I. Executive Summary

Since 1903, the University of Washington’s Friday Harbor Laboratories (FHL) has achieved worldwide recognition as a center of excellence for research and education in marine science. With its integration into the University’s College of the Environment, FHL has an opportunity to expand its research, educational, and outreach missions in a manner that enhances this global reputation while simultaneously advancing the College’s goal of tackling the great environmental challenges confronting society in the 21st century. Here, we present the outputs of a strategic planning process aimed towards revitalizing FHL’s human resources and aging facilities so that it can continue to inspire scientists and students from around the world.

In Autumn 2022 and Winter 2023, over 300 past and present associates of FHL provided input to this strategic planning process. Three separate planning sessions were held, involving personnel with experience at FHL in Facilities, Research, and Education/Outreach. Participants in each session first enumerated Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) at FHL, then used these to brainstorm about achievable goals that allows FHL to seize opportunities while addressing current weaknesses.

Several consistent themes arose in all three sessions both in the SWOT analyses and the goal-setting effort. Participants were often passionate about the strengths of FHL—what makes FHL unique and competitive?—such as its egalitarian and collaborative culture, its access to field sites and organisms, and its facilities that enable diverse types of research. The most consistent concern raised in all sessions related to the small number of resident faculty and research scientists at FHL. Such resident scientists are essential for attracting top students and colleagues, bringing necessary overhead funds to FHL, and providing both equipment and intellectual vibrancy to the institution. Solving this problem will also help address another important weakness mentioned in all sessions—the declining condition of much of FHL’s infrastructure and equipment. Without a critical mass of active faculty and research scientists, FHL cannot raise the overhead necessary to maintain, repair, replace and update the facilities and equipment required for 21st century science nor support the technical staff essential to maintaining those facilities and equipment.

Building research and educational partnerships both within and outside of UW will contribute to the desired increase in year-round use of FHL facilities and provide a mechanism to achieve another goal, that of broadening the diversity of FHL staff, resident faculty and scientists, students, and visiting researchers. Increasing the availability of affordable housing will be critical to diversifying and strengthening FHL’s human resources, which in turn will facilitate accomplishing many other components of the strategic plan.
II. Mission, Vision, and Values

MISSION: To provide a world-renowned facility that uses research, education, and outreach to expand global understanding and appreciation of the marine environment and its living resources - from genomes to biomes.

VISION: To place FHL among units at the forefront of the University of Washington’s efforts to find solutions to the significant biological and environmental challenges confronting society.

VALUES: To promote a culture that is equitable, diverse, and inclusive, and where learning, research, and teamwork are facilitated in an egalitarian fashion.
III. Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT)

The following themes emerged from three separate SWOT sessions (involving Staff/Facilities, Education/Outreach, and Research: see Appendix 1 for description of the planning process, and Appendices 2-4 for details of output from each session). The fact that these themes arose in all three sessions with different participants indicates how pervasive and important these are for FHL. These are:

**Strengths** (internal): FHL facilities including housing and dining hall; surroundings that facilitate focused work; access to boats and field sites; staff with its culture of helpfulness; overarching egalitarian operations; funding for students for courses and research; and the Whiteley Center.

**Weaknesses** (internal): few resident scientists/faculty, especially during the 9-month academic year; general age and condition of labs, housing, and equipment; insufficient staff, especially for technical help and equipment maintenance; unpredictable academic curriculum; lack of diversity; increasing costs, especially for housing and boats.

**Opportunities** (external): available regional and national partnerships that could help increase year-round use, e.g. with workshops or new research efforts; faculty present on Seattle campus who could take greater advantage of FHL facilities; current international focus on climate change, biodiversity, and monitoring for which FHL is an ideal research hub; the growing Marine Biology major at UW.

**Threats** (external): UW budget model that emphasizes the high cost but not the high value of small field station classes; UW budget model that encourages academic units to compete for resources rather than cooperate, especially with regard to faculty effort; low pay scale and high local cost of living for FHL staff; insufficient permanent state budget.

IV. Goals

The overarching strengths and weaknesses identified by the three planning groups pointed towards a corresponding set of broad goals, as follows:

**A. Increase year-round use, especially by resident faculty and researchers; increase use by UW researchers from various departments; develop new partnerships; and increase the number of courses and workshops.** There is broad consensus that the core action necessary to keep FHL vital into the future is finding ways to increase the number of resident faculty and researchers. Achieving this goal would create positive synergies in terms of bringing new colleagues and graduate students to FHL, increasing indirect cost returns to contribute to upgrading facilities and equipment, and forming new partnerships.
B. **Build the reputation of FHL as a hub for diverse sciences, with modern facilities and shared equipment that is adequately maintained.** Most participants in all 3 strategic planning sessions believe that FHL is under-utilized and that it has huge potential to attract more users, and that one of its strengths is the diversity of research it can accommodate, from genomics to Earth system science, paired with proximity to remarkable marine habitats. Attracting new researchers – and getting them to repeatedly return – will require upgrades to facilities, housing and equipment as well as better maintaining existing equipment. *Achieving Goal B is linked in part to achieving Goal A, and vice versa.*

C. **Make FHL an even more attractive place to work, with better staff salaries, and a DEI lens incorporated into all efforts.** Being able to hire and retain qualified and enthusiastic staff is core to FHL’s success. Attracting excellent staff while retaining equity and increasing diversity is essential to our long-term evolution.

Many other goals were defined as part of the strategic planning process and are listed in Appendices 2-4 under the different focus sessions. A number of these relate directly to education/curriculum planning, how to attract students to FHL, how to enrich student experiences with community-building, and how to increase student diversity. These goals are all important to FHL’s mission, and feed into the three overarching goals listed above. Curriculum development will be the province of the new FHL Teaching Faculty hire, and will heavily depend on the future of how FHL is allowed to hold summer courses (through Continuum College). Goals related to accessibility of FHL campus and the value of remote learning were more controversial and are discussed in more detail in Implementation Appendix 5.

V. Implementation plans relevant to main goals

*“Vision without action is merely a dream. Action without vision just passes the time. Vision with action can change the world.”* Joel Barker.

Below are *examples* of suggestions from the planning sessions on how to begin to implement the overarching goals. More details are listed in Appendix 5.

**Goal A. Increase year-round use with resident faculty and researchers, increased presence of UW researchers from various departments, new partnerships, and more courses and workshops.**

- Have FHL participate on Seattle faculty search committees to make new faculty interest in FHL part of the discussion from the beginning.
- Encourage deans and the provost to create joint appointments among units to encourage interdisciplinary work.
- Advertise more effectively with many departments at all three UW campuses so that faculty know the research and teaching opportunities that exist. Emphasize broad availability of space in the off-season.
- Attract graduate students with more support for housing, and more TA and RA positions to focus their research at FHL.
Hire research scientists at 50% FTE and offer them PI status so that they can fill out their appointments with research grants.

**Goal B. Build the reputation of FHL as a hub for diverse sciences, with modern facilities and with shared equipment that is adequately maintained.**
- Establish and nurture partnerships with diverse outside agencies, individuals, tribes, non-profits, field stations.
- Seek funding for modernizing facilities and acquiring state-of-the-art equipment.
- Offer more innovative, interdisciplinary courses that attract new faculty to teach and new graduate students to take; focus on offerings that take full advantage of the proximity of diverse habitats to modern lab equipment.
- Expand research fellowships for faculty from other universities.

**Goal C. Make FHL an even more attractive and competitive place to work, with better staff salaries, and a DEI lens incorporated into all efforts.**

Many suggestions were made about improving diversity on FHL campus, especially for students (see Appendix 3). However, because staff salaries are largely set by UW and limited by FHL budget constraints, few feasible implementation suggestions addressed this goal.

**VI. Next Steps**

Some of the goals and implementation actions that arose in the three planning sessions were put into practice immediately because they were feasible, affordable, and/or urgent. These include: hiring a part-time staff person (using donor funds) to help students and researchers with equipment and other technical issues; obtaining an NSF grant (Field Stations and Marine Labs) to renovate one lab and buy new equipment – another grant proposal is in the works; beginning to reach out to create new partnerships, e.g., as part of a Letter of Intent submitted to NOAA. Clearly, implementation will need to be a team effort, since FHL staff and administration have little available capacity to add new tasks. We thus propose the establishment of a number of committees (and potentially others), to be composed of resident and non-resident researchers, educators, and staff, to define and implement clear and achievable activities to reach many of the identified goals, especially the overarching goals in Section V.

**Committees to be established:**
- Facilities (both scientific and residential)
- Building bridges within UW
- Building partnerships outside UW, e.g. with new initiatives/proposals
- Undergraduate curriculum development and student recruitment
- Evolving graduate education at FHL
- DEI and FHL Community, connecting the broader public to the missions of the labs
- Private fund-raising for student support, postdoc and faculty endowments