

College of Arts and Sciences
Spring 2020 Address

Good afternoon, and welcome to a very different College of Arts and Sciences spring address. Typically, during the spring semester we would gather for the Dean to provide an update on progress, accomplishments, and business of the College. We would also celebrate several faculty and staff awards. In some ways there is nothing typical about this semester, yet in others, we keep doing what we typically do, and do well. In the midst of pandemic chaos, a parallel universe of normal, typical business continues for the College.

We frequently hear President Dietz describe Illinois State University as “strong and stable” and perhaps in no other time has that been more reassuring. During a world-wide crisis, with very little time to prepare, we transformed our teaching to respond to the needs of our students to continue on a path towards degree completion. From our position of strength and stability we “flipped our curriculum” to be delivered entirely on-line. That is truly amazing; but even more remarkable than what we did, was how we did it. To a person, each of you, faculty, staff, and administrator immediately responded with self-sacrifice and with a Redbird spirit of doing the right thing, even in trying times. Our College has done what would have seemed impossible in January of 2020 as we began the semester. Every single person in this College shares the success of this, even as we knew it wasn’t what we would have chosen for us or our students. But we did it, because we had to do it. Our great diversity across the College became unified in one singular mission of “gladly we learn and gladly we teach”.

As I say, in the midst of extraordinary life is the ordinary business of the College. Our enrollment is strong with over 6,147 students. The Arts and Sciences deliver nearly 50% of all ISU credit hour production and 85% of all general education content is delivered through CAS. We read on a daily basis in the Chronicle that the liberal arts and sciences are under threat to cuts in many universities. So, as we approach commencement season, we can all proudly claim that the Arts and Sciences contributes to the vast majority of all students who receive degrees and become Redbird Alumni. Let there be no mistake, the liberal arts and sciences are the foundation for all other disciplines.

In order to meet the learning needs of an increasingly diverse student body, we need to make advances on hiring more faculty who identify from underrepresented groups. We know that it is important for our students' intellectual and professional development that they see role models in the classroom and can develop mentoring relationships with professors that reflect their similar experiences. We are proud to say that 50% of our hires this year self-identify as a person from an under-represented group. And we are extremely grateful for the Educational Diversity Enhancement Program from the Provost office that is a real commitment to recruitment for diversity in our faculty ranks.

As we look back at this year, we are proud of the outstanding accomplishments of several faculty members who were honored with University Awards. Faculty and staff from the College of Arts and Sciences excel in all three areas of teaching, scholarship, and service. Gladly we Teach is part of our University motto and so we are proud of our faculty who exemplify this every day in the classroom as they inspire students. Joseph Zompetti from the School of Communication was chosen for Outstanding University Teaching Awards and Lindsey Thomas from the School of Communication was honored with a Teaching Initiative awards. Jillian Joyce Kaufman from the School of Communication received the Outstanding Graduate Student Teaching award for doctoral students.

Just as we are proud of our faculty who won University Teaching Awards, we are delighted to honor several outstanding colleagues with College Teaching Awards. Aaron Smith from the Department of English and Katie Jasper from the Department of History each received the Outstanding College Teacher award. Ben Schmeiser from the Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures and Allison Harris from the Department of Physics were awarded the Shaw Teaching Fellowship.

Gladly we learn is also part of our University Motto and our faculty continue as life-long learners with ground-breaking research that produces new discoveries and finds new integration of existing knowledge. We are proud of Andrew Hartman from the Department of History and John Sedbrook from the School of Biological Sciences who received University Research Awards. The College had several colleagues who received Research Initiative Awards including Tenley Banik from the Department of Geography, Geology, and the Environment, Lindsey

Thomas from the School of Communication, Daniel Lannin from the Department of Psychology, and Taeok Park from the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders. We are also proud to honor Linda Clemmons from the Department of History and Nobuko Adachi from the Department of Sociology and Anthropology as College Research Award winners. These award winners indicate a very bright future for CAS with research endeavors.

We are proud of our robust model of shared governance at Illinois State University and as we believe in the value of civic engagement for our students, we also expect our faculty and staff to be engaged in their community of Illinois State University. Maura Toro Morn, Director of the Latin American and Latino/a Studies Program and faculty from the Department of Sociology and Anthropology won the impressive David Strand award for diversity accomplishments. Kass Fleisher from the Department of English, John Kostelnick from the Department of Geography, Geology, and the Environment, and Adena Meyers from the Department of Psychology were named as Outstanding College Service Award recipients.

It is my pleasure to acknowledge the accomplishments of our University and College award winners. The College of Arts and Sciences impressively stands out for high achieving scholarship with one of the two Distinguished Professors and both of the University Professors coming from our College. Dr. Krzysztof Ostaszewski from the Department of Mathematics is most deserving of the distinction of being named a Distinguished Professor and T.Y Wang from the Department of Politics and Government and Lisa Szczepura from the Department of Chemistry were chosen as University Professors. These awards shine a light on particularly productive people, but so many of our faculty are productive with the research and creative production endeavor. Scholars from the College of Arts and Sciences received \$7,483,529 from external funding. This stunning productivity in research is shared with the professional and scientific community through dissemination of our good work through publication. Our faculty average 4.79 scholarly or creative products per person and remarkably 30% include student co-authors. This truly is living out our values in our strategic plan for individualized attention for our students.

Our students in the College of Arts and Sciences flourish with this individualized attention. This year we are proud to claim that six of the 14 Bone scholars came from Arts and Sciences. The Sorenson Distinguished Dissertation award winner is Chereka Dickerson from the Department of English. Joseph T. Neale from the School of Biological Sciences was the Fischer Thesis award runner up and Kate Brunk from the Department of Politics and Government and Alyssa Hernandez from the School of Communication were the College award winners. The College of Arts and Sciences also swept the 3MT competition this year with Austin Calhoun from the School of Biological Sciences winning first place and the People's Choice award and Jennifer Woodrum from the Department of Psychology won second place. We are extremely proud of Jonah Mixon-Webster from the Department of English doctoral program who was recently awarded the prestigious Windham-Campbell prize for his debut poetry collection *Stereo (TYPE)* which examines and interrogates systemic racism in the Flint water crisis. Jonah is one of only eight scholars world-wide to receive this award.

Just as we are proud of our teaching and scholarly accomplishments, loyal alumni and donors are eager to support our good work. The College of Arts and Sciences surpassed our \$20 million capital campaign and as of this writing we have raised \$24.3 million largely for student scholarship and support. We have also surpassed our annual goal of \$5.1 million by raising \$5.3 million at the 75% mark of the year. This support is so important to assist our students with the realization of their dream.

We are living in unprecedented, historic times. None of us could have imagined this 60 days ago. We, out of necessity, are focused on the acute moments of managing this day amidst the anxiety for our health, are loved ones, and our financial stability. We forget in the midst of pandemic crisis that in a parallel universe, many good things with the College of Arts and Sciences have still occurred. And I am not only hopeful, I am confident that there are many more good things ahead for the College of Arts and Sciences. We have certainly been humbled by these events, but humility can be one of life's great teachers. We have all the potential to rise from this stronger, more compassionate, and more hopeful for a bright future. In closing, I quote President Barack Obama:

Hope is that thing inside us that insists, despite all evidence to the contrary, that something better awaits us if we have the courage to reach for it, and to work for it, and to fight for it.

