



DRAFT. CUAHSI Strategic Plan

2023 - 2028

DRAFT

Acknowledgments

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Introduction

Water connects all life and links together places, industries, and cultures. Finding solutions to pressing water issues requires professionals to transcend sectors in the same way that water does. Yet, water is often studied, discussed, and managed by separate entities.

CUAHSI (est. 2001) supports the water community and bridges the gaps between sectors and disciplines. CUAHSI empowers a diverse and dynamic water community to develop an integrated understanding of water, earth, ecosystems, and society and ensures knowledge and tools are aligned with solving critical water-related challenges. CUAHSI has had many recent successes, including enhanced and increased data publishing and discovery through HydroShare, adaptive education resources that weathered the pandemic, myriad trainings and bootcamps that support water workforce development, and the creation of a code of conduct that provides guiding principles and community standards for all CUAHSI activities and participants.

Our 2023 - 2028 Strategic Plan builds upon our previous successes, reaffirms our values and vision, and sets ambitious goals for our future. The creation of this plan was shaped by feedback from CUAHSI staff, our Board of Directors, a 2022 NSF Management Review, Member Representatives, Standing Committees, and users of CUAHSI resources. The Board of Directors and CUAHSI leadership synthesized this content and created the strategic plan in January of 2023.

This plan was written to inspire a vision of CUAHSI's role in enabling impactful collaborative water science. The plan consists of four overarching goals that strategically extend our current work and move us toward an ideal future state. Each goal includes a list of desired results and a number of priority initiatives that will help to achieve the goal and desired results. The plan is intentionally not prescriptive, as the focus of this plan was to define the goals, not the pathway to implementation.

We've built upon what we continue to hear is one of our biggest strengths – our ability to provide a community, facilitate collaborations, and create connections. Thus, *community*, *collaboration*, and *connection* are major themes within the plan. Goal #2 – Create infrastructure and resources to drive the advancement of water science – is our most ambitious target, which calls for integrating existing resources and building new solutions to support comprehensive water research and education. This ecosystem of open, living resources supported by CUAHSI infrastructure will help advance fundamental knowledge and better equip students and professionals to address real-world issues.

The water community must solve increasingly complex, diverse, and pressing challenges. A recent report from the World Health Organization, *State of the World's Drinking Water* (Oct. 2022), states that climate change, competing agricultural and ecological water needs, competing financial priorities, and the challenges of existing and emerging threats to water quality can be overcome through innovation; partnerships and collaborations; providing and sharing relevant data to support evidence-based decision making; and innovation in methodologies, approaches, and technologies. These are areas where CUAHSI resources and

services are strategically aligned to support the collective, interdisciplinary advancement of the water community in solving the most urgent and complex water challenges. We look forward to supporting this critical mission in the next five years and beyond.

Our Mission, Vision, and Values

Mission - Our Core Purpose

To empower the water community and advance science through collaboration, infrastructure, and education.

Vision - Our Picture of the Ideal Future

A thriving water community – enabled by shared resources – developing an integrated understanding of water, earth, ecosystems, and society to meet human and environmental needs.

Values - Who We Are

- **Strategic Collaborators:** We value the diverse perspectives of our colleagues and create connections among individuals and institutions to advance water science.
- **Innovative Catalysts:** We bring innovative and high-value ideas, technologies, and science to the community and into practice.
- **Impactful Leaders:** Operating with high academic and professional standards, we engage and support the community to drive lasting change for the greater good.

Goals - Our Focus for the Next Five Years

Goal 1: Grow our water community.

Goal 2: Create infrastructure and resources to drive the advancement of water science.

Goal 3: Expand CUAHSI's reach and prominence in the water community.

Goal 4: Refine our governance and business model for sustainability.

Goal 1: Grow our water community

Desired Results

- A diverse, thriving water community connected across institutions, disciplines, and demographics.
- The water community collaborates to produce impactful synthesis products.
- CUAHSI is a recognized leader in inclusive and equitable collaboration.
- Individuals in the water community are actively engaged with CUAHSI throughout their careers.

Priority Initiatives

Initiative 1: Expand and diversify the community and strengthen connections across constituencies (people, institutions, disciplines, etc.).

- Focus on personalized, high-touch connections with new members.
- Design and implement a new approach to engage with Primarily Undergraduate Institutions (PUIs) and Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs).
- Target engagement with important societies and agencies.

Initiative 2: Provide leadership to nurture inclusive collaborations.

- Demonstrate CUAHSI's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI).
- Generate the space and practices for productive and inclusive scientific collaborations.
- Routinely launch new synthesis projects.

Goal 2: Create infrastructure and resources to drive the advancement of water science

Desired Results

- An ecosystem of open, living resources supports end-to-end water research and education built on and with CUAHSI infrastructure.
- Individuals in the water community are trained with content that leverages and integrates CUAHSI resources.
- CUAHSI enables innovative research advancing fundamental knowledge and meeting real-world uses.
- Enhanced operational reliability and usability of CUAHSI data storage, access, and discoverability.

Priority Initiatives

Initiative 3: Define and develop an ecosystem of open, living resources for end-to-end water research and education supported by CUAHSI infrastructure.

- Inventory existing tools, projects, and programs; perform a gap analysis; and prioritize enhancements and new developments.
- Leverage and integrate existing and new tools, projects, and programs to strengthen end-to-end capability.
- Organize the community to identify and prioritize skills, knowledge, and attributes for the water community to inform the development of CUAHSI resources.
- Identify best practices for effective collection and management of water data in support of the complete data life cycle.
- Engage with and gain buy-in from key stakeholders.

Goal 3: Expand CUAHSI's reach and prominence in the water community

Desired Results

- People in the water community can articulate the mission, value, and impact of CUAHSI.
- People in the water community are using CUAHSI in their data life cycle.
- People in the water community are using CUAHSI resources.

Priority Initiatives

Initiative 4: Design, launch and measure the effectiveness of a communication and outreach campaign to raise awareness and use of CUAHSI resources.

Goal 4: Refine our governance and business model for sustainability

Desired Results

- Funding supports successful and sustainable execution of CUAHSI's mission.
- Strategic staffing and knowledge management ensures leadership and operational resilience.
- Responsive governance supports leadership, strategic management, inclusivity, and accountability.

Priority Initiatives

Initiative 5: Develop and implement a sustainable funding model for CUAHSI.

Initiative 6: Develop and implement a plan to attract and retain CUAHSI staff.

Initiative 7: Implement governance structures that support effective planning, decision-making and implementation in a dynamic environment.