple ways of knowing, social justice principles, and integrated critical and creative thinking to advance knowledge within and between MSU and the communities we serve.

VALUE 2 RCAH BUILDS COMMUNITY

We are committed to building a community that values the well-being of all who live, learn, and work together in the context of RCAH. We recognize that community-building happens across the College and among our external partners. The relationships we foster sustain us and help provide a sense of pluriversal belonging that is essential to RCAH.

VALUE 3 RCAH CREATES INCLUSIVE FUTURES

By encouraging our community members to explore and experiment with different forms of expression, we advocate for creative alternatives to traditional teaching, learning, and problem-solving. Through creativity, we aim to grow our College, empower our communities, celebrate our learning, and prepare students professionally and personally as they chart their futures.

VALUE 4 RCAH FOSTERS RADICAL RECIPROCITY

We believe socially engaged and community-based teaching and learning can lead to more transformative opportunities for ourselves, our communities, and society at large. We carry this approach across the spaces in which we work, learn, and live. We are committed to creating an environment that recognizes and embraces the many differences represented by all members of our community and supports each member in meeting their full potential. We strive for shared understanding in which our knowledge is produced collaboratively.

VALUE 5 RCAH (RE)IMAGINES POSSIBILITIES FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

We believe imagination is critical to broadening knowledge. Interdisciplinarity, creativity, experimentation, innovation, and intellectual vibrancy are essential. We use imagination to critically examine and understand the conditions that produce social, political, and historical inequities, as well as to build knowledge, explore values, and understand culture. We meet these challenges by (re)imagining new possibilities for doing and being in the world.



PILLAR 1 RCAH IS A VIBRANT, STUDENT-CENTERED COMMUNITY

Defined as what we do to cultivate a living-learning community and lifelong learning; the successful recruiting and retention of students; the diversity of the student body; and achieving success for all students enrolled in RCAH.

GOAL

RCAH ensures student success by effectively recruiting and retaining a diverse student population and helping students identify and transition to their chosen postgraduate careers.

OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

- 1.1 Sustain a robust, diverse, and engaged undergraduate student body.
- 1.2 Promote RCAH as a student-centered, journey focused destination college.
- 1.3 Prioritize accessibility for all RCAH students and members of the RCAH community.
- 1.4 Nurture the success of minoritized individuals and communities.
- 1.5 Maintain a diverse and engaged alumni community that helps foster and sustain our identity as a model living-learning community.



PILLAR 2 RCAH IS A LEADER IN CONTINUOUS LEARNING AND TRANSFORMATION

Defined as what innovative activities (curricular and co-curricular; research; scholarship; creative work) we do to contribute to student success.

GOAL

RCAH demonstrates commitment to continuous learning and transformation through high-impact and innovative research, creative work, teaching, and mentoring that promote academic excellence while also empowering all members of our community to lead fulfilling lives and help build a more just society.

OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

- 2.1 Demonstrate our commitment to student success through innovative engagement experiences that promote achievement and academic excellence and prepare students to contribute to a vibrant, just society.
- 2.2 Develop and support a coherent, dynamic ecosystem in which curricular and cocurricular opportunities are related and are rigorous, relevant, and impactful for students, staff, faculty, and community.
- 2.3 Establish a strong presence at MSU by developing and augmenting new and existing collaborative relationships across campus, throughout the state, and globally.



PILLAR 3 RCAH ADVANCES BELONGING AND ENGAGEMENT

Defined as the work we do in and with community.

GOAL

RCAH creates a sincere environment of belonging and inclusivity that starts with students on an individual level and ensures cooperation and investment, expanding the RCAH community to include alumni, University Collaborators, donors, community partners, parents and caregivers, and other external stakeholders.

OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

- 3.1 Create a strong sense of belonging and well-being among students, ensuring that all students feel valued and supported throughout their RCAH journey.
- 3.2 Support community members' career growth, advancement, and fulfillment, as determined by the needs and goals of the individual and by the capacity of RCAH and MSU to support those needs.
- 3.3 Engage alumni and community partners as integral parts of the undergraduate student experience.
- 3.4 Continually support alumni throughout their post-RCAH journeys.
- 3.5 Provide alumni, University collaborators, donors, community partners, parents and caregivers, and other stakeholders with the information they need to participate fully in the College.



PILLAR 4 RCAH AMPLIFIES COLLABORATIVE CAPACITIES

Defined as the work we do to build and sustain a diverse faculty and staff, creating collaborative and effective capacities and a culture of faculty and staff empowerment.

GOAL

RCAH promotes a collaborative climate that respects and values diverse perspectives and identities and provides all members of the community with support, resources, and a sense of fulfillment.

OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

- 4.1 Cultivate opportunities for RCAH faculty and staff to serve as arts and humanities leaders at MSU.
- 4.2 Create a workplace and community that advances equity, inclusion, and collaboration across all positions, classifications, and identities within the College—creating a sense of belonging, not just welcoming.
- 4.3 Ensure clarity and transparency in decision-making, expectations, evaluations, policies, procedures, and calendaring across College constituencies.
- 4.4 Develop and implement communication strategies that allow faculty and staff to be efficient, successful, and fulfilled in their work.
- 4.5 Support promotion, tenure, professional development, and annual evaluation systems for RCAH's faculty and staff, who "live their learning" by applying the arts and humanities with diverse communities, leading change, or engaging in social justice action.



PILLAR 5 RCAH IS AN INNOVATOR IN LIVING ARTS AND HUMANITIES

Defined as a “change practice” that calls students to actively integrate, apply, and lead their learning across and throughout their lives.

GOAL

RCAH clearly articulates an expanded and inclusive residential college identity in which students live their learning in the arts and humanities in ways that engage principles of social justice and community engagement.

OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

- 5.1 Establish RCAH as the college at MSU where using participatory methods—arts and humanities knowledge is applied and cocreated with diverse communities on and off campus, across the state, and around the world.
- 5.2 Establish RCAH as the college at MSU where innovation and change are learned, lived, and led.
- 5.3 Establish RCAH as the college at MSU where social justice is actively taught, applied, and critiqued.
- 5.4 Redefine and publicly articulate a residential college model that embraces all RCAH students regardless of where they physically reside.
- 5.5 Develop, support, and disseminate successes achieved by students, faculty, staff, alumni, community partners, and others as they apply the arts and humanities with diverse communities, lead change, or engage in social justice action.
- 5.6 Partner with the other MSU residential colleges on initiatives that support our students and apply the arts and humanities with diverse communities, lead change, or engage in social justice action.



PILLAR 6 RCAH ENHANCES ORGANIZATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY AND INCREASED IMPACT

Defined as stewarding financial resources and acquiring new sources of funding to expand our impact across all constituencies.

GOAL

RCAH maintains an infrastructure that supports sustainability and growth of fiscal resources to increase opportunities for students, collaborations, and local and global impacts well into the foreseeable future.

OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

- 6.1 Identify, recruit, and retain students, accomplished faculty and academic staff, talented administrative staff, inspired community partners, and engaged alumni for sustainability, growth, and opportunity.
- 6.2 Bolster College sustainability by cultivating a diversity of RCAH alumni, parents, friends, and corporate and foundation support in line with our values for fundraising, recruitment, and retention.
- 6.3 Build and sustain College development opportunities, resources, and institutional capacity.
- 6.4 Respond to internal and external challenges and opportunities intentionally, looking beyond the present moment and toward many possible futures.
- 6.5 Increase and streamline communications about College funding, other income sources, and allocation of resources.



WE ARE ALL THESE THINGS

As a student-centered college, we want to continually teach and learn with students. This teaching and learning extends past time spent in the college so that we can collaboratively reimagine and recreate new worlds.

As educators, we are committed to helping our students develop critical skills through which they can be empowered as social leaders capable of addressing the most pressing issues of our time. Our transformative potential—what some might call our value proposition—is grounded in the idea that, no matter our social position or identity, we are continually learning. By recognizing our collective strength, RCAH's model has the potential to transform institutions of higher education. We want to make and collaborate with others to both deepen and broaden knowledge creation within the university and beyond the East Lansing campus.

The relationships that define RCAH are the shoulders that hold us up, give us courage, and lift us toward success. They also empower us. These collaborative relationships that mutually generate knowledge are a key priority; they shape our engaged research, applied and engaged teaching practices, and community engagement.

We want to live so that we may sing together, raising voices with our many constituencies—with each other, our students, our alumni, our community partners, and our friends across the university. To do this, we want to ensure effective, efficient use of college resources while implementing fiscally sound practices and sustainable initiatives to position RCAH for a future of responding to and creating opportunities—here in Michigan, across the Upper Great Lakes, and beyond. **We believe that liberal arts must be at the core of a university education.**

Some see us as a small, creative catalyst or a model of excellent teaching that can be scaled across the larger university. Others say we are a prestigious liberal arts college embedded in (and with all the benefits of) a large, public, research university. Some call us an emancipatory space where students have the freedom to make their own way and earn a degree. Still others see us as a safe—or even a brave—space for students in an environment where it is easy to get lost.

We are all these things.

But, most importantly, we are a public arts and humanities college that is seriously committed to living our learning. We have reciprocal responsibilities as scholars, artists, community members, teachers, and life-long learners.

At MSU, and in the other worlds into which we seek to fit, we use socially engaged arts and humanities to seed change, build community, create inclusive futures, foster radical reciprocity, and imagine possibilities for a better world.

RCAH'S STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

Consistent with RCAH's values of building community and creating inclusive futures, this strategic plan was created through a participatory process, facilitated by the faculty lead, an external consultant, and the elected members of the Faculty Advisory Committee, serving as the Strategic Planning Steering Committee.

FALL 2021

Envisioning our possible futures began with a college-wide fall retreat in August, which also led to the creation in September of six strategic planning committees (SPCs) focused on:

- Recruitment and Student Success;
- Curriculum and Co-Curriculum;
- Alumnx and Post-RCAH Pathways;
- Faculty and Staff Success and Fulfillment;
- Marketing and Communications;
- Resources and Funding.

Our intention was to use these SPCs to bring together RCAH faculty and staff from across different areas of expertise. The SPCs met throughout the fall semester, with each SPC producing its own strategic planning report by the end of the semester and receiving feedback from an ad hoc review committee. Meetings with RCAH's Committee on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (CDEI) helped align the strategic planning process with our ongoing, facilitated dialogues on racial healing and college DEI climate that were now in their second year. Monthly College Academic Committee (CAC) meetings (comprised of faculty and staff) were used to provide support, host workshops, and share updates as a way of keeping everyone involved in these interconnected conversations. All reports, feedback, and workshop materials were stored on a shared Microsoft Teams platform available to all members of RCAH's CAC; this process of transparency continued throughout our year-long planning process.

SPRING 2022

Our goals for the spring included streamlining committee work, meeting our timeline, and keeping the process inclusive. Based on our consultant's recommendation, the Strategic Planning Steering Committee appointed a Strategic Planning Writing Committee (SPWC) made up of faculty and staff from across different appointment types.

The SPWC's charge was to draft an overarching strategic plan for the college by reading the six SPC reports and identifying emerging themes and cross-cutting goals. Throughout the spring semester, the SPWC generated several drafts of our strategic plan, gathering input from RCAH faculty and staff through CAC meetings, appreciative inquiry, and an anonymous Qualtrics survey. At the end of April, the SPWC handed the process back to RCAH's Strategic Planning Steering Committee, the faculty-lead, and the dean to finalize edits, formatting, and design of the report.

MOVING FORWARD

This document is but one outcome of our year-long strategic planning process. Sharing our Mission, Vision, and Values has reaffirmed and reinvigorated our collective commitment to the College. As we move forward, our next steps include setting priorities, developing metrics, and creating a timeline for implementation. We remain committed to an inclusive, participatory approach to implementation that intentionally centers Diversity, Equity, Inclusion (DEI), as well as Belonging and Social Justice.



STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS PARTICIPANTS

Dylan Miner, Dean
Terese Guinsatao Monberg, Faculty Lead
Julie Brockman, Consultant (School of Human
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STRATEGIC PLANNING STEERING COMMITTEE (SPSC), 2021-2022

Eric Aronoff (Chair)
Tama Hamilton-Wray
Sitara Thobani
Terese Guinsatao Monberg

STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEES (SPCS), FALL 2021

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Primary photography by Dave Trumpie; additional photography by Morris Arvoy, Kelsey Block, Alyssa Briones, Kevin Brooks, Emily Row, Kristin Phillips, and MSU Communications Photography and Videography.

Residential College in the Arts and Humanities

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AD HOC REVIEW COMMITTEE, FALL 2021

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Kristin Phillips (Spring-Summer 2022)
Christopher Scales (Spring 2022)
David Sheridan (Spring 2022)
Members of RCAH's College Academic Committee
(CAC) (2021-22)



Visit rcah.msu.edu/about/rcahradicalreciprocity2030.html
or scan this QR code to access
the virtual version of the
Strategic Plan.



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