

TO: Faculty Senate

FROM: Michelle Maldonado, Ph.D.
Provost/Senior VPAA

DATE: September 1, 2023

SUBJECT: Provost Report for September 8, 2023

Academic Planning Priorities 2023-2024

Strategic Enrollment: Implement Environmental Scan and New Building Programming

We will implement our environmental scan considering shifting realities within higher education, an increased focus on non-traditional learning, partnerships, innovative programs, and a desire to create a more transfer-friendly culture at the University. In addition, we will continue discussions on and planning of the Workforce Development, Applied Research, and Outreach Center in Health, Science and Cyber Security.

- Environmental scan
- Transfer Students
- New building
- Explore partnerships in collaboration with President's Office

Assessment of Academic Affairs

We will assess centralized University-wide academic initiatives within the Provost's Office in view of the evaluation of our retention efforts, academic support, and the current enrollment and demographic landscape of higher education. This academic year we will focus on graduate education, first generation and historically underrepresented students, and continued work on current student retention initiatives. With the establishment of the Office of Student Support and Success and the convening of a two-year taskforce to focus on our first-year experience, we will continue to sharpen our efforts to support student success.

- Online tutoring pilot in Math 005
- Emphasis on Student Success through restructuring of OSSS
- Stronger faculty development through CTE
- FYE taskforce and review of Office of Retention

Highlight the Distinctiveness of our Jesuit Liberal Arts Education

We will continue our University's commitment to *Laudato Si'* as an expression of our Catholic and Jesuit educational mission. We will also continue an emphasis on student wellness and mental health as they discern their academic vocation and professional journey.

- Laudato Si' launch September 19
- Ecological Education
- Exploring JED training for faculty

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

We will launch the Ethics Across the Curriculum Initiative which will focus on integrating both content-related and pedagogical strategies that focus on the practical application of ethical principles within the Jesuit tradition in an inter-disciplinary manner. In addition, we will continue to support the implementation of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Strategic Plan in collaboration with the Council on Diversity and Inclusion, as well as distinctive initiatives within our Schools/Colleges and the Library.

- Ethics Across the Curriculum Pedagogical Grants

- DEI: Latinx student population
- Adjunct faculty onboarding project

Foster a Cohesive Vision of the University

We will collaborate with deans to foster a stronger culture of shared governance at the University. We will support the professional development of faculty in their research and teaching through cross-disciplinary initiatives that include the formation of the Center for Teaching Excellence, the creation of a targeted budget in each School/College to support faculty research, and continued funding through the Clavius.

- Townhall twice a semester to improve communication between faculty and administration
- Monthly breakfasts with the faculty: President and Provost
- Monthly Provost communications
- Management and Communication training through HR

Class of 2027

We welcomed nearly 1,500 incoming students for the fall semester. More than 1,035 members are undergraduate students which is one of the largest in our history. In addition, nearly 60 transfer students and 350 graduate students, both on-line and on-campus were welcomed. We also welcomed the largest degree seeking, graduate international student cohort in the last 15 years, with more than 120 new graduate degree-seeking international students starting this fall. The incoming graduate students represent several states and foreign countries, including the Bahamas, Canada, Cayman Islands, China, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Philippines, Saudi Arabia and Vietnam.

Graduate Academic & Student Services

One hundred seventy-two new graduate students attended the New Graduate Student Orientation held on August 24th. Resources from around campus spoke about how their areas serve our students (library, bursar, financial aid, registrar's office, OSSS, OED, university policy, student life, career development and IT). After the orientation, students met with their program directors to discuss expectations and policies of their departments, followed by a graduate student social, where about 125 new graduate students attended.

Administrative Searches

The University has secured the search firm, Isaacson, Miller, to conduct the search for the College of Arts and Sciences Dean. This search firm has extensive experience working with Catholic and Jesuit Institutions.

The Search Committee membership is:

- Jean Harris, Ph.D., Professor, Political Science
- Jerry Muir, Ph.D., Professor, Mathematics
- Michael Jenkins, Ph.D., Professor, Criminal Justice, Cybersecurity & Sociology
- Theresa Kurilla, Senior Manager ORSSP
- George Aulisio, Dean of the Weinberg Memorial Library
- Sarah Kenehan, Executive Director of the Slattery Center for the Ignatian Humanities
- Thomas Elias, Senior, Philosophy Major

Office of Student Support and Success and International Student and Scholar Services

We are pleased to announce that three new staff members have joined Academic Affairs. Mr. Matthew Smith is the Manager of the Office of Student Support and Success (OSSS). Matt's career in education began with acceptance into the New York City Teaching Fellows where he earned his master's degree in Special Education at Hunter College. He spent more than a decade teaching at the high school level, and

working as the transition coordinator for the NYC Department of Education. He transitioned into higher education, working at Penn State-Scranton, where he served as the Disability and Learning Services Specialist.

Mr. Stanton Estwick is a Student Success Specialist within OSSS. Stanton received a bachelor's degree from the College of Staten Island and his master's degree from Baruch College. He worked as the Assistant Director of Transfer at St. Peter's University of Jersey City, advising and assisting student with their transfer credits, choice of major, and career plans. At his most recent position at East Stroudsburg University, Stanton worked to build a stronger and more efficient transfer process with other colleges, mentored incoming transfer students, and worked with a diverse population of student. Stanton is a doctoral candidate in Higher Education and Leadership Program at Johns Hopkins University.

Mr. Crystal Cool, is the Manager of the International Student and Scholar Services. She earned a bachelor's degree in International Studies and studied abroad in Nara, Japan for a year. Crystal earned an M.Ed. from Bloomsburg University and has worked in International Student and Scholar Services for over 10 years providing support services for international students at Wilkes University.

Planning, Institutional Effectiveness, and Institutional Accreditation

As we begin preparation for our next strategic plan, anticipated to launch in fall 2025, University-wide efforts to implement our 2020 Strategic Plan continue. This fall, the Office of Planning & Institutional Effectiveness will be updating strategic plan progress reporting materials to document additional outcomes, which, together with tracking and reporting of divisional and college-wide priorities, will continue to paint the picture of the breadth and depth of the plan's impact. It will also help to identify areas of work that we wish to complete before the current plan concludes. Board members can expect to hear more throughout the fall and spring on both current plan initiatives and outcomes, and preparations for Strategic Plan 2025.

Following from robust discussion of last year's National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) survey reporting, we will be exploring additional survey opportunities to gather information and data about the student experience. The University has been invited to participate in a unique survey opportunity sponsored by the Lilly Fellows Program in association with the Springtide Research Institute. This survey, open only to Lilly Network institutions, gathers information about students' spiritual and intellectual development during their college years. This survey administration is being planned for early fall.

Later this semester, undergraduate students and members of the faculty and staff will receive invitations to take part in the Noel Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI) and Institutional Priorities (IPS) surveys. The SSI, which will be sent to all undergraduate students, gathers information about student expectations and satisfaction with a variety of academic and student life topics. The IPS survey is sent to faculty and staff, and gathers their own perceptions of the student experience with these same items. Results identify areas of strength and challenge, as well as potential gaps between student and faculty/staff perceptions.

Analysis of both the Noel Levitz and Lilly surveys will provide important data related to our mission and strategic goals.

Fulbright Awards

I am pleased to report that two students were awarded Fulbright Student Scholarships.

- Elise Westhafer graduated, summa cum laude in 2023 with a bachelor's degree in neuroscience and a minor in philosophy. She received a Fulbright Award to Slovenia where she will conduct research focusing on neurotransmitters in the aging brain at the University of Ljubljana.

- Isaiah Livelsberger graduated, summa cum laude in 2022 with a bachelor’s degree in both international studies and philosophy, a minor in Spanish, and a concentration in Latin American studies. He received a Fulbright Award to Guatemala where he will study judicial reform in Guatemala by carrying out research at Rafael Landivar University and at the Association for Research and Social Studies in Guatemala City.

New Faculty

Please join me in welcoming our new faculty:

Name	Rank	Department
Holly Avella	Visiting Assistant Professor	Communication & Media
Patrick Beldio	Lecturer	Theology/Religious Studies
Michele Boland	Faculty Specialist	Nursing
Melanie Caughey	Assistant Professor	Education
Laura Chapman	Assistant Professor	Health & Human Performance
Michael Crowell	Associate Professor	Physical Therapy
Krisy Elrod	Lecturer	Counseling & Human Services
Mark Fenner	Assistant Professor	Computing Sciences
Kelly Filchner	Assistant Professor	Nursing
Carrie Griffiths	Faculty Specialist	Occupational Therapy
Anna Grippi	Lecturer	Nursing
Michael Hague	Assistant Professor	Biology
Matthew Hale	Visiting Assistant Professor	Theology/Religious Studies
Samantha Herrick	Associate Professor	Counseling & Human Services
Gen Liu	Assistant Professor	Physics & Engineering
Christiane McDonald	Faculty Specialist	Health & Human Performance
Farshad Merrikh-Bayat	Assistant Professor	Physics & Engineering
Katherine Stefanelli	Assistant Professor	Counseling & Human Services
Amy Szydlowski	Faculty Specialist	Health Administration & Human Resources
Megan Whitbeck	Assistant Professor	Counseling & Human Services
Katorah Williams	Assistant Professor	Criminal Justice, Cybersecurity & Sociology
Elin Woods	Assistant Professor	Library

In addition to the new faculty, 39 Faculty Specialist contracts were renewed.

Fulbright Scholars

We have five Fulbright foreign language teaching assistants taking courses and teaching their native languages:

- Ms. Sheila B. Mignolet, Argentina

- Mr. Joshua Hartmann, Germany
- Ms. Héloïse C. Vérissi, France
- Ms. Rahma Baklouti, Tunisia

Additionally, we are pleased to have a Visiting Instructor from Japan, Ms. Naoko Omori.

Sabbaticals

The Faculty Research Committee approved the following sabbaticals:

Fall

Sean Brennan
 Ahmed Gomaa
 Lisa Lesneski
 Sylvia Orner (pre-tenure)
 Amelia Randich (pre-tenure)
 Marc Seid
 Argyrios Varonides

Spring

Roxanna Curiel (pre-tenure)
 Ashley Driver (pre-tenure)
 Christopher Howey
 Rose Sebastianelli
 Marc Shapiro

Intersession/Summer 2024

Donna Witek

Academic Year

Marzia Caporale
 Brigid Frein
 Christian Krokus
 Charles Pinches

Center for Teaching Excellence

Tara Hamilton-Fay, CTE Coordinator, surveyed all faculty to see what types of pedagogical development opportunities they were interested in. This fall, CTE is offering the following presentations:

- Guide for program learning outcomes (PLO) assessment
- Practical guides for assessment and report writing with special emphasis on GE
- Making your Brightspace course accessible
- Mental Health and Our Students
- Race and Ethnicity Awareness training

Ignatian Values in Action Lecture

Tim Muldoon, “Living Against the Grain,” September 21, 7:30pm, Byron Recreational Complex

Slattery Center for the Ignatian Humanities: Fall Schedule

Sept 28 - Fr. Clooney Lecture, 5:00-6:30PM, Moskovitz Theater

Fr. Clooney will discuss his work in Comparative Theology. In particular, he will talk about: “What is Comparative Theology? How is it humanities? How is it Jesuit? How is it Catholic? Why do you (Fr. Clooney) do it, and how have you found that God meets you in this work?”

Oct 11 – Kevin Soucie – “Chanteur of French Songs” 6:00-7:00PM, Slattery Center

With guitar in tow, Kevin Soucie has been singing French songs since his college days in Montreal. What began as a hobby, has developed into a passion for the French chanson.

Oct 12 – J.R. McNeil Lecture, “Bison Hide, Elephant Tusk, and Sperm Whale Oil: The Industrial Revolution and the ‘Late Holocene Depletions’ ca. 1800-1920” Humanities Forum Event, 5:30-7:00PM, LSC 133

Part of the larger theme of Global Environmental History of the Industrial Revolution, this lecture concerns the ecological implications of ramping up the supply of fibers, minerals, lubricants, dyestuffs, and several other ingredients of industrialization, mainly in the 19th century. British and American industrialization required cotton, wool, lead, copper, whale oil, palm oil, bison hide, elephant ivory, gutta percha among other items, most of which came from afar. Cheap coal-fired transport made it feasible to harvest, hunt, gather, collect these ingredients, and ship them to industrial centers. This focuses on the impacts on three megafauna species of industrial demand for leather belting, ivory keyboards, and sperm whale oil for machine lubrication and illumination. Bison, elephants, and sperm whales as keystone species had for millennia helped to regulate ecology on large grasslands or in the deep oceans, but in the 19th century their populations fell sharply, reducing their effectiveness.

Oct 17 – Dale Jamieson, Myers Distinguished Visiting Fellowship in the Humanities and Civic Engagement, 5:30-7:30PM, Brennan 509

The Sondra and Morey Myers Distinguished Visiting Fellowship in the Humanities and Civic Engagement advances the University's efforts to bring renowned scholars, artists, and thinkers to Scranton to share their work and enrich cultural and civic activity at the University and in Scranton. This year, we welcome Dr. Dale Jamieson, a scholar of environmental ethics and animal rights, and an expert on contemporary climate change discourse.

Oct 19 – Author Patricia Leavy Lecture and Book Signing, Humanities Forum Event, 5:00-7:00PM, Brennan 509

Hollyland follows the love story between Dee Schwartz, a writer and arts researcher, and Ryder Field, a famous actor descended from Hollywood royalty. Bonded by the loss of their mothers and their passion for the arts, the two embark on a love story that explores their search for magic—or “gold dust”—in their lives. Patricia Leavy wove her 20 years of experience as an arts researcher into the novel.

Nov 2 – Dean Zimmerman “Explaining the Cosmos: Can the Philosopher Help?” Humanities Forum Event, 4:00-5:30PM, Brennan 228

Why is there anything at all, and why a cosmos even remotely like ours? Grand questions like these never cease to generate wonder — and, sometimes, confusion. Answers to them offered by popular science and popular religion generally prove to be a mixed bag. Recently, scientists and popularizers of science have drawn our attention to wondrous discoveries about the shape of the cosmos, and suggestive new theories about the universe’s origins; while religious apologists have revived some ancient but still appealing arguments for the existence of God. But these attempts to address the big questions of “life, the universe, and everything” often gloss over subtleties that turn out to be important. Sometimes they dress up a philosophical confusion in flashy rhetoric. Philosophers can help uncover these subtleties and confusions, even if we can do no better in providing universally satisfying answers to these questions.

Nov 10 – Nick Ripatrazone “*The Habit of Poetry: The Literary Lives of Nuns in Mid-century America*” Humanities Forum Event, 12:00-1:30PM, Brennan 509

On Friday, November 10 at 12 p.m., the Gail and Francis Slattery Center for Ignatian Humanities welcomes Nick Ripatrazone to give a talk entitled “*The Habit of Poetry: The Literary Lives of Nuns in Mid-century America*.” Ripatrazone’s most recent book, *The Habit of Poetry: The Literary Lives of Nuns in Mid-century America*, is a work of literary recovery, revisiting the lives of nuns whose poetry was published and acclaimed in secular venues in the twentieth century, though they’re far less well-known than the work of priests. As Ripatrazone says, “[t]he literary creations of poetic priests like Gerard Manley Hopkins, S.J., and Robert Southwell, S.J. have been both a blessing and a burden—creating the sense that male clergy alone have written substantial work.” *The Habit of Poetry* traces a “mid-

20th century renaissance by nun poets,” which, as Ripatrazone argues, is “more than a literary footnote; it is a case study in how women negotiate tradition and individual creativity.”

Updates

- The College of Arts and Sciences has created a new undergraduate research fund to support CAS students. This fund will assist student across the college, both in their research efforts and supporting presentation of their work at academic conferences.
- The University has finalized a direct admissions agreement with Seton Hall University School of Law that will allow Scranton students who meet program requirements to be eligible for admission to the prestigious law school after just three years at Scranton.
- The College of Arts and Sciences welcomed Pamela Harper who will serve as the point of contact for all incoming and first-year pre-health students.
- The CAS Dean’s Office will host a faculty development workshop to respond to the development of AI writing generative programs like ChatGPT in September. This workshop is designed to assist faculty work with and through AI writing generative programs.
- The Pro Deo Room in the Library was renovated to improve the student computer lab and Bring Your Own Device Space and the Guest Computing Area.
- A new integrated discovery search that combines print materials with the library’s vast collection of electronic resources has been implemented. The new interface has been branded as Royal Search. The Library faculty will host workshops for interested users throughout the semester and on demand.
- A new agreement with the Everhart Museum has provided the library with lendable Museum Passes. The passes allow up to 25 students, staff, or faculty of The University to enter the Everhart Museum free of charge.
- The Jay Nathan, Ph.D., Visiting Scholar series will host an event on Denmark: History, Culture, Economy on October 26, 2023. The Ambassador of Denmark Stig Piras, Cultural Advisor Frederikke Kristiansen, and a Denmark Jazz Duo will be our distinguished guests.
- The Fall 2023 Schemel Forum schedule has been released. All regular Schemel Forum events are free and open to University of Scranton students, staff, and faculty, as well as students, staff, and faculty of the Geisinger Commonwealth School of Medicine. Events can be found at www.scranton.edu/schemelforum.
- Among many distinguished guests, we are pleased to host Tracie D. Hall, Executive Director of the American Library Association, for a talk on Censorship and Book Banning in the United States. Executive Director Hall, recently named a TIME 100 Most Influential People of 2023 and Forbes Magazine Top 50 over 50 list, will join us on Monday, October 30, 2023.