

College of Arts and Sciences

Spring Address – 2013

Good afternoon, and welcome to the College of Arts and Sciences spring address. I appreciate your being here today. We're here this afternoon to honor a number of students, staff, and faculty in the College who are recognized for their remarkable contributions to the College and the University. First, however, I'd like to say a few words about the state of the College.

Once again, the College of Arts and Sciences has had a strong and successful year. This, of course, is attributable to the intelligence, enthusiasm, hard work, and collegial spirit that characterize our faculty, staff, and students. I want to begin, as always, by acknowledging the excellent staff in the College office. I am fortunate to work with three outstanding associate deans. Joe Blaney oversees research, facilities, and technology for the College; Dagmar Budikova works with budget and personnel; and Sally Parry is involved in all things undergraduate in the College, including General Education and summer school. Debbie Fox is our Assistant Dean for External Relations, and is always thinking of new ways to take the College's message to our various constituencies, in this community and beyond. Carrie Wieburg is in her second year as our budget officer and assistant to the dean, and works with chairs and directors, as well as their lead staff. Our Administrative Aide, Peggy Haycraft, keeps the office in good shape and the College website up to date. We have two new faces in the College office this year. Jayne Zeller began serving in October, and is the first face that one sees on entering the office. We could not ask for a more helpful or cheerful person to welcome people to the College. Finally, Mike Regilio began serving just this semester as the Director of CAS-IT. Together, this College team works tirelessly to provide service and support to the faculty, staff, and students who are at the heart of our enterprise. As many of you know, we lost our Director of Development, Mary Crawford, in November, to a vice presidency at Kentucky Wesleyan College. The search for her replacement, unfortunately, has not yet been successful, but we hope to have someone identified before too much time passes.

Considering the budgetary constraints on the University brought about by ever-dwindling financial support of higher education in the state, we have to be pleased that we have nevertheless been able to continue to recruit new faculty. We welcomed 18 new faculty to the College this year, and we recruited for nearly that many to begin in the fall. In both of the years that I've been involved in this recruitment, I've been very pleased to see that we are successfully attracting new faculty who understand ISU and the atmosphere for growth that we provide. When I speak with candidates, they nearly all mention being attracted to ISU for its balance of teaching and research or creative activity, the engagement of our students, and the collegial nature of our faculty. Again this year, most of the searches successfully recruited the departments' first choices. Also like last year, we were successful in retaining faculty who attracted the attention of other universities.

Another topic that came up frequently in my meetings with faculty candidates concerned their interest in support provided by the College and University for interdisciplinary research and teaching. The generation of scholars entering the professoriate today recognizes that much of the most interesting work being done at universities takes place at the intersection of our traditional disciplines, and they are interested in the possibility of interdisciplinary collaborations when they join the faculty. We want to do everything in our power to facilitate this kind of collaboration. Beginning this year, the College is encouraging departments, schools, and programs to consider the possibility of recruiting with interdisciplinary work specifically in mind, and partnering with another department, school, or program in a joint-hiring proposal. This is possible under existing University policy, but has not been pursued in the College of Arts and Sciences in the past. The Council of Chairs has discussed ways in which departments can work together to agree on the division of labor of someone hired into such a position, the expectations and means of measuring success. One such proposal has already been made for the next recruiting cycle: The Department of Psychology and the School of Biological Sciences have proposed the recruitment of a cognitive neuroscientist, and I am hopeful that this hiring request will be approved.

To support our faculty once they are on campus, we have continued our New Faculty Professional Development Series, meeting several times a semester with our newest colleagues, to discuss issues of concern to them, including promotion and tenure at ISU, the annual evaluation process, increasing scholarly productivity, and work/life balance issues. If return traffic is any measure of our success, then the Series is working well. An added bonus of these meetings is that faculty are able to become better acquainted with colleagues who are members of their cohort, but not in their disciplines. I think some interdisciplinary friendships have been formed, and, I hope, some future interdisciplinary research collaborations.

In addition to the series for new faculty, this year we initiated a Mid-career Faculty Development Series. We tend to act sometimes as if the achievement of tenure and promotion to associate professor is the culmination of a faculty member's professional life, at a time when the person has two thirds or three quarters of his or her career ahead. In this series, we discuss those issues that we in the College office perceive to be reasonably in the minds of associate and full professors. Our first meeting, earlier this semester, focused on issues associated with taking a career in the direction of administration at some level. This Friday, the second meeting will discuss preparing for promotion to full professor. Not assuming that we in the office know everything that is, or should be, a concern for mid-career faculty, we are also asking them what they would like as workshop topics. Finally, we have been discussing with the College Council ways that we can support the work of our non-tenure track faculty, and our A/P and civil service staff. I hope to have something in place for these groups in the fall. As I've said many times before, when we're unable to recruit new faculty and staff at the pace we would like, it becomes more important than ever that we take care of those we have. I hope that these workshops work successfully toward that end.

In addition to the hiring I mentioned before, I believe the College has had a number of successes this year, despite our economic difficulties. We had degree programs in Legal Studies and Biochemistry approved by the IBHE, and the University has approved an undergraduate degree in neuroscience and behavior, and an MS in Anthropology. We were able to create a new teaching fellowship, the Kenneth A. and Mary Ann Shaw Fellowship, to support innovative proposals in teaching. The inaugural recipients of the Fellowship were Dan Breyer in Philosophy and Gina Hunter from Sociology and Anthropology. Three new study-abroad programs were initiated, in Turkey, Spain, and the West Bank. There were seven Bone Scholars from the College, three from English alone. The College's competitive teams did very well. The Mock Trial team will compete in the National Championship Tournament, the Forensics team won national awards again this year, and the solar-car team is becoming more competitive every year. WZND again dominated in awards for student radio stations from the Illinois Broadcasters Association.

Our faculty have been very successful this year as well. On the back of today's program are the names of members of the College of Arts and Sciences who were recognized for their teaching, research, or service at this year's Founders Day ceremonies, including the University's newest Distinguished Professor, Dr. Roberta Trites. We have two new University Professors, in Tim Hunt in English and Fred Smith in Sociology and Anthropology. Of course, we'll meet a number of recipients of College awards momentarily. Our faculty published 15 books and monographs, 19 edited books, and 437 journal articles and book chapters. I think it's also worth noting that one in four of the publications coming out of the College included co-authorship by students, and 17% of our articles and chapters represented international collaborations. Scholars in the College generated \$8.7M in extramural funding, the highest amount in our history. Since 2007, funding of College scholars has increased by 47%.

We also had a successful year in fundraising. Although we have been without a Director of Development for several months now, we nevertheless received contributions to the College from 4,133 donors giving a total of over \$2.2M. Both of these numbers are higher than last year. Mary Crawford deserves the credit for this level of philanthropy, but I believe she built a solid foundation with our donor base that will continue to help us in the future.

Of course, as we look to the future, we can't just brag about our successes. We must look realistically at the position we're in, and prepare for the challenges that face our state, and higher education more broadly. As you know, uncertainty about the future of our pension system led to a higher-than-usual rate of retirement a year ago, and these retirements hit some departments especially hard. We took these losses into consideration as we prioritized the 20 faculty lines we requested for next year. We hope that this trend doesn't continue, and that we are at least able to keep pace with our losses by hiring at least as many new faculty as we lose.

Early in March, the College held its budget meeting, at which chairs and directors presented their budget requests for the coming year. There are several areas where

funding is inadequate that were raised by virtually every department and school. Funding for graduate students, both in terms of the number of stipends available and their size, funds for faculty travel, and departmental operating moneys are all seen to be challenges that increase each year. Another concern is that units with competitive teams have difficulty funding travel and other expenses associated with competing nationally. These teams bring tremendous positive attention to ISU and their respective units, and we don't want them to wither, but funding is increasingly difficult.

I know that last year at this time, I also discussed the increasing difficulty that we have each year in addressing the start-up needs of incoming faculty, especially in the natural sciences. We rely very heavily on indirect cost recovery from existing grants to fund start-up. Our chairs and directors have been cooperative, in contributing some of their own funds to raise the amount we're able to provide to new faculty to get their scholarship started. The new faculty have also been cooperative, in allowing us to provide funds spread out over two or three years. We are very grateful for this cooperative spirit, which I have come to expect at ISU. Nevertheless, the expenses grow each year, and any change in the national funding landscape will make it increasingly difficult to compete for the best faculty. I have expressed all of these concerns to the Provost, and she is in full agreement, but of course, she doesn't have the funds that she needs either. I am honored to have been asked to serve on the steering committee for the Long Range Financial Plan that was initiated by President Bowman in his State of the University Address. I am hopeful that these budgetary concerns can be addressed in this process, and that there will be some relief to units in the College in the future.

The University is entering an important and dramatic period in its development. There is uncertainty about the future of the leadership of the University, and how that future may affect what we do in the College. I am confident, however, that the University, and the College of Arts and Sciences are on firm footing, and we look to the future from a position of strength, not with the fear and even desperation that seem to characterize the atmosphere on so many campuses these days. The College of Arts and Sciences at Illinois State University is a great place to be, and, with your help, it will remain so for years to come.