

College of Arts and Sciences
2021 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.

This spring, the Dean's Address feels very different than previous years. Last year when I gave the spring Dean's address, we had just moved to remote teaching and the campus was closed. I think we can all think back to one year ago and can recall the surreal, perhaps dystopian, feel to our lives. In some ways it feels like this year has flown by and in others, life before COVID, seems like a different life ago. We have come to mark time as before and after. As I gathered my talk together, this context left me struck by how in the midst of pandemic chaos, a parallel universe of "normal" has continued here in the College of Arts and Sciences. Despite unimaginable odds, we continued being true to our motto of "gladly we learn and gladly we teach." We continued to be strong and stable with a forward leading edge.

In the midst of extraordinary life, is the ordinary business of the College. Despite the pandemic and fears of steep declines in college enrollment, the College of Arts and Sciences actually had a modest 2% increase in enrollment. With our commitment to the majority of general education courses, CAS contributes to the majority of students who graduate from ISU, no matter their degree or major. Nearly one-third of graduates are aligned with a major in the College of Arts and Sciences. CAS produces 50% of the credit hours in the University. Given

this, the strength of the College of Arts and Sciences is the foundation for the strength of the entire University.

Our Arts and Sciences faculty continued doing what they do very well despite the challenges of a pandemic. Our faculty continue with their scholarly productivity with an average scholarly output of 2.15 published or creative works per tenure-track faculty member. Including conference papers, CAS tenure-track faculty averaged 3.63 scholarly/creative “products” per person. Our undergraduate and graduate students are routinely involved in research and creative activities under faculty guidance. The quality of these mentorships is demonstrated by the students’ appearance as co-authors on many of our published journal articles, book chapters, creative efforts, and conference presentations.

Our faculty continued to apply for external funding to support scholarship. Although we only had about half the number of awards as the previous year in pre-pandemic FY20, we increased the total amount of funding in dollars awarded by 38%.

Three College of Arts and Sciences faculty were awarded with some of the highest levels of distinction for research with two University Professors named and one Distinguished Professor named. Dr. Scott Jordan, Chair from the Department of Psychology and Dr. Steve Hunt from the School of Communication were named as University Professors. Dr. Jeffrey Kahn from the Department of Psychology was named as a Distinguished Professor.

In addition to our faculty distinction in research, our graduate students also lead projects of distinction. Amani Wise from the Department of Psychology took first place in the Three Minute Thesis Competition and

Megan Donnelly took second place. Jennifer Woodrum from the Department of Psychology was the Fisher Thesis award winner. We are also proud that 5 CAS students were named as Bone Scholars.

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. Julie Campbell from the Department of Psychology and Abigail Stone from the Department of Sociology and Anthropology were honored with Teaching Initiative awards.

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. The College had several colleagues who received Research Initiative Awards including Uttam Manna from the Department of Physics, Joseph Hilgard from the Department of Psychology, Ryan Paitz from the School of Biological Sciences, Wondy Seyoum from the Department of Geography, Geology, and the Environment, and Ela Przybylo from the Department of English.

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 through service. We are proud of Alycia Hund from the Department of Psychology who received the Outstanding University Service Award and Brea Banks, also from the Department of Psychology who won a University Service Initiative Award.

AWARD PROGRAM IN HERE

Both I and Associate Dean Joe Blaney have shared with you some of the many extraordinary accomplishments from the College of Arts and Sciences this year. Despite a world-wide pandemic, the excellent work of our faculty and staff continued. Now that we are turning the corner on this academic year and the pandemic, we are wasting no time looking forward to work ahead.

We all are familiar with the looming demographic decline of traditional college-aged students beginning as soon as 2024. To remain strong and stable, the Provost has put forward a plan with five pillars for new opportunities for the University. These initiatives include:

- Developing new programs and majors to attract students we currently do not attract. Such possible programs include Engineering and Data analytics
- Growth in areas of opportunity with existing programs such as nursing and STEM programs.
- A renewed commitment to Internationalization
- Expansion of innovative graduate programs including accelerated programs
- Expansion of online/distance education programs that are intentional to reach students who cannot commit to a traditional, residential campus experience. This may include micro-credentialing, upskilling, and life-long learning.

The College of Arts and Sciences will play an exciting and integral role in each of these initiatives. Regarding new programs of engineering, CAS has been a leader on the Strategic Planning committee as so many of

our departments including Physics, Math, and Chemistry along with English and School of Communication will be impacted by the integrated curriculum and growth of students with an engineering program. The university is currently exploring the possibility of a data analytics major and departments such as Mathematics, Geography, Geology and the Environment and Sociology and Anthropology will be heavily involved.

The university is exploring expansion of existing programs, including STEM program, where there is heavy demand and many more applicants than we can accept. This will likely impact the School of Biological Sciences and possibly Chemistry.

Renewal of efforts towards internationalization will include CAS in exciting ways. This will include international students coming to ISU as enrolled students as well as developing partner programs abroad with other institutions. The Department of Mathematics is one example of a CAS unit that has partnerships with two Universities in China. As we become a more globally connected society, efforts to encourage students to “internationalize their major” by picking up proficiency in a foreign language will become even more attractive to students.

Several CAS graduate programs have already initiated accelerated programs such as History and Anthropology and several are developing this. The department of English is in the process of receiving final approval for an exciting Master of Science degree in English Education centering on a social justice curriculum. This exciting new program will also include an accelerated 4+1 path to the degree.

One indelible lesson we have learned from the pandemic is that ISU faculty are exceptional teachers in any modality and as we have

become more confident with online and distance education, we anticipate growth in intentional programs to serve non-traditional populations. The Department of Mathematics is on the horizon of opening an entirely online master's in actuarial sciences next year. The MS in English Education will be a predominately online program as well.

Many of us attended the Provost Office retreat in February to explore exciting opportunities and chart a course forward with renewed possibilities. Several of the working groups will continue to support growth as identified by the Provost including internationalization and new programming. Some of the focus from these exploratory groups will focus more internally on how we "do ISU" and include student success, student affordability, faculty success, increasing efforts to attract diverse faculty and students, revising the general education program, and enhancing our research profile.

Chairs and directors in the College of Arts and Sciences are meeting with Provost staff this semester to develop a department specific plan for student success. The College Council is currently in the process of developing a new advisory council to the College, a Student Advisory Council. This type of body will be an important conduit of information from students to enhance their success in our academic programs and as alumni once they graduate.

Initiatives for faculty success will dove tail with the regular and required 5-year review of the University ASPT policy by the URC. Much of this effort will include developing greater alignment with the policy in Appendix 2 with the university strategic plan, Educate, Connect, Elevate as well as with the Framework for Inclusive Teaching. There will be a new lens to Appendix 2 which will expand how we value the balanced

teacher-scholar model to be more inclusive of emerging areas of scholarship and teaching.

As the University continues the process to develop a new general education program, I urge all in our College to be engaged and invested in this process. As we see the threats to liberal education across our society, there is no time that it has been more important to accentuate the value of a liberal education foundation to all other areas of study.

As the University continues to focus efforts on becoming a more inclusive and diverse environment, many of our departments have developed or are in the process of developing diversity and inclusion committees. The College committed the last two years of professional development to topics of inclusive teaching and through the Growth Change team process we will continue this commitment next year. The College will be eager to hear input from students through the Student Advisory Council on what can be done to create more inclusive and welcoming learning environments.

As we close out this academic year, we acknowledge that we have stood on the shoulders of giants of faculty and staff who preceded us. Sadly, we learned of the passing of some of those who contributed so much in their careers in the College. We would like to start a new tradition of remembering those from the College who have passed.

In March, Patty Foltz, who was the lead staff member in the Department of Psychology, died after a short illness. Patty had devoted over 30 years of service to ISU. She held both bachelor's and master's degrees in music, and she accompanied many students and faculty members at recitals concerts over the years.

In October, Isabel Green, assistant professor of Chemistry, left us. She began her career at ISU in the fall of 2017. Before coming to ISU, she was a process engineer at Intel, having earned her Ph.D. at University of Virginia. In her short time at ISU, she demonstrated her passion for teaching and mentoring students. Always cheerful, she enjoyed hiking and biking in her free time.

Henry Zintambila, who had retired in the summer of 2020 from the Department of Geography, Geology, and the Environment, passed away in December. After emigrating from South Africa, Henry completed his doctorate at the University of Hawaii at Manoa and then arrived at Illinois State to join the faculty in 1983. He loved his students and will be remembered for his kindness.

In February, Neil Skaggs succumbed to a prolonged chronic illness that he faced with courage and perseverance. Neil had already started his career at ISU in the Department of Economics in 1979 prior to receiving his doctorate in economics from Duke University in 1980. A St. Louis Cardinals fan, he also enjoyed participating in softball, vocal music, and 5k races.

March brought with it the passing of Joan Miller, professor emerita of Geography. Born in England, Joan said to New York City in 1957 and began teaching geography at Indiana University. She began teaching at Illinois State Normal University in 1962. Before she retired in 1993, she had taught sixteen different geography courses to 9,014 students.

We lost to emeriti professors from the School of Biological Sciences this spring. Lauren Brown, who enjoyed a long and illustrious career as a professor of vertebrate zoology at ISU—from 1962 until his retirement in 2002. He continued to maintain an office on campus, amassing nearly 200 publications over the course of his career, and was a familiar sight on campus to many until very recently. On April 15th

David Weber passed away. He joined the faculty at Illinois State in 1967 and for 35 years conducted research, taught genetics, and mentored graduate students in the School of Biological Sciences. After his retirement he continued doing research and consulting until 2019.

Diane Urey, Distinguished Professor of Spanish, died on April 14th. For over 30 years she was a member of the faculty at Illinois State University, serving as chair of the department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures during her tenure.

It's hard to lose people that we admire and respect, who are such an integral part of the daily routine of our professional lives. We are grateful for having known them, and we will not soon forget them.

We have certainly been humbled by the events of this past year, but humility can be one of life's great teachers. As we look forward, there is so much excitement of the potential for new work to begin. We have all the potential to rise from the past year stronger, more compassionate, and more hopeful for a bright future.