



COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

Illinois State University

Spring Address – 2015

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, but especially to honor a number of students, staff, and faculty in the College, and to recognize their many contributions to the College and the University.

The College of Arts and Sciences has had another busy and successful year. We recently finished the faculty recruiting process, one of the most exciting annual activities. We are looking forward to welcoming 10 new faculty members to campus next year. Our new colleagues give every indication that they will continue to excel both in the classroom and in their scholarship and creative activity, as have those in our hiring cycles in the recent past. Last year at this time, I discussed (not for the first time) the difficulty of finding adequate resources for our new faculty to start their research agendas. I want to thank the staff in my office, especially Dagmar Persaud and Carrie Wieburg, for the careful management of funds that allows us to put a large portion of our budget into start-up funds. I am also grateful to the department chairs and school directors for using some of their own scarce funds for this purpose, and also for their honest negotiation with our new faculty about their legitimate needs to set up their scholarship. Finally, I thank our new faculty for their good-faith efforts to keep start-up requests at a manageable level. Together, we are building an outstanding faculty in very difficult times, and I thank all of you for your support of that effort.

For the second time in as many years, we have hired one faculty member who will have responsibilities in two units. This year, Women's and Gender Studies has partnered with Sociology and Anthropology. The College will continue to encourage such joint recruitments as a means of increasing interdisciplinary scholarship at ISU. The new colleague we are bringing in next year is Dr. Erin Durban Albrecht, who will be very important to the effort in Women's and Gender Studies to increase its profile in LGBT and Queer Studies. This past Fall, WGS hosted a new course, WGS 292, Introduction to Queer Studies. As a result of the success of that class last semester, an interdisciplinary group of faculty is working to build a more complete curriculum, to lead eventually to a certificate or a minor. I'm very pleased that we have hired a new faculty member to assist, and indeed, to take on a leadership role, in this effort.

I spoke in the Fall about several things that we have done in the College to help support our faculty and students. Some of these concerned travel, including funds for international faculty travel, student team travel, and undergraduate research travel. We do not know from year to year whether we will be able to continue these programs. Some of you may have heard that there is some talk of permanent cuts to our state funding. The



COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

Illinois State University

programs that I have just mentioned are not funded from permanent monies, so it is my hope that there will continue to be funds available for these and other programs. However, if there are cuts to our permanent funds, it's impossible to know at this point how those cuts will trickle down to affect other kinds of funds.

I'm happy to say that some of our support programs are already done on a shoestring. This year, we have continued both of our two Faculty Professional Development series, one for new faculty and one for mid-career faculty. The New Faculty Series presents topics of interest to our newest colleagues, such as "The First-year Experience," "Annual Evaluations," and the especially popular "Promotion and Tenure." For our post-tenure faculty, we present topics such as "Building Interdisciplinary Research Teams" and "So You Want to be a Department Chair." These series have been successful, as measured by return traffic, and we will continue to offer them in the future. Last year, Carrie organized the first lead-staff development retreat. This, too, was very well received, and she will be repeating that again this year.

We continue to try to strengthen our outreach efforts, and to take the excellent work that is done in the College to the larger community. Toward this end, a year ago we started Main Street College, a series of lectures given by scholars in the College to present their research to an interested community audience. Debbie Fox has added this event to her already-full schedule of outreach activities, and it has been very successful. Next Monday, April 13, Dr. Shawn Hitchcock, of the Department of Chemistry, will present "Public Health Concerns in Drugs, Foods, and Vaccines: Where are We Now?" These events have been very popular in the past, and have brought in a substantial audience, including many from outside of ISU. Dr. Hitchcock will speak at the Alumni Center at 7:00 P.M. on Monday, and although we intend for this series to bring in a community audience, the campus is of course invited also.

Last year, we revived the College Administrative Fellows program, which we have continued this year. This semester, we have two fellows – Laura Vogel of the School of Biological Sciences, and Gina Hunter of Sociology and Anthropology. Laura is working closely with Associate Dean Joe Blaney on issues having to do with animal care facilities, and Gina is working with the departments and schools to increase participation in Study Abroad among students in the College.

I cannot make a presentation like this without bragging about the productivity of our faculty and students. The College of Arts and Sciences is home to nearly 5,000 undergraduate students. Last year, we conferred 1,455 undergraduate degrees, 267 Masters, and 38 doctoral degrees. We generated over 275,000 credit hours. Managing a student body of this size can take quite an effort, and we are all grateful to Associate Dean Sally Parry for her tireless work on behalf of undergraduate education in the College, and indeed the University. Our faculty are also very productive in their scholarly



COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

Illinois State University

activity. In 2015, CAS faculty authored 20 books and monographs, eight edited books, 13 textbooks, 537 journal articles and book chapters, 44 creative works, and 848 conference presentations. A statistic that I am especially proud of shows the level of engagement of our students with the research enterprise. In 2015, 25% of the publications, and 32% of the conference presentations coming out of units in the College of Arts and Sciences had student co-authors. Our departments and schools are also home to 108 editors, associate editors, or editorial board members of national and international journals. Our faculty generated around \$5.8M from 91 awarded grants, and we had three new inductees into the Million Dollar Club. Craig Gatto was named a University Professor.

Again this year, we had eight Bone Scholars. In addition, our competitive student teams did very well again this year. The Solar Car Team competed in an international competition in Abu Dhabi, and the Mock Trial team again has been very competitive in regional and national tournaments. Our Model U.N. team was honored this year as a Team of Distinction.

We have had a very successful year in fundraising. For the third year in a row, we have raised over \$2M in charitable gifts. In each of the last four years, there has been a steady increase in annual giving as well. Each year the number of annual-giving donors increases, as does the amount of money raised. We have three new endowed scholarships in the College. I am especially pleased to announce that a fund that the College set up two years ago, the World Wide Campus Fund, received a substantial gift a few weeks ago. The purpose of this fund will be to provide financial assistance for students who want to study internationally but need some financial help to do so. It was a long way from being endowed until it received a \$30,000 gift in February. This amount will only allow us to provide a single modest award in the coming year, but I hope that this fund will continue to grow to allow larger awards to more students. Stephanie Sellers, our Director of Development, and I will travel to Washington DC and California this summer to visit donors and friends, as well as making shorter trips to Chicago and St. Louis. Stephanie is constantly on the lookout for new prospects, and takes very good care of our donors.

Illinois State continues to be in a state of transition. We are approaching the end of President Dietz' first full year as President. A new Provost is in place, and there will be a second vice president named this year. Then there will be two vice president searches next year. These transitions take place at a time when universities are expecting to receive lower levels of funding than we have seen in some time. This has engendered a certain level of anxiety on university campuses all over the country. In times like these, it is not uncommon for colleges of arts and sciences to feel especially under siege. Tuition increases are attributed to lazy faculty, administrative bloat, and exorbitant salaries for faculty, administrators, or both. We hear cries to eliminate those majors that don't "lead to jobs," and most of those majors are identified in the arts and sciences. The Humanities are hit especially hard with this. But how do we then explain the millions of gainfully



COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

Illinois State University

employed arts and sciences graduates? What the critics mean is that the major should lead in a simple linear fashion to a job in that discipline. If a degree in Philosophy does not lead to a job called "Philosopher," then it didn't lead to a job. Never mind that the philosophy major is the CEO of a Fortune-500 company. He or she is not a philosopher, and therefore the major made no contribution to his or her future. I don't know very many adults who could draw a simple line between their education and their employment status twenty years later, but that is what universities are being asked to do. Last week, I had the pleasure of dining with a guest of the College of Business -- Bill Allison, an alumnus who is a principal with Deloitte Consulting. Provost Krejci was there, and asked him what he looked for in prospective employees. He didn't reply by naming one or more majors, nor did he describe a particular set of skills. He said he looks for "the best mental athlete." This is the employee who is able to understand the context in which she or he is working, and adapt to that context; a person with the cognitive flexibility to read a situation and respond accordingly. He mentioned critical thinking and communication skills. In other words, he listed those attributes that every college of arts and sciences nurtures in its students. The breadth that our students are exposed to, not just in content but also in method, prepares students to look at a problem from multiple angles, and understand multiple solutions.

This, unfortunately, will be a hard conversation to change, as we are arguing with people some of whose objection to higher education today is based in ideology rather than reason. There seems to be a deep resentment and suspicion of the life of the mind that is the very reason for our existence. Nevertheless, the argument must be made. Somehow, we must reestablish the idea, once accepted widely by leaders of every political stripe, that education is not simply a means to a job, but the means to a healthy democratic society. The very nature of the arts and sciences is the best argument we have.