

College of Arts and Sciences
2022 Spring Address

Good afternoon, and welcome to the College of Arts and Sciences spring address and awards ceremony. We come together each year at this time for an update on College activities, to honor faculty in the College, and to recognize important contributions to the College, the University, and the Community.

First and foremost, I want to acknowledge what each of you have done. With my acknowledgement comes a large measure of gratitude. When we went to remote teaching in the spring of 2020, you all rose to the nearly insurmountable task and continued to serve our students and did it very well. At that early point, we were all naively thinking about when we could “get back to normal.” We all realize now that there was no coming “back” to a “normal” as the pandemic experience changed us all, including our students. I have heard from faculty and students alike that this transitional year back to more in-person experiences has been fraught with its own unique challenges. You as faculty and staff had to meet these challenges for our students, while negotiating your own challenges in your personal lives. But once again, you did it and you did it well. I couldn’t have chosen to walk through this fire with a more courageous and compassionate group of people than the faculty and staff from CAS.

Every single person in the College of Arts and Sciences with every day, contributes to the vibrancy of our mission. I would like to highlight just a few achievements from the College this year. I will speak to exciting program development initiatives, initiatives that promote equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility, the bright promise from some of

our student successes, and outstanding achievements from faculty and staff.

Despite the challenges of this transitional year, we made progress on several exciting program development initiatives that will serve our students well and prepare them for the future. The English Education program is admitting students to the new graduate program in English Education from a social justice pedagogical lens. The Department of Mathematics has been developing an online graduate program for K-8 math education and they are getting ready to launch the exciting online graduate program in actuarial sciences. The Department of History developed FCR on-line graduate courses for secondary education teachers to qualify to teach dual credit courses. The School of Biological Sciences developed dual majors for students from Geography, Geology, and the Environment and students from the Mennonite College of Nursing. A very exciting program development is that the College of Arts and Sciences and the Department of Mathematics are taking the lead on development of a new interdisciplinary major in data sciences that will be coordinated with the College of Applied Sciences and Technology and the College of Business. We hope to be admitting students to this new program in 2024.

I am delighted to share several initiatives that advanced our commitment to equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility. I am very proud of the COBAS initiative which stands for Communities of Belonging and Success which was a collaborative effort between the Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures and Latin American and Latino/a Studies Program. The Department of LAN partnered with the Latin American and Latino/a Studies program (LALS) to redesign SPA 120 and LALS 109 for first year students that would target the strengths of first time-in-college Latino students with bilingual abilities and incorporate essential skills for student

success. The Latino Studies course is taught trans lingually (code switching between Spanish and English; a natural skill of bilinguals) and both courses fostered community building and exploration of cultural identity as well as academic skills valuable to all FTIC students. The retention rate for these students is 96% versus the 86% retention rate of the overall cohort. I am appreciative of the work of Alejandro Enriquez, Julie Lynd, Maura Toro-Morn, Daynali Flores- Rodriguez, and Jim Pancrazio who had the vision for an integrated “successified” course and ran with it. This is a model that can be extrapolated to many other disciplines as we focus on student success particularly for our bilingual/bicultural students.

The College of Arts and Sciences is invested in transforming our learning environments to be inclusive for all students and faculty. The College hosted a retreat for departmental EDI committees at the end of the fall semester and will host another at the end of the spring semester on May 11th. The Department of Philosophy and the School of Social Work faculty conducted curricular reviews of their courses to identify opportunities to create more culturally responsive curricula and pedagogies. Seven of our 16 departments have already embarked on changes in their ASPT policy to recognize and value EDIA efforts from faculty. We know that as our student body becomes more diverse, we must do better at recruiting and retaining diverse faculty and staff. We are proud to say that 14 of the Colleges 19 faculty hired in this cycle identify as a person from an historically marginalized population. The College has taken a leadership role on professional development activities that promote culturally responsive teaching as well as the promotion of inclusive environments. Four of our 6 professional development sessions were on topics promoting culturally responsive teaching and building inclusive working environments. Over 19% of the College general

revenue budget was directed towards EDI initiatives. We still have much work to do, but it is good to see folks within the College making real strides on becoming a more inclusive environment.

The College launched an important student success initiative this year with two career development workshops entitled “Engaging the Power of your Liberal Arts Education.” These workshops helped students particularly in the humanities and social sciences to think about the transferrable skills they are learning and how to present that to future employers.

Each of our departments met with staff from the Provost’s office to examine their department’s student success data and are working through plans on how to remove barriers and enhance students’ ability to move successfully through to timely graduations. Some examples include The Math department faculty who are in the process of examining MAT 113 and MAT 121 to identify potential barriers and the department funded two GAs to provide targeted tutoring for students in Calculus I and II. The Department of Psychology developed a peer mentor training program for undergraduate students who will mentor students in psychology courses through their Student Success Center. The Department of Sociology and Anthropology developed a senior practicum course that functions as a 6-week lab to the senior thesis course. The practicum lab provides practical coaching on bridging the gap between education and a career. The lab provides career development for sociology and anthropology majors. I point these initiatives out as just a couple of examples of good work, many departments are doing.

We are eager to continue creating more successful experiences for students and we have so many student achievements to be proud of such as Nick Rhodes from the School of Biological Sciences. Nick with the oversight of his professor Tom Hammond won a Cozzarelli Prize from the National Academy of Science. This honor is bestowed on only 6 journal publications from over 3500 submitted each year. This is quite an honor of distinction. Ian Freeman who is a junior student with triple majors in physics, computational physics, and mathematics was named as a Barry Goldwater Scholar. The award is one of the most prestigious scholarships for students in STEM disciplines. And I know many of us were proud to see so many of our students presenting their research at the University Research Symposium recognized for outstanding teaching achievement. Jennifer Woodruff from the.

We owe our success with innovative academic programs and student achievements to our outstanding faculty and staff. We are proud that so many of our faculty have been recognized for outstanding teaching achievements. Jennifer Woodruff from the Department of Sociology and Anthropology was recognized with an Outstanding University Teacher Award for NTT, Keith Pluymers from the Department of History won a University Teaching Initiative Award and Liz Chupp from the School of Communication was honored with the Claire and Tom Lamonica Outstanding University Teaching Award. Eriane Theodorf from the School of Comm also was acknowledged with an Outstanding University Graduate Student teaching award.

Just as with teaching awards, many of our faculty have been acknowledged for their research and creative production. Ela Przybylo from the Department of English won the Creative Activity Initiative

Award and Katie Sampeck from the Department of Sociology and Anthropology won the Outstanding University Researcher Award. Chris Mulligan from the Department of Chemistry was one of 3 faculty on the team that won the Outstanding Cross-Disciplinary team research award. We eagerly watch the work of up-and-coming scholars Brea Banks from the Department of Psychology and Matt Caplan from the Department of Physics who won Research Initiative awards. CAS was pleased to see the long over-due recognition of Ricardo Cortez Cruz from the Department of English who won an Outstanding University Service award. Anyone who knows Ricardo knows that he is selfless in his service to students and colleagues.

In addition to University awards, our faculty are incredibly productive with their innovative scholarship. Dr. Mahua Biswas from the Department of Physics is the lead researcher on an NSF grant that is over \$400k that will bring a state-of-the-art electron microscope to campus. This was a collaborative partnership from the beginning and faculty in other departments will benefit from this instrument. Thank you Mahua. Katie Sampeck from the Department of Sociology and Anthropology has been awarded her third Fulbright award and will study at the British Library. Two faculty have been chosen for prestigious NEH fellowships from the Department of History. Amy Wood and Katie Jasper each received NEH grants, and Amy Wood also was the recipient of a prestigious year-long fellowship from the National Humanities Center. Paul Ugor from the Department of English is completing a fellowship funded by the National Humanities Center this year.

All of our good work on campus is reflected in the enthusiasm and generosity of alumni and donors. Our development goal for the College

was \$2.6 million this year. Through the stellar work of our Director of Development, Kate Childs, we had met the goal In December at only the 50% mark of the fiscal year. As of today, we are at 132% of our goal and still going strong. That is all due to the outstanding work we do in the College and people will give to excellence.

I have only spoken to just a fraction of the outstanding work that happens in the College of Arts and Sciences. We would be here for an interminable time if I went on about all the wonderful initiatives and achievements from all of you.

As this will be my last Dean's address, I want to thank each of you for the deep honor to have served with you for the past 4 years. As many of you know, I might have been described as the reluctant dean in that I did not see my career going in this direction. But when the Provost at that time, Jan Murphy was rather persistent, I began to see this opportunity as service to Illinois State University, where my career began as an undergraduate social work student. It is probably a true blessing that we can only live in limited linear time, because if I had the ability to have been clairvoyant, I'm not so certain I would have said yes. Who would have anticipated a world-wide pandemic, the real near threat to our democracy on Jan. 6th, so many months of painful cultural and social reckoning, and now we sit on the precipice of a possible third world war? But whether I said yes or said no to Jan Murphy, here we all are in this messy existence, none of us could or can escape. So given that, again, I can't think of a group of more caring people I could be navigating these challenges with than all of you. There really is something special here at ISU.

Dean Dillaway will pick it up from here soon, and I know she will be the leader you all deserve. As you can see, we have a lot going on in the

College of Arts and Sciences, so she will certainly be jumping into a deep end. I ask of each of you to help her with the transition to Illinois State University. I ask each of you to show up each day in such a way that she always feels blessed to have been chosen for this position. So, in other words, I simply ask each of you to be authentically who you are; the people I have always seen you to be each day I have served by your side.