

Research Strategic Plan

ANU College of Medicine, Biology and
Environment

Preface

1. This Research Strategic Plan is the first of a series of documents that will outline the capabilities of the College of Medicine, Biology and Environment at the Australian National University, and the strategic developments that will be undertaken by the College.
2. This Plan is intended for an audience within the ANU, and aims to identify problems that affect our research activities and solutions to those problems.
3. Although the Research Strategic Plan considers the nexus between education and research, a separate Plan will be developed that more fully considers our educational activities.

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Director, College of Medicine, Biology and Environment
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Contents	Page
Introduction	4
Planning Process	5
Research Strengths	6
Strategic Environment	8
Strategic Elements	10
I – Recruiting and Retaining Staff	11
II – Driving Performance	14
III – Scaling Up	17
IV – Linking Research and Teaching	20
V – Making Infrastructure Productive	23
VI – Marketing our Capabilities	26
Immediate Imperatives and Future Funding	29

Introduction

1. It is the overriding goal of the researchers in the College of Medicine, Biology and Environment to perform research that is internationally outstanding in its contribution, rigour and consequence. The following plan outlines the actions the College will take over the next 5 years to support its researchers in meeting these aspirations.
2. It is a stated principle at the ANU that decisions for the application of discretionary funding by either the university or a college will be based upon a strategic plan determined at the college level. The following plan is thus intended to inform decision-making both within the College and by the university.
3. The College was formed in 2008, following a review of biosciences at the ANU. Three of the four Schools that make up the College were formed by amalgamation of smaller organisational units between 2007 and 2008. The College is consequently made up of a large number of researchers, many of whom had not previously worked closely, despite their common interests. It is intended that the following plan will enable consistency and transparency of strategic decision-making across the College, and encourage interaction across traditional boundaries.
4. Implementing the plan will be the responsibility of the Director and the College executive.
5. It is intended that this will be a dynamic document. The research environment at any organisation is continuously changing. Policy changes, shifting external funding opportunities, natural staff turnover, changing social needs, the competitive environment nationally and internationally, as well as the pace of discovery and technological advance all necessitate opportunism and flexibility in the implementation of research strategy.

Planning Process

1. At the commencement of the strategic planning process, the College identified nine streams of research capability, extending across organisational units and across disciplines. Each of these capabilities represents an area where the ANU is making internationally significant advances in research and each represents an area of opportunity, too, where the ANU has some distinctive advantage nationally or internationally.
2. These nine capability areas were: 'behaviour, health and healthcare'; 'ecology, evolution, and sustainable landscapes'; 'genetics and genomics'; 'global change'; 'infection and immunity'; 'neuroscience and cognition'; 'people, society and environments'; 'plant sciences'; and 'proteins and membranes'.
3. In May 2009, the individual members of the College were asked to identify with at least one of these nine areas of opportunity. The intention in grouping people by capability rather than by organisational unit was twofold: (a) to foster greater interaction across the College and (b) to encourage the members of the College to emphasise strategic pressures relevant to core areas of research rather than specific organisational units.
4. The members of each capability subsequently developed a statement of their research focus and of the strategic actions they were keen to promote within the College. A background analysis of each area was also provided by an external consultant. These documents provided the starting point for a series of planning discussion days conducted by an external facilitator who was tasked with identifying for each capability group: (a) what its most significant challenges and opportunities were; and (b) what strategic actions its members would most like the College to take.
5. The conclusions from this planning process were collated to identify common challenges and opportunities and to highlight the key strategic choices faced by the College. The College executive were informed by the information obtained from the capability plans and meetings as well as by the strategic pressures and imperatives from the Schools and other component parts of the College to develop this strategic plan.

Research Strengths

1. There are several ways of assessing institutional strengths in research. Strength can be measured in terms of scale and quality. It can be measured relative to other research at the ANU and relative to research in other parts of the world. It can be estimated using objective metrics and using subjective peer assessments. It can be established on the basis of academic impact and on the basis of societal impact. It can be an attribute of an individual or of a large group.

2. Recognising these complexities, the following table presents the main research strengths of the College, where strength takes some account of relative scale as well as quality of research. These strengths are listed together with the broader areas of capability they underpin, and the associated opportunities for research they engender. Obviously there are individual researchers and smaller groups of outstanding calibre working in other fields, whose achievements also are important to the College and who may in future afford the College with reputational benefits and growth prospects.

Strengths	Capability	Opportunities for future focus
A. Epidemiology & pop health B. Mental health C. Primary & preventative healthcare	Behaviour, Health & Healthcare	I. Integrated behavioural health II. Ageing and life-course approaches to health and illness III. Health delivery
A. Ecology and evolution B. Biodiversity conservation C. Sustainable landscapes	Evolution, Ecology & Sustainable Landscapes	I. Unique access to Australian biota and environments II. Integrated environmental & natural resource management III. Integrating from genes to ecosystems
A. Genome structure, function & evolution B. Genome regulation & epigenomics C. Immunogenomics	Genetics and Genomics	I. Novel genomic response to health and disease II. Integrated genomic response to environmental change III. Unique opportunities for research on the Australian biota

Research Strengths (continued)

Strengths	Capability	Opportunities for future focus
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Epidemiology & pop health B. Sustainable development C. Plant sciences 	Global Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I. Global change and human well being II. Sustainability and earth system governance III. Bioenergy and biosequestration
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Immunology B. Medical microbiology & emergent diseases C. Epidemiology & pop health 	Infection and Immunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I. Longevity of immunity to infection II. Genetic & environmental determinants of autoimmune disease III. Genetic & environmental causes of lymphoma and leukemia
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Sensory systems B. Cellular neuroscience C. Social psychology 	Neuroscience and Cognition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I. Vision science and technology II. Neuronal signalling III. Cognitive development and ageing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Social psychology B. Sustainable development C. Epidemiology & pop health 	People, Society and Environments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I. Psychology of social norms, values, beliefs & behaviours II. Human values, policy and institutions III. Social determinants of health and mental health
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Plant physiology & genetics B. Plant pathology C. Plant ecophysiology 	Plant Sciences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I. Plants and global change biology II. Plant function – from genes to ecology
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Membrane biology B. Enzymes C. Cell biology 	Proteins and Membranes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I. Mechanisms of disease II. Protein structure and design III. Drug binding and resistance

Strategic Environment

1. The Australian research environment has undergone a period of dramatic transformation. The growth in national competitive grant funding and fellowship funding has provided a tremendous opportunity for all institutions to attract outstanding research-only staff and to drive research performance more broadly. The shifting balance of national competitive grant funding in particular from small investigator project grants to larger centre and program grants has afforded opportunities for institutions with outstanding researchers to grow the scale of their research relatively rapidly. At the same time, the remarkable expansion of business R&D in Australia, of state government investment in research, and of philanthropic and international investment has drastically shifted the competitive landscape and the scale on which research is performed in Australian universities.

2. Experience over past decades suggests that the funding environment for research in Australian universities can change fairly suddenly, as can the environment for specific institutions. Shifting government priorities, success or failure in renewing centre or program grants, and inter-institutional movement of outstanding researchers can impact on institutional funding profiles very quickly. All universities consequently face challenges in maintaining a diversity of funding sources, promoting organisational and individual flexibility in responding to opportunities, and in driving individual performance. At the present time, uncertainties in the global economy and the weakening revenue base of Australian governments also point to a period of consolidation rather than expansion in the Australian research sector.

3. Yet there is reason to believe that the environment for university researchers will remain favourable over coming years. In the immediate future, the government investments of the past decade will be complemented by an expansion in discretionary block grant funding, as well as a likely growth in “ear-marked” research expenditures by governments targeting areas of political priority. In this environment, researchers and institutions who can set agendas, lobby effectively (both inside and outside their institutions), or who are able to position themselves in politically advantageous fields may experience windfall investments.

Strategic Environment (continued)

4. On balance, this should be positive for the College. Social interest and political pressure means that ongoing funding is likely to be strong in several areas where the College has good existing capability, such as in environmental sciences, global change, vision science, and medical research broadly. Similarly, the College is nicely poised to benefit from initiatives in medical research due to its formal relationship with ACT Health. In addition, the ANU's proximity to federal policymakers is another potential advantage – in lobbying for direct investment, in accessing federal research funds to address specific policy-related problems, and most importantly contributing to the setting of political or policy agendas.

6. Not everything in the current context, however, will work in the College's favour. In recent years, researchers in other Australian institutions have been extremely proactive and entrepreneurial in accessing a growing pool of higher education research funds. By branding themselves very strongly with particular research fields, by ensuring that their institutions are the administering institutions on large grants, such as centre or program grants, by making the most of state government or philanthropic funding to leverage substantial Commonwealth investment in infrastructure, and by offering strong inducements to attract outstanding researchers on ARC and NHMRC fellowships, other universities have been remarkably successful in transforming both the realities and perceptions about the location of research excellence in the Australian higher education system.

7. This trend will gain momentum in coming years. Already other institutions are positioning themselves very strongly in direct competition with the ANU. In every area in which the College operates there are massive strategic issues arising from competition. To thrive in these circumstances, the members of the College will need to focus hard, not just on attracting outstanding researchers, on building a vibrant community, and on driving individual productivity, but also on how they connect with the outside world, how they package what they do for the outside world, and how they raise external resources.

Strategic Elements

1. The strategic plan of the College is made up of six strategic elements. These are summarised as follows:

- (i) **Recruiting and Retaining of Talent** – to ensure that , in its areas of focus, the College is seen internationally and nationally as one of the most desirable universities in which to do research.
- (ii) **Driving Performance** – to manage its talent in such a way as to ensure extremely high standards of research performance, both by individual researchers and by groups of researchers.
- (iii) **Scaling Up Research** – to engender new opportunities for growing the scale of its research.
- (iv) **Linking Research and Education** – to integrate teaching and research activities, to grow HDR loads given the College’s broad discipline mix, and to establish incentives for commitment to education as a key academic activity.
- (v) **Making Infrastructure Productive** – to manage the College’s infrastructure portfolio in ways that support the first four elements of the strategic plan.
- (vi) **Marketing our Capabilities** – to underpin the other five strategic elements by increasing investment in marketing to key external audiences, including government, industry, colleagues of high regard, quality research students, and the Australian community.

2. In describing each of these elements, this document briefly highlights key aspects of strategic context, it represents schematically some broad principles of strategic action linked to challenges and opportunities, and summarises a selection of specific proposals that have been put forward through the strategic planning process by members of the College.

I – Recruiting and Retaining Talent: Context

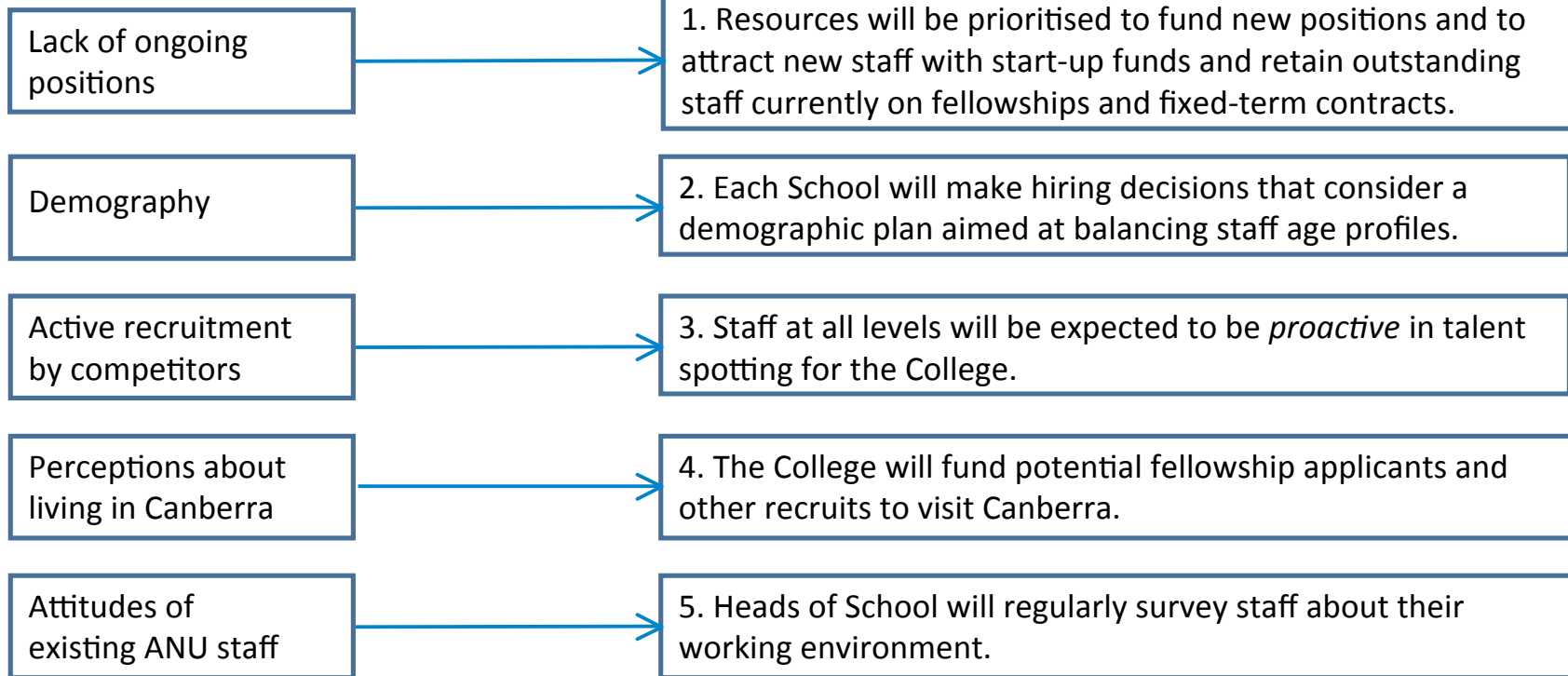
Aim: The first strategic priority for the College is to ensure that , in its areas of focus, the College is seen internationally and nationally as one of the most desirable universities in which to do research.

Main Challenges: The College has a significant demographic and recruitment challenge. The age structure is extremely top-heavy, particularly among staff in the old Research Schools. The recent or impending retirement of high-performing staff, expensive recruitment campaigns being waged by other universities, the challenge of attracting staff to Canberra, and the lack of discretionary funding to provide positions to outstanding younger researchers have created serious challenges for the College in recruiting and retaining high calibre researchers in many areas. The problem has been exacerbated by an apparent lack of well-defined plans to address this problem in the past, including an incoherent response to the opportunities presented by the ARC buy-in, and a lack of shared institutional knowledge about what has induced many outstanding researchers to come to the ANU and to stay at the ANU despite attractive offers to work elsewhere.

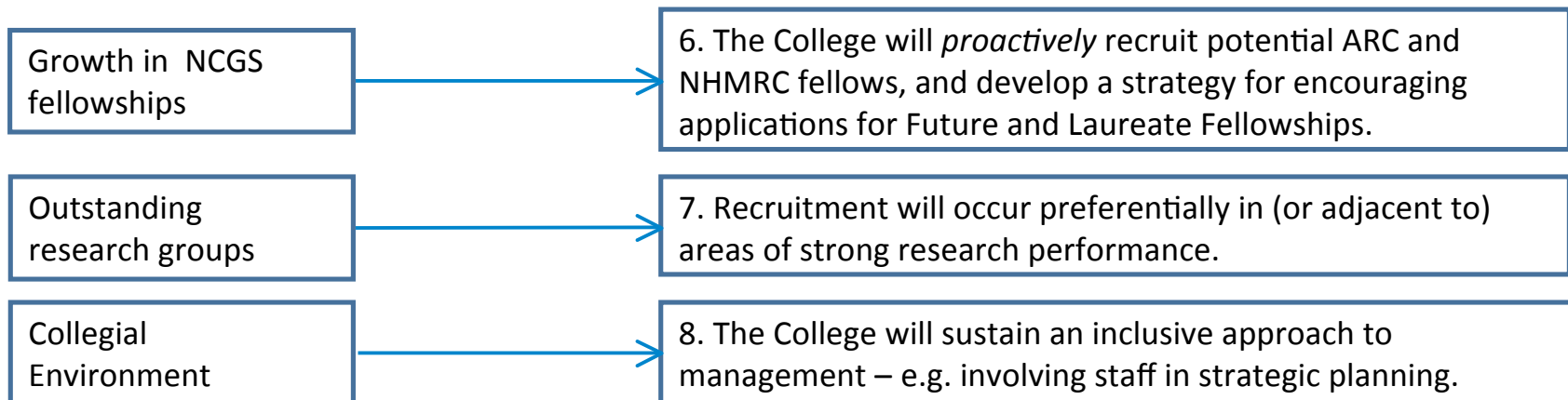
Main Opportunities: Tempering these challenges, the College does have several vital assets for driving recruitment and for retaining its talented researchers. By national and international standards, the university has a very high calibre workforce active in research. The College hosts significant numbers of researchers whose work is internationally outstanding. The College has excellent research infrastructure. The College research community also benefits from a strongly collegial culture. These are all attributes which can be strengthened and exploited in identifying, recruiting and retaining outstanding researchers. All universities in Australia also have good opportunities to attract research-only fellows through national competitive grant schemes. A recruitment strategy for the College clearly needs to exploit these schemes by *proactively* identifying and attracting externally funded fellows, and by creating opportunities, where necessary, for outstanding fellows to move from fellowships onto continuing appointments.

I – RECRUITING AND RETAINING TALENT: PRINCIPLES

CHALLENGES



OPPORTUNITIES



STRATEGIC ACTIONS

I – Recruiting and Retaining Talent: Specific Opportunities

1. Looking for opportunities within – The College is attracting excellent younger researchers in some of its areas of strength (e.g. ecology and evolution) but frequently lacks scope to transition the best of them to ongoing positions. Obviously, following retirements in other areas, the possibility of offering appointments to outstanding, up-coming researchers in growing capabilities should be assiduously evaluated.

2. Building on momentum – In several of its nine capabilities (e.g. Plant Sciences, Infection and Immunity, Neurosciences and Cognition, and Genetics and Genomics) the College has particular demographic opportunities, where impending retirements could enable new, continuing appointments to be offered in five or more years time. This provides an excellent opportunity to recruit outstanding individuals into some of the College's strongest research clusters on fellowships, supporting them generously with infrastructure and collegial advice, but with time to evaluate their performance before offering continuing appointments.

II – Driving Performance: Context

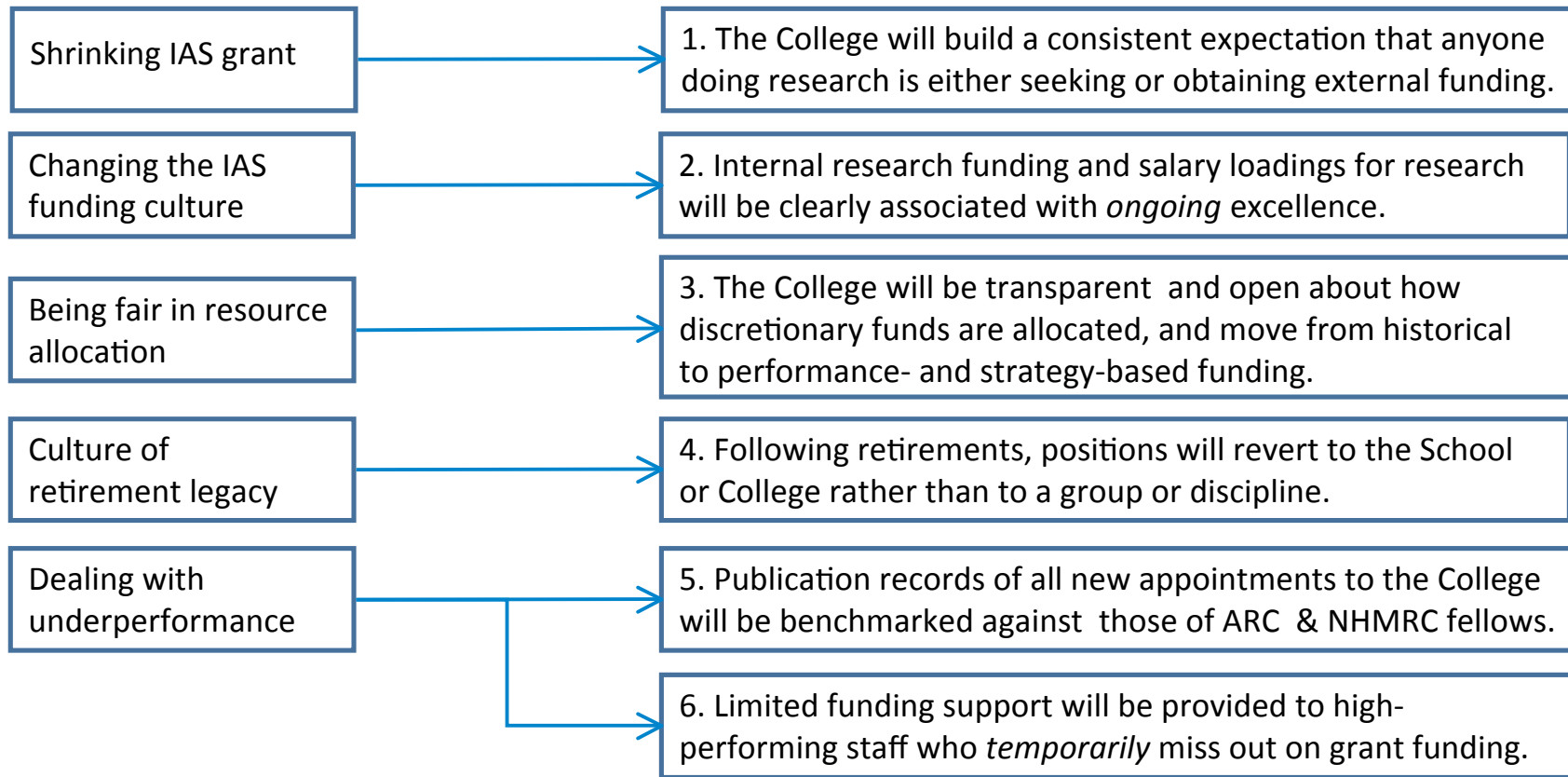
Aim: The second strategic priority for the College is to manage its talent in such a way as to ensure extremely high standards of research performance, both by individual researchers and by groups of researchers.

Main Challenges: The ANU has a history of attracting high-performing researchers by using its IAS grant to provide salary security, excellent infrastructure, research funding, and independence from the need to participate in short-term fund-raising. But the IAS funding is increasingly stretched and external fund-raising has become an essential aspect of research at ANU. There is, consequently, a culture shift underway, that has been explicitly caused by changes in the external environment. Today, the College faces a particular challenge in building a performance culture and an active, entrepreneurial culture among *all* staff. Fundamental in this respect will be ensuring that the College is able to align its limited discretionary resources with merit. Over the long-term, this will require a rigorous approach not only to internal staff assessment and career development, but also to recruitment. The ANU tradition, whereby appointments were often made to perpetuate a legacy for a retiring staff member, will be replaced by a policy that all academic appointments to the College should be outstanding researchers, normally capable of winning externally funded fellowships. Staff will be judged primarily on their recent performance rather than on past performance.

Main Opportunities: The College also recognises that the growth in external funding opportunities over the past decade (which is likely to continue at least in some fields) provides ongoing scope for attracting investment to drive improved research performance. The College should benefit, in this respect, from its strong foundations: the outstanding track records of its individual staff, the clusters of research strength around particular disciplines and themes, and its established infrastructure in key areas. Finally, many of the organisational units within the College have an impressive tradition for balancing the high performance of individuals with the collegial ethos. This is a great strength of the College and does afford opportunities for underpinning the performance of younger researchers. Being fair and open about how merit is determined and about how discretionary resources are distributed, however, will be critical in preserving this ethos.

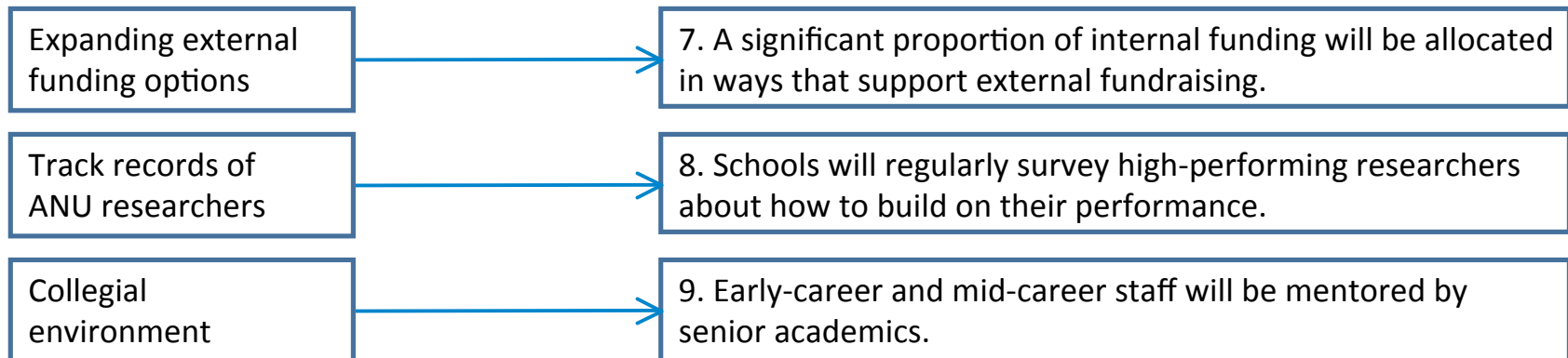
II – DRIVING PERFORMANCE: PRINCIPLES

CHALLENGES



STRATEGIC ACTIONS

OPPORTUNITIES



II – Driving Performance: Specific Implications

1. Measuring Performance – Linking internal funding to ongoing excellence is arguably most effective and most fairly applied where there is a common understanding of what excellence entails. The College intends to maintain a flexible and balanced approach to assessing research excellence, combining both objective and subjective measures, in a way that is appropriate for a given discipline. To this end, the College Director will work closely with the Deans and heads of Schools, in consultation with key research leaders across the College, to develop appropriate measures that might be used to contribute to the evaluation of individual and group performance on an ongoing basis.

2. Ongoing Reviews – The principles outlined in this plan will impact on performance only to the extent that they are rigorously applied, which almost certainly means shifting investment over time away from underperforming areas in order to invest in areas of outstanding performance. The implication here is that individuals and research groups should expect to be reviewed from time to time, and that a possible outcome from such reviews will always be that internal investment in particular groups may be reduced in time or even wound up.

III – Scaling Up

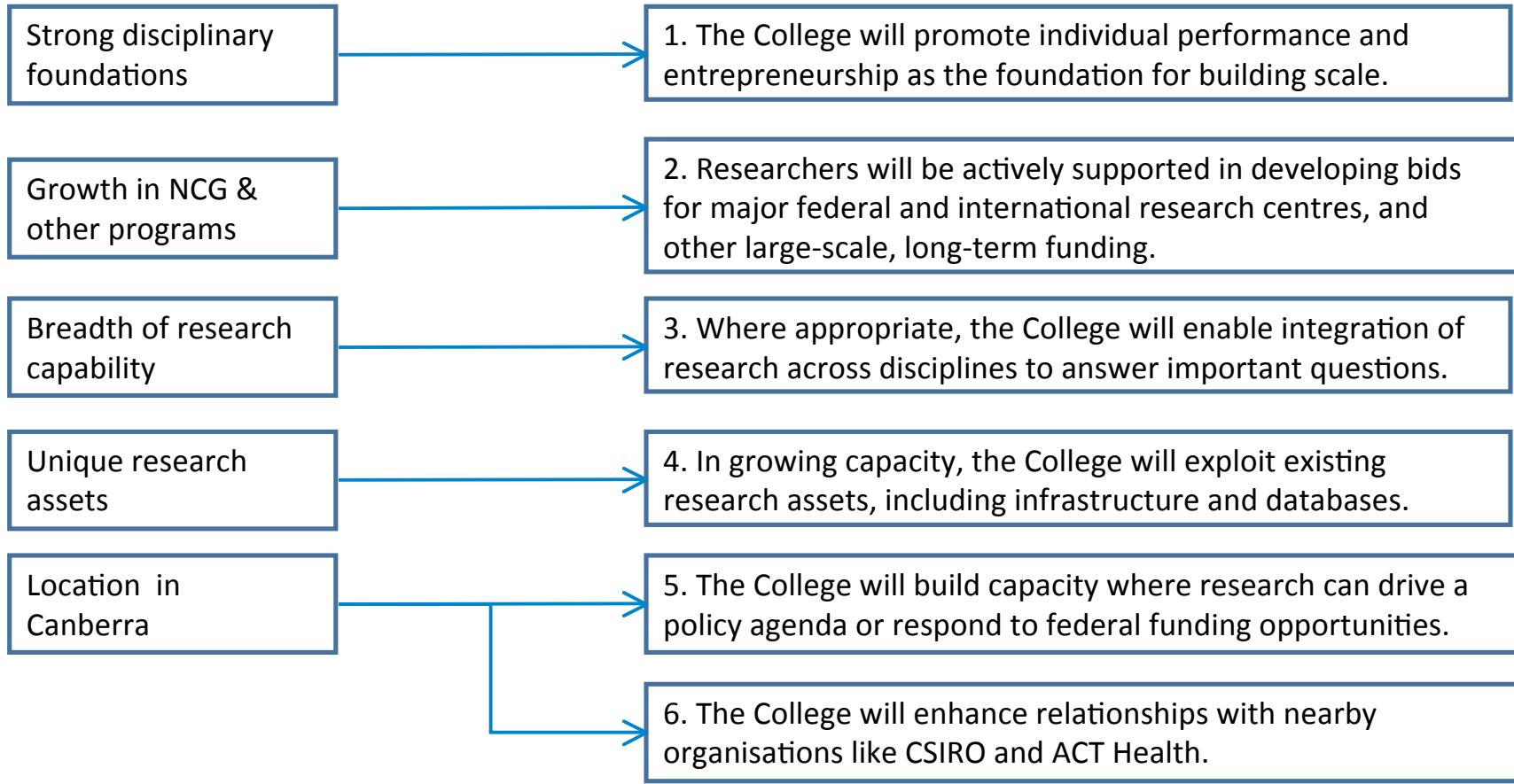
Aim: The third strategic priority for the College is to engender new opportunities for growing the scale of its research.

Main challenges: Massive sector-wide growth in national competitive grant funding, in externally funded fellowships, in research investment from some state governments, in philanthropic funding, in fees from international students, and in large-scale funding programs (such as ARC centres of excellence and NHMRC Program grants) has enabled several Australian institutions to increase the scale of their research activities in the medical, biological and environmental sciences dramatically over the past decade. In many, though not all, areas of research, despite growth in *absolute* terms, the ANU's *relative* share of national research activity has declined in recent years. The College clearly needs to respond to the growing scale of its competitors. If it fails to do so, the ANU will find it increasingly difficult to compete for staff, for students, for infrastructure, or for certain forms of external funding. But there are other, more positive justifications too for trying to build scale. Where scale enables outstanding recruitment, it can drive research productivity and quality.

Main opportunities: Fortunately the College has excellent potential for expanding the scale of its research. It has strong disciplinary foundations, researchers with outstanding track records working in exciting areas, and unique infrastructure assets. The external funding environment has seen a proliferation in large-scale programmes over the past decade. At the same time, the breadth of research pursued in the College affords scope for productive collaborations: for basic researchers to work with applied researchers or research users; and for researchers to integrate vertically across disciplines – e.g. to link molecular research with ecosystem science, genomics to epidemiology, psychology with environmental science, or biomedical science to clinical practice. This noted, the strategy for building scale is not prescriptive. Opportunities for attracting research investment to build significant scale can change suddenly. The College executive favours an approach that supports the entrepreneurship of individual academics (or groups of researchers) rather than deciding for academic members where their focus should be.

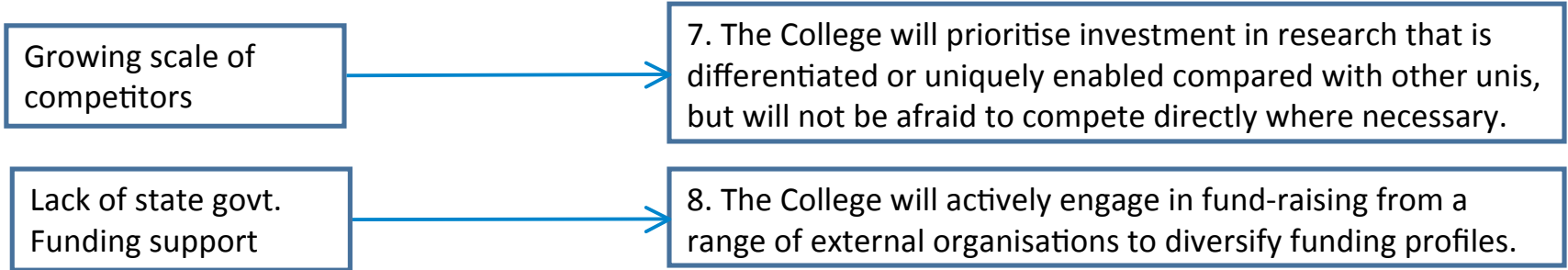
III – SCALING UP: PRINCIPLES

OPPORTUNITIES



STRATEGIC ACTIONS

CHALLENGES



III – Scaling Up: Specific Opportunities

1. Existing Centres of Excellence – The College has immediate priorities in ensuring that its existing Centres of Excellence are renewed with strong internal budgets going to ANU researchers. Determining the scale of ANU matching funds for Centres of Excellence bids will be an important aspect of this process for the College.
2. Inter-College Planning – The strategic planning process suggested that there are opportunities for groups within the College to build scale by working more closely with researchers in other Colleges at the ANU. For example, there is significant scope for researchers in the Proteins and Membranes capability to link with protein and drug researchers in the College of Physical Science in order to position the university to bid for large-scale funding programmes (including infrastructure funds). Similarly, there is considerable scope for many researchers working on environmental and health science projects to connect with ANU social scientists outside the College.
3. Intra-College Planning – Many members of the College have identified specific opportunities for attracting increased external funding by integrating their research through collaborative projects. Where such initiatives address bold and important problems and are underpinned by outstanding individual researchers, with strong track records for attracting external investment, there may be justification for increasing recruitment in related areas, or for providing other forms of support to build capacity. Opportunities along these lines were foreshadowed during the strategic planning process especially by researchers working in the areas of: Global Change; People, Society and Environments; and Behaviour, Health and Healthcare.

IV – Linking Research and Education: Context

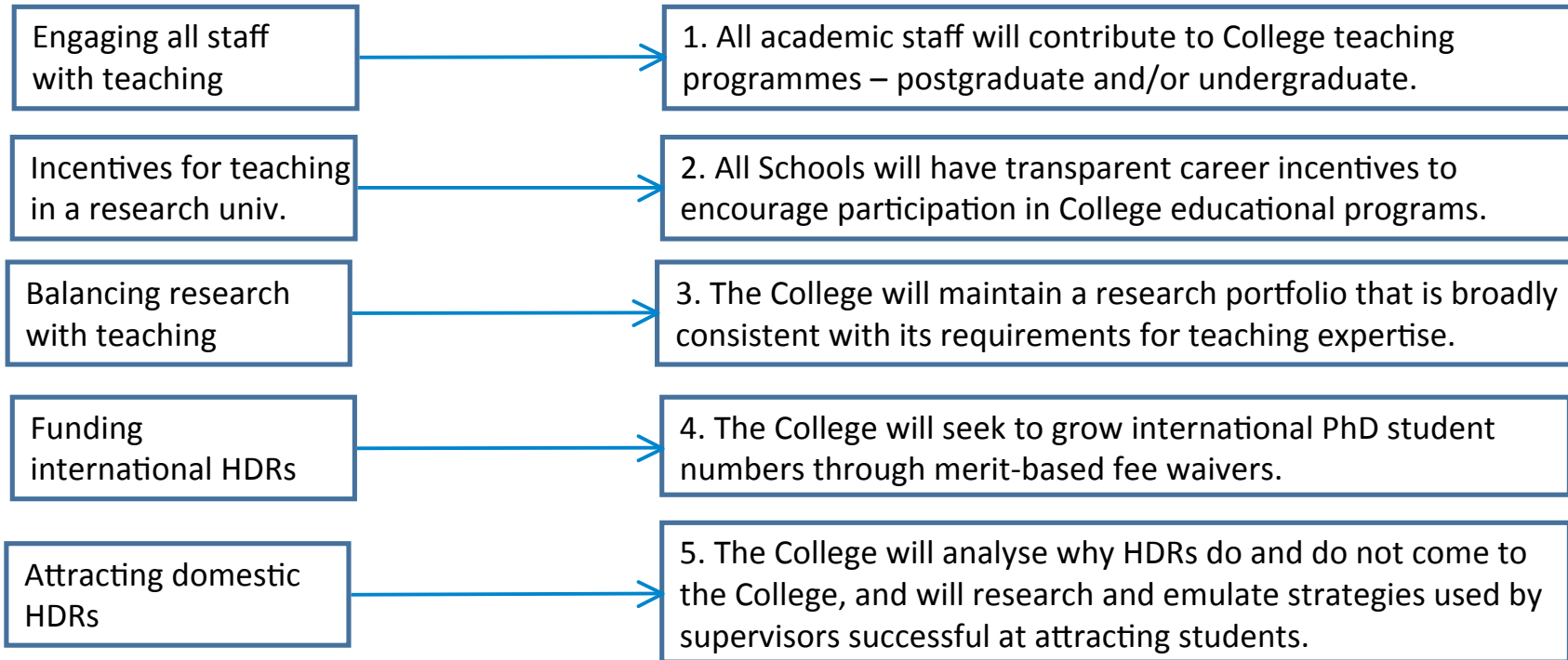
Aim: The fourth strategic priority for the College is to integrate teaching and research activities, to grow HDR loads given the College's broad discipline mix, and to establish incentives for commitment to education as a key academic activity. An additional strategic plan focusing on education will be developed with high priority.

Main challenges: The College has long-standing challenges attracting higher degree research students to many of its research programs. This problem is not universal (some parts of the College have strong HDR enrolments that are limited by the availability of sufficient supervisors), but it is widespread. Arguably some of the challenge can be attributed to: the relatively small population base in Canberra; the lack of interest by domestic students in pursuing PhDs; a lack of inter-institutional mobility among Australian graduate students; the recent record low unemployment levels; and the excellent starting salaries and career trajectories of ANU honours graduates entering the public service. However, we need to be vigilant against the possibility that lack of interest and/or motivation on the part of some academics has contributed to the problem. There is also a particular tension in managing funding and demand across domestic and international cohorts. Federal funding is largely driven by domestic student numbers, while in many areas there is strong unmet demand from high-quality international students. Given the importance of research students in creating a dynamic research environment, the College will take targeted action to address these issues, but not so that driving HDR numbers distorts the discipline mix of the College or if action is likely to undermine the College's other strategic priorities.

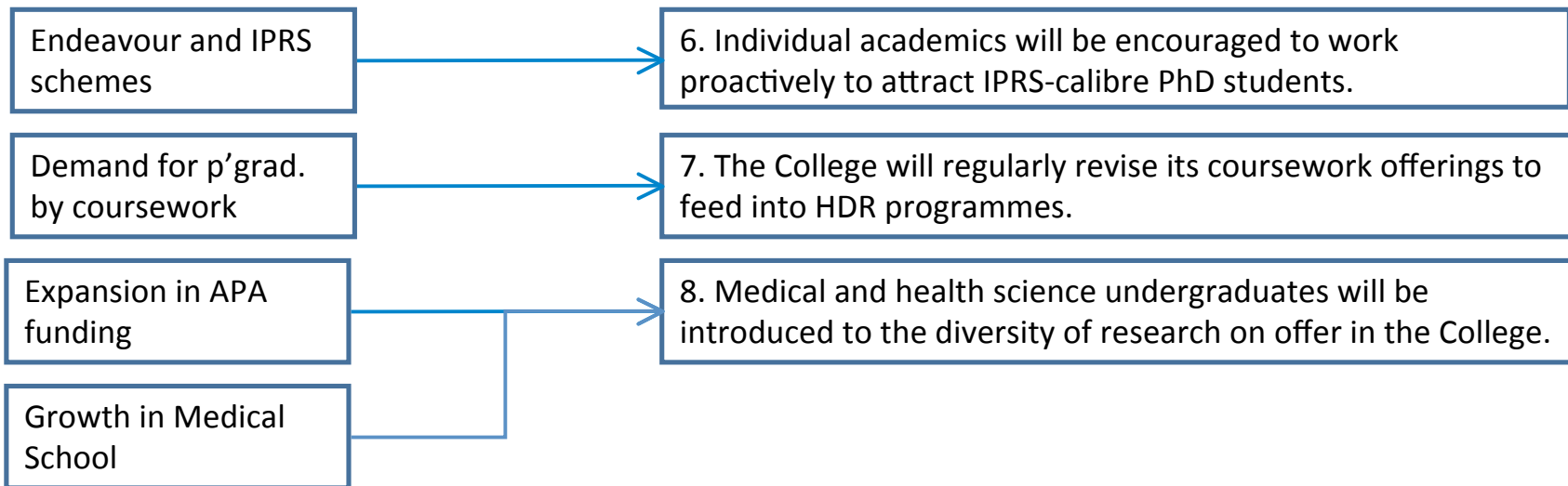
Main opportunities: There has been recent growth in federal funding provision for research students. The College should be able to exploit this, if it is able to foster some growth in student demand. The creation of the College itself may afford improved prospects for coordinating coursework programmes to underpin student demand. There is an opportunity here too for the College in responding to its changing funding model (notably the declining relative importance of the IAS grant) by adjusting the expectations staff are made to feel about their involvement in teaching. All staff, no matter how their salaries are funded, will be expected to engage with teaching – whether at the undergraduate or the postgraduate level.

IV – LINKING RESEARCH AND EDUCATION: PRINCIPLES

CHALLENGES



OPPORTUNITIES



STRATEGIC ACTIONS

IV – Linking Research and Education: Specific Opportunities

1. Areas of Growing Demand – There are several areas where the College looks set to experience rising student interest. The new Medical School affords special opportunities for linking research, teaching and clinical practice. Demand for education (and research training) around social and environmental themes also looks likely to remain strong in the near-term. Areas like these will likely provide special opportunities for growth in the College in coming years. In order to maintain strong links between research and education, delivering outstanding research performance will be especially critical in these areas.
2. Cross-College Integration – Across several of its main areas of research capability there is a perception that the College’s education programmes (including those for honours courses) could be better integrated. As the College’s teaching programmes are revised in coming years, there will be ongoing opportunities to coordinate teaching of undergraduate programmes with HDR activity. But this will only occur so long as all reviews of teaching programmes give consideration to the implications for research. It may be that adopting a unified approach to honours tuition in the first instance will provide a focused mechanism both for improving the integration of teaching with research and for improving the integration of teaching across the College.
3. Graduate and Professional Training – The College has specific opportunities to expand graduate and professional training to meet the needs of Asian and Pacific markets. Increasing the focus on graduate and professional entry programmes that are highly synergistic with the research strengths of the College may afford special opportunities for raising revenue, increasing HDR numbers, and engaging all staff with educational activity.
4. Targeted Advertising of HDR Opportunities – In making an evidence-based assessment of what attracts prospective HDR students to come to the ANU (strategic action 5), the College will need to look particularly at the impact of its marketing and advertising initiatives. Implementing this strategic element will require strong connections with the ‘marketing’ element of the strategic plan.

V – Making Infrastructure Productive: Context

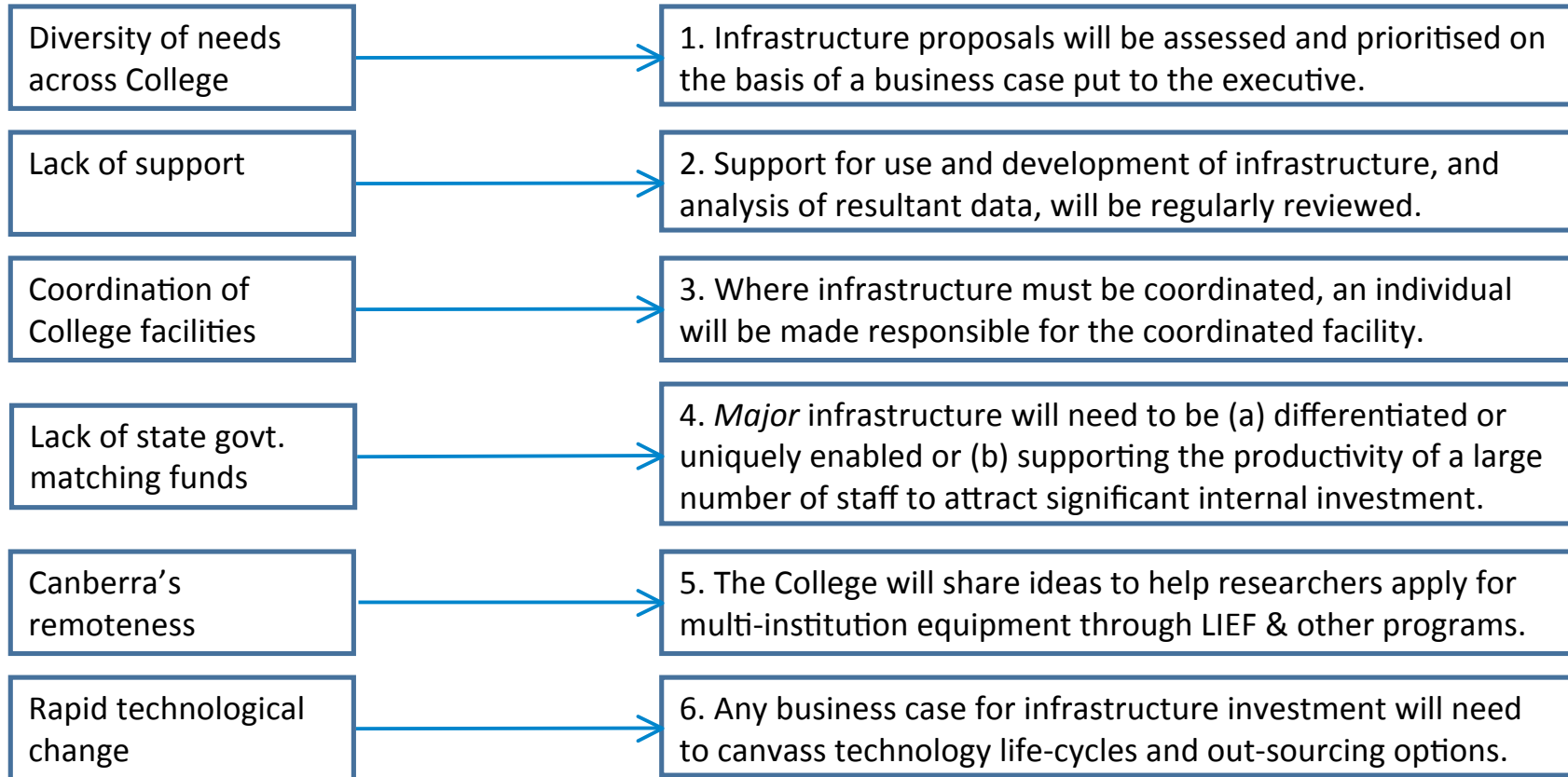
Aim: The fifth strategic priority for the College will be to manage its infrastructure portfolio in ways that support the first four elements of the strategic plan.

Main Challenges: The demand for infrastructure investment in most (but not all) areas of research in the College is high and looks likely to remain high for the foreseeable future. This is creating a challenge for the College in prioritising infrastructure – a challenge that is compounded furthermore by several other factors. Rapid technological change means that in some areas infrastructure life cycles are shrinking and cost structures are changing. Finding resources to update and maintain leading-edge infrastructure is a constant problem. This is a serious issue in specific areas, such as genomics research. But it is also manifest in more generic ways, for instance in the rapidly growing need across a wide range of research areas for increased technical support and for investment in the maintenance and management of electronic databases. At the same time, the historical advantage to the ANU in providing substantial infrastructure (a legacy of the IAS) has eroded in recent years as other universities around Australia have begun to attract substantial state and federal investments in their own major facilities. The College consequently faces difficult choices in deciding what infrastructure it should support over the coming years.

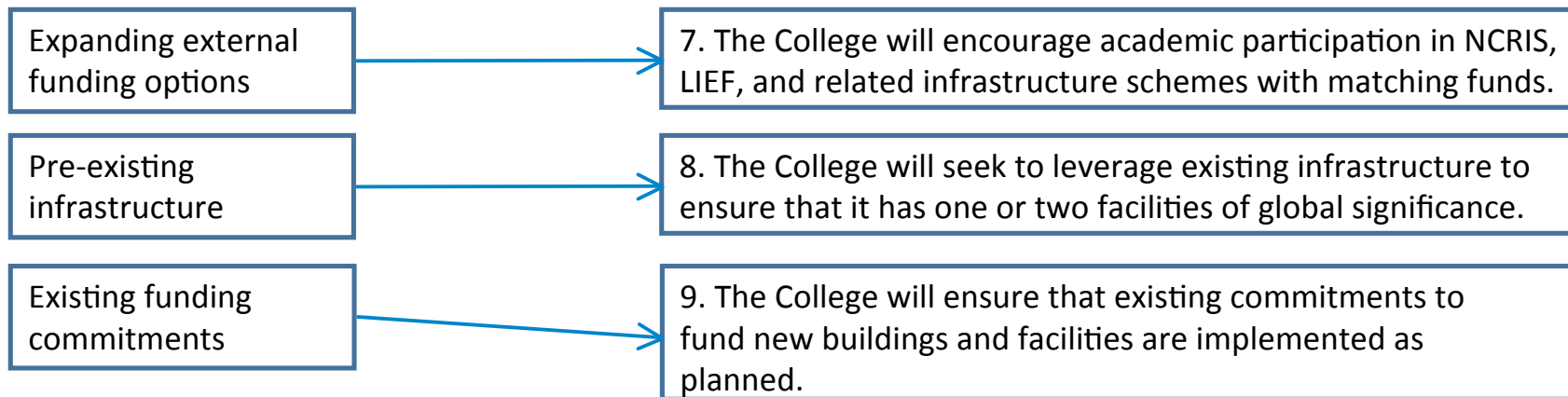
Main Opportunities: Fortunately the College already hosts several unique or important research assets. These include facilities such as: the Australian Phenomics Facility; the Biomolecular Resource Facility; considerable infrastructure in plant sciences; several public health databases and repositories; and the new buildings for the John Curtin School of Medical Research and the Research School of Biology. These (and other) facilities provide important advantages to ANU researchers. There are also good opportunities at present for attracting external funding to support and grow these facilities and for expanding the College's more generic building infrastructure. A key strategic focus for the College over coming years will be finding ways to attract funding from well-supported federal programmes such as EIF, NCRIS, and LIEF.

V – MAKING INFRASTRUCTURE PRODUCTIVE: PRINCIPLES

CHALLENGES



OPPORTUNITIES



STRATEGIC ACTIONS

V – Making Infrastructure Productive: Specific Opportunities

1. High-throughput DNA Sequencing – Researchers working in four out of the College’s nine areas of main research capability need access to high-throughput sequencing facilities, which have been acquired through a successful cross-College LEIF bid. Nonetheless, attention needs to be given to adequate technical and bioinformatic support for these facilities.
2. Data Management and Analysis – Researchers working in four out of the College’s nine areas of research capability have identified information technology, data management and data analysis as an area that requires special focus. The public health research community in the College, for example, has identified the creation of an integrated data hub that provides hardware, software, and expertise for managing, integrating and analysing its complex health datasets as an important priority. Plans to establish ANU as a centre for the management and analysis of data from long-term ecological research studies, and the massive outputs from new sequencing and genomics technologies, add to the case for investment in this area. There is also potential in at least two of the College’s capability areas to link the expansion of electronic data infrastructure to the development of associated long-term, secure tissue banks.

VI – Marketing our Capabilities: Context

Aim: Underpinning the other five strategic elements of the strategic plan, the College will increase its investment in marketing its research to key external audiences, including government, industry, colleagues of high regard, quality research students, and the Australian community.

Main messages: The elements of this strategic plan will obviously be most readily implemented if external impressions of the College are positive. The College marketing strategy will be intended to influence a range of key external audiences in highly focused ways. For example, the College will be strongly advantaged if:

(a) the Australian and international research communities rank the College as one of the world's most outstanding research institutions in its areas of focus;

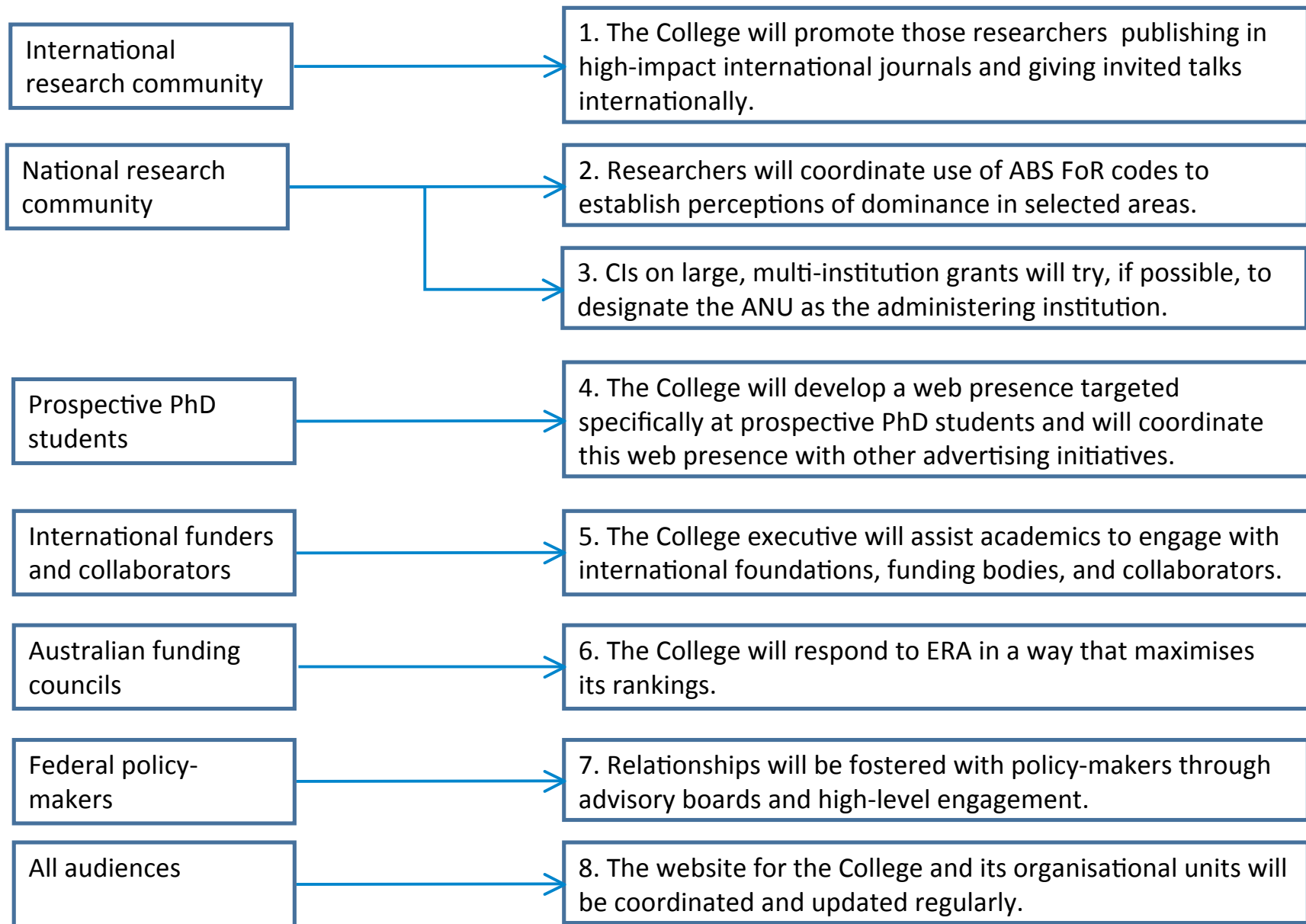
(b) the College is seen nationally and internationally as an ideal institution for doing a PhD; and

(c) federal policy-makers see the College not only as the leading institution nationally in its areas of focus but also as an institution to which they can turn for advice or research.

Main audiences: To these ends, individual members of the College of course will continue to build their own relationships and profiles with academic partners, with governments, with the wider research community, and with businesses. But there are a number of ways in which the College can bring generic benefits to its members by marketing directly to specific audiences. These audiences include: the international research community; the national research community; prospective PhD students; international foundations and funding bodies; Australian funding councils; federal policy-makers; and a general audience.

VI – MARKETING OUR CAPABILITIES: PRINCIPLES

AUDIENCES



STRATEGIC ACTIONS

VI – Marketing our Capabilities: Specific Opportunities

1. Excelling in ERA – Over the coming years, the College will need to maximise its performance in the Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) scheme. College researchers will be expected to understand the evaluation process that will be followed through this scheme, and will be made cognisant of the metrics by which their research performance will be assessed. The College will assist individuals, discipline groups, or Schools to think tactically about the ERA reporting process in order to maximise contributions through any ERA evaluation.
2. Website Development and Cohesion – The quality and visibility of the ANU website was raised as a key issue by several capability groups throughout the planning process. The College’s internet presence, and the way it targets different audiences online, is clearly an important priority. At a time of organisational change, moreover, where the newly formed College is still developing a sense of identity, the development of a website affords opportunities not just for projecting the College to the world but also to itself – in other words, for building understanding and cohesion across the College’s disparate teaching and research capabilities.
3. Engaging with Canberra’s Policy Community – Researchers in several fields have identified the value of engaging more closely with Canberra’s policy community to establish relationships, to gain insights about the priorities and needs of broader society, and to raise the profile of the College’s research. For members of the College with an openness to this idea, the College may find it worthwhile to develop some modest incentives to reward academics who identify public servants, politicians, journalists, consultants, or philanthropists from the Canberra community and who in turn can be shown to value ongoing engagement with the College, including through participating in formal discussions, seminars, symposia, or advisory boards. The members of the College executive also recognise that they can directly facilitate interactions with the Canberra community through personal connections and by developing and presenting public events which highlight the College’s research performance.

Immediate Imperatives and Future Funding

1. The strategic plan outlined in this document provides a framework for thinking over the coming years. But it should not be seen as either a fixed or a definitive document. The most successful university organisations tend to be opportunistic and entrepreneurial.
2. A series of reviews, organisational changes, and planning discussions have created a feeling of reporting and reform fatigue across the College. The members of the College have experienced rapid organisational change in recent years. Given the recent formation of the College, ongoing changes across the university, and a host of recent reviews, many researchers feel uncertainty about how internal management and funding processes will work in the College and across the university.
3. The College therefore proposes to give immediate priority to implementing changes that enable staff to plan with certainty into the future, to enhancing the transparency of decision-making and funding allocation, and to increase the confidence of staff that they will be supported in their academic endeavours.