

College of Arts and Sciences

Fall Address – 2016

Provost Krejci, faculty, staff, and students, welcome to the College of Arts and Sciences Fall Address and Awards event, and to a new academic year. Every year, I look forward to welcoming new students and faculty, eager to take part in all that ISU has to offer. To the new faculty and staff, I want to say that your success is the most important part of our job, as the success of our students depends on it.

Especially for the benefit of our new colleagues, I like to take a minute in this address to introduce the College office, and some of the new faces in the leadership. Although we don't have any new department chairs or school directors in the College this year, I would like to introduce Dr. Heidi Harbers as Acting Chair of the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders, while Ann Beck is on sabbatical.

I have the privilege of working with an outstanding group of people in the College office, who possess tremendous knowledge of the College of Arts and Sciences, and are committed to its mission. Sally Parry is the Associate Dean for Academic Programs and Student Affairs; Marla Reese-Weber is the Associate Dean for Personnel, Budget, and Planning; and Joe Blaney is Associate Dean for Research, Facilities, and Technology. Debbie Fox is the Assistant Dean for External Relations, and is responsible for College events. She also publishes CASNews weekly, and assists with the organization of several advisory boards in the College. Carrie Wieburg is our Business Manager, managing the budget and serving as the Dean's assistant. I appreciate very much the hard work and selfless dedication of these colleagues to advancing the mission of the College. Tammy Hansen is the Administrative Aid, and Val Ilyukhina serves as our Office Manager. They present a welcoming face to visitors to the College, and are also enthusiastically planning another College office display for Homecoming, hoping to keep the tradition of award-winning displays begun two years ago and continued last year. Mike Regilio is the Director of CAS-IT, leading a team that assists faculty and staff with technology needs, in desktop support, web design, and advice on recent technology advances. Our Director of Development is Stephanie Sellers, now beginning her fourth year of fund raising for the College. I am pleased to work with this dedicated group of individuals whose commitment to the success of our students and faculty will continue to be critical to our growth as a College.

We are continuing our several faculty development efforts this year, with our New Faculty Professional Development Series, which kicked off last Friday. Dr. Alysia Mortimer, a second-year faculty member in the School of Biological Sciences, told our new faculty things that she had learned by the end of her first year that she wished she had known at the beginning. This Friday, we will begin our Mid-career Faculty Professional Development Series, with the topic "So you want to be an administrator."

We are also continuing our Administrative Fellow Program, and Dr. Doris Houston of the School of Social Work will be working with College staff. She will be leading a project to address issues

of diversity and inclusion in the College of Arts and Sciences, and is chairing a committee composed of faculty from diverse backgrounds to propose concrete suggestions for how departments may provide the best possible environment for our underrepresented faculty, staff, and students.

The College will sponsor two public presentations this semester. On September 27, Dr. Kerri Milita, of the Department of Politics and Government will present “When You Say Nothing at All: How Candidates Win Elections by Shunning the Issues.” This is part of our Main Street College Series, in which our faculty present their research to an audience that is outside the University, though of course the University community is encouraged to attend as well. The talk will take place at the Alumni Center at 7:00 P.M. on the 27th. Dr. Alan Lessoff is this fall’s Distinguished College Lecturer, and at 7:00 P.M. on November 10, in this room, he will present “Downtown Bloomington is not Uptown Normal.” I hope you are able to attend both of these talks.

Of course, these presentations represent only a tiny piece of the remarkable scholarship that occurs in our College, which is both broad and deep. In FY 16, College faculty submitted 77 proposals for external funding. Although the total amount of funding was down slightly from 2015, we had more grants funded this year than last, and total funding still reached nearly \$5M. Given both the declining amounts of money available, and changes in NIH funding policies, I think we can consider 2016 a successful year. Several large grants have been funded in the last few weeks, suggesting that 2017 will be a success as well.

As is the case every year, a number of our faculty have been honored for their professional achievement. Dr. Kathryn Wehrmann of the School of Social Work was elected to the presidency of the National Association of Social Workers; Dr. Greg Ferrence was named a Fellow of the American Chemical Society; Dr. Kyle Ciani was part of a team that successfully worked to make the Belmont-Paul Women’s Equality National Monument a reality; the Actuarial Program in the Department of Mathematics was honored with the Casualty Actuarial Society University Award; and, in the wake of the terrorist attack in Dhaka, Bangladesh in July, Dr. Ali Riaz, chair of the Department of Politics and Government, was interviewed by CNN, Aljazeera, the BBC, the *Atlantic*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and the *New York Times*, among other national and international news outlets.

Our faculty are continually engaged with our students as well. From our successful competitive student teams to the collaboration of students and faculty in research and creative activity. You have heard me say before that approximately 25% of the published works coming out of our college have student co-authors. We continue to attract new faculty that understand and welcome the close collaboration between students and faculty, and take very seriously the mentoring role for undergraduate students that is expected of our colleagues. It has been a pleasure for me to meet our new faculty, whom you will also meet shortly, and see what a brilliant and committed group they are. We all look forward to their growth and development at ISU.

It was almost six years ago that I stood in this room for the first time. At the time of my interview, I recall saying something about the balance that our attitude must have in difficult budgetary times. On the one hand, I believe I said that there is no point in sugar coating our situation. In a difficult financial climate, we know that decisions have to be made carefully, and it isn't always possible to fund activities that have been supported in the past, and, in the worst cases, some must be eliminated. Through careful planning, ISU has been spared the most drastic of these kinds of cuts. Nevertheless, the College has had to say no to a number of things that it has funded in the past. We have had to decline requests for funding a number of speakers and conferences that we have supported in recent years. These requests are for very worthy events, and are usually quite modest. However, we see dozens in the course of a year, and we have simply had to refuse them, as disappointing as this is both to those making the requests and those of us in the College office.

On the other hand, I believe I also said that we mustn't adopt a bunker mentality, as that will prevent us from moving forward at all, even in ways that may place little or no demand on our existing resources. We have tried to walk that line between admitting the reality we are in, but not allowing it to cripple us. Toward that end, we have done what we can to marshal the resources that we have in place already to move forward with some new initiatives, particularly interdisciplinary ones, which has been a priority of the College for several years. I have already mentioned the diversity and inclusion initiative being led by Doris Houston. The plans are very tentative at this point, but the intention is to have a series of workshops on issues related to improving the environment for members of underrepresented groups.

A second initiative that has been very successful in the last year is the development of the Queer Studies Concentration in Women's and Gender Studies. Three years ago, a committee appointed by the College developed a course, WGS 292, Introduction to Queer Studies, which was first offered in the fall of 2015. That course was very successful, and was followed by the same group of faculty designing a curriculum for the Queer Studies Concentration. This program simply brings together existing courses taught by our faculty in an organized way to provide this opportunity for our students. It did not require the hiring of any new personnel or further development of new courses. The College remains very amenable to similar development of other interdisciplinary areas that would serve the needs of our students.

Also in the interest of interdisciplinary growth, the College is making available a modest pool of funds in order to support further projects. Department chairs and school directors have been sent information about the process by which interdisciplinary faculty teams may propose a project that could be used to expand an existing program (such as one of our interdisciplinary minors) or to build a new interdisciplinary connection. Funds could be used, for example, for travel, funding a small conference, bringing someone to campus to advise on program development, or assistance in developing a proposal for external funding. This is not an exclusive list, but the intent of the program is for these seed funds to facilitate the development of something relatively permanent in the College (that is, more than just a one-time activity).

One such project that has already begun brings together faculty from across campus who have a common interest in water quality and supply. On September 2nd, researchers from several departments, led by Dr. Joan Brehm of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology and including faculty from that department, along with some from Geography/Geology, Biology, Philosophy, and several others, including faculty from other colleges at ISU. The College is also involved, along with the College of Applied Science and Technology, in an effort to create a Botanical Gardens, coordinating activities involving a number of existing entities – the Fell Arboretum, the Horticultural Center, the Herbarium, and the Sugar Creek area north of campus.

As troubling as these budgetary problems are, we need only look around the state of Illinois to see that they are not as bad as they could be. ISU is one of only three public universities in the state not to see a decrease in enrollment from a year ago. You have already heard that ISU has broken the 21,000 mark in total enrollment, and the incoming class is up again in numbers and diversity. The statistics for the College mirror those of the University. It has occasionally been the case in the past that despite increases at the University level, Arts and Sciences showed a decline. That is not the case this year, with undergraduate enrollment up 3% over last year. Over half of our departments are up from last year, and, for the most part, those that are down are down modestly. Our College continues to have the reputation necessary to attract excellent students, and this will stand us in good stead for the future.

Also helping us remain healthy is charitable giving to the College. Stephanie is frequently on the road for the College, and, in preparation for the first comprehensive campaign in 10 years, is meeting with major donors, working hard for transformational gifts to Arts and Sciences. I mentioned last year that the World Wide Campus Fund, the College's fund to support students studying abroad, received a large gift. That fund now has nearly \$40,000, and we are prepared to make an award from it. I will be soon be sending to chairs and directors the application process for students to apply for up to \$750 to help with the funding of a study-abroad trip. We will make two awards in subsequent years, expanding their number and size as growth of the fund allows.

So, we live in difficult times, but there is no need for panic or retreat. The University is still strong and stable, and the Arts and Sciences is still its heart. We will continue to serve our students as we would in boom times, and provide for them the perspective on life and the world around us that the arts and sciences are known for. We will continue to do this in a spirit of cooperation and collegiality, and we will live up to the promise of our faculty, and the students whom we serve.