More than just changing or transforming those who seek to learn and to know, a university education lifts us from ignorance, gives us meaning to our existence, and empowers us with the knowledge and ability to fulfill our potential as human beings. The humanities and social sciences represent the core liberal arts of a university from which all education inevitably derives. As a result, the humanities and social sciences are the heart and the soul, as well as the mind and spirit, of any university.

At CSUB, the faculty of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences (HSS) teaches students how to think and to reason, how to read and to write, and how to speak and to persuade. The humanities and social sciences hold the keys to understanding how, and why, humans behave and act, feel and believe; expound and aspire, and create and perform. We impart, ultimately, what it is that defines us as human beings, and how we, as human beings living and working in various “cultures,” give our lives meaning and value.

These are not just words to inspire our students to excel academically. These are our raison d’être. A true liberal arts education is a lifeline, and the core liberal arts are the fibers from which that lifeline is spun. Whether born to privilege or poverty, students who major in one of the programs in HSS can be confident they will receive an education that engages them as active participants in the learning process and challenges them to develop their potential. As a result, HSS students will become lifelong learners, gifted with autonomy and self-determination, and ready to meet changing professional and personal opportunities of the future.

Excellence
First and foremost, education must strive for excellence among all participants and at all levels. Aristotle’s observation is our guide: “We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is a habit, not a virtue.” To make a habit of excellence, a system of education must recognize and reward success wherever it occurs, not only via grand events such as commencement and honors convocation, but in the quotidian achievements that build toward these culminating celebrations. To achieve excellence, we must embrace change, ever seeking new ways to improve student learning, whether in the classroom, through research projects or creative activities, involvement in field work or internships, or helping other students or the disadvantaged in our community. Providing multiple avenues for student learning in HSS programs empowers our students to continue educating themselves long after they have graduated from CSUB.

Diversity
More powerful than technology, more far-reaching than the Internet, is the fire within each individual. The commitment, dedication, and passion of those who seek to discover and impart knowledge—the faculty—are the keys to excellence. The faculty in HSS are both outstanding in their professional credentials and in their diversity of values and ideas. This diversity encourages us as a community to be expansive in our ideas and, at the same time, to be inclusive of different values and perspectives. HSS seeks to make CSUB a “universe” of ideas, perspectives, values, lifestyles, and cultures. In other words, HSS values all the rich panoply of human endeavor and experiences. The multiplicity of accomplishments by the faculty and students in HSS is directly tied to the multiplicity of strengths brought by each individual faculty as equal partners in our grand venture.
Education is simultaneously a most singular and most collaborative endeavor. No one can learn for another person; individuals must learn for themselves through their experiences. The transfer of knowledge from one individual to another requires hard work; sometimes the work may be tedious, and sometimes it may be agonizing. The task of learning is frequently lonely, exhausting, and frustrating. The HSS faculty will not beguile students with promises of making learning “fun” or “easy.” The joy of learning comes from one’s own self-knowledge and self-confidence that you have put in the necessary hard work to gain understanding and, as a result, that you “know the stuff.” Of course, getting a good grade on an exam or for the course will go a long way in reinforcing one’s self-confidence.

As much as learning is singular, it is also collaborative. The proverb, “One hand cannot wash itself clear; it needs the help of the other,” states simply and clearly a fundamental truth of education. No one makes it alone; we all need the help of another. Thus, enthusiastic collaboration among the diverse individuals of a university is essential for the most profound learning to take place at the highest level of excellence. This collaboration may involve other students, tutors, counselors, staff, administrators, and, or course, faculty. True collaboration recognizes the value each participant contributes to the process. The key is collegiality, and collegiality in HSS is framed upon trust, openness, respect, and interdependence. The interchange of diverse ideas and competing values may become untidy at times, perhaps even “rough-and-tumble,” but HSS faculty will remain positive and productive because we trust each other’s behaviors and motives, mutually respect each other’s ideas and values, and understand fully that we are integral parts of a “university team” that will assist students to “scale heights” unattainable by individual effort.