

TO: Faculty Senate

FROM: Tracy M. Stewart, Ph.D.
Interim Provost/Senior VPAA

DATE: February 7, 2025

SUBJECT: Academic Affairs Report for February 2025

1. Faculty Development

Summer Grants

Call for proposals for Clavius and Summer grants were sent out in January. Applications should be submitted electronically to provost@scranton.edu or by campus mail to the Associate Provost's Office no later than March 10th and March 7th respectively.

Provost Faculty Enhancement Awards

A request for nominations for the Provost Enhancement Awards was sent to the deans and department chairs. The deadline for nominations is March 11, 2025, and should sent to provost@scranton.edu or by campus mail to the Associate Provost's Office.

2. Faculty Searches

Faculty searches continue into the spring semester. To date we have hired four new faculty.

Margaret Lakomy	Visiting Assistant Professor	Chemistry
Nathan Henceroth	Assistant Professor	Political Science
Marlon Toro-Alvarez	Assistant Professor	Criminal Justice, Cybersecurity & Sociology
Swathi Ragulan	Assistant Professor	Counseling & Human Services

3. Strategic Planning Update

The University Planning Committee continues its work in steering the process to develop our next University wide strategic plan. This includes reflecting on input and suggestions from members of the faculty, staff, and student body, members of our Board of Trustees and Alumni Society, and other campus groups over the last several semesters.

This input tells us several things. First, members of the University community are deeply committed to our University and its success, and are looking for a fresh, forward thinking shared vision for the future. In addition to the wide array of potential strategic directions we must discern amongst for our next strategic plan, input also highlights the sustained importance of several elements of our [current strategic plan](#). Following UPC reflection on this input,

- We will augment the planning process to take time to reflect on our [current vision statement](#), and develop a new one. This will include review of information shared from community input so far, including through submissions to the fall 2024 [Shared Vision: Community Input](#)

[Survey](#). This survey link remains open; if you have not already done so, please share your thoughts on this topic, and encourage others to do so as well.

- As it works through the community input and emerging potential strategic directions gathered so far, UPC will identify items that connect closely to our current strategic plan, and other high level planning activities – including strategic enrollment, DEI, and Laudato Si - to highlight short term priorities to work on as the current strategic plan concludes this year. Rather than wrap up the current plan this May, we will continue the plan through fall 2025.
- Work will continue building the new strategic plan through the spring and summer, with plans to share draft materials with the University community in early fall. Faculty should watch for additional communications and opportunities to offer feedback throughout this process.

Senate UPC representatives are encouraged to continue sharing input, or questions/concerns, from their constituent groups with the UPC. More information about the strategic planning process is available on the [Strategic Planning 2025](#) web site. Please reach out to Kate Yerkes with any questions or suggestions you may have.

4. Graduate Studies

- *New On-Campus Graduate Student Orientation* was held on campus on January 21 for all new campus-based graduate students. Twenty-seven domestic and international students attended. Presentations were given by the following offices: Graduate Academic and Student Services, Bursar, Student Life, Library, Information Technology, Office of Mission and Ministry, Office of Equity and Diversity, Registrar, Career Development, Student Support and Success, Financial Aid, University Police and Parking.
- *New Online Graduate Student Orientation* was held virtually on January 23 for all new online graduate students. We had 19 students attend.
- *Spring 2025 Graduate Assistant Orientation* was held on January 16th.
- *Graduate Assistant Applications* are now open for the 2025-2026 academic year - students need to apply by March 1 and faculty are requested to submit their hires by May 1. As of today, we have 193 applicants. Four information sessions are scheduled in February.
- *Online Course Migration* - One hundred percent of Intersession and spring courses have been migrated to our Brightspace Learning Management System. Currently, 95% are approved by faculty, and 5% are being reviewed for spring H2.

5. OSSS/CTE Updates

CTE Programming for Spring 2025 Sessions for Faculty

- Talking About Teaching: Supporting Neurodiverse Students in the Classroom
- The Autism Spectrum On-campus
- Talking About Teaching: AI In Your Classroom
- Talking About Teaching: Ignatian Pedagogy
- Safe Zone Training

CTE is heavily involved in the conversion of 110+ Wiley/Risepoint online courses to Brightspace and development of ABA, NURS, SLP online courses and programs. CTE serves as the technical and instructional “lead” for our instructors and technical liaison for Collegis contractors.

Large increases in student accommodations have necessitated continuous improvement to our CTE/OSSS testing initiatives and modifications to Accommodate and Brightspace. Support and training for Brightspace is ongoing and interest is brisk.

Ten workshops were held on tips and tools for effective pedagogy in Brightspace. Separate orientation presentations were held in Zoom for students and instructors transitioning from Wiley/Risepoint to Brightspace for our fully online master's programs. Attendance by students was high.

Academic Integrity Tutorial Statistic for Fall 2024

- 789 of 856 Freshmen completed, a 92.2% completion rate

Course Evaluation Statistics for Fall 2024 (Evaluations Completed)

- First Years = 76.4%
- Sophomores = 85.3%
- Juniors = 88.9%
- Seniors = 88.6%
- Graduate = 82.0%
- Overall = 83.4%
- Percent of course evaluations with student comments = 67%
- Mean number of words per eval with comments = 57

The CTE, in conjunction with the Course Evaluation Committee of the Faculty Senate will conduct an investigation to assess whether there is gender bias in student course evaluations.

The OSSS is collaborating with The Center for Career Development on a 4-part workshop series specifically for students registered with disability services.

- Session 3 & 4: Interview Skills Part 1 & 2 SP 25

OSSS Fall 2024 Data		Year to Year Comparison
General Subject Tutoring Sessions	Clients: 761, Total Sessions: 5075	Fall 2023: 5120
Writing Center Consultations Clients:	Clients: 337, Total consultations 954	Fall 2023: 1044
Student Success Specialist Gonzaga + AP	Total meetings: 98	Fall 2023: 133
New Disability Requests	Total Sessions: 899	Fall 2023: 667
Total Registered w/Disability Services ADA + AP Requests	Total: 140 (17% of 1 st yr. students)	Total: 140 (14%)
Disability Specialist Coaching	Total Sessions: 452	Fall 2023: Comparison 479
Exams Proctored	Total: 2018	Fall 2023: Comparison 465

Note-Takers: Students/Hired/Courses	175 Students, 205 hired, 408 courses	Fall 2023: 1800
OSSS Workshops	21 workshops, 365 impressions	100 students, 121 hired, 315 courses

6. Global Initiatives

Spring 2025 International Students		
Total students and scholars enrolled and on Optional Practical Training:		309
Total student and scholars enrolled Spring 2025:		220
Total New Student and Scholars Spring Enrollment:		28
Students actively enrolled are from:		
Bangladesh (1)	Ghana (2)	Saudi Arabia (9)
Burma/Myanmar (1)	India (169)	Spain (1)
Canada (1)	Ireland (3)	Taiwan (3)
Cayman Islands (1)	Kenya (1)	Tunisia (1)
China (2)	Mexico (2)	The Bahamas (1)
Dominican Republic (2)	Nepal (1)	Ukraine (1)
France (1)	Pakistan (2)	Vietnam (2)
Germany (1)	Philippines (3)	Venezuela (1)
Visiting Scholars/Professors		
Taiwan (1)	Japan (1)	Kazakhstan (1)
Other things of note: 88 currently participating in Pre-Completion or Post-Completion Optional Practical Training (OPT) as of February 5 th .		

Faculty-led Study Abroad in Intersession 2025 included			
Country	Faculty	Course	Students
South Africa	Dr. Marc Seid Dr. Gary Kwiecinski	Biology 296: Tropical Ecology	9
Ireland	Fr. Daniel Sweeney	International Studies 284: Global Ireland	22
Ireland	Dr. Julie Murphy Dr. Cristen Walker	Nursing 496 – Healthcare Systems and Nursing Practice Abroad	12
Uganda	Dr. Cyrus Olsen Dr. Charlie Pinches	Theology/Religious Studies – Christianity in Africa	13

Interession 2025 Semester Study Abroad Students

- In January Interession, we sent 23 students to study abroad on partner programs
- The students' host university sites included Rome (7 students); London (1); Berlin (1); Seville (3); Tokyo (1); and Dingle (10).

Spring 2025 Semester Study Abroad Students

- In the Spring 2025 semester, we have 32 students studying abroad.
- The students' host university sites include Australia (2 students); Barcelona (4); Lisbon (3); Tokyo (1); Kyoto (1); Madrid (2); Florence (6); Rome (3); Galway (2); London (1); Edinburgh (2); and Dingle (5).

Fulbright U.S. Student Program

- Both of our 2025-26 Fulbright applicants have been selected as semi-finalists. They have applied for Study/Research in Norway, and for an English Teaching Assistantship in Taiwan. Fulbright announced the semi-finalists at the end of January. They typically announce the recipients in April.
- Our two 2024-25 winners are completing their Fulbright year abroad. Ms. Shelby Traver is in Rwanda for Study/Research on "The Secondary Effects of the Rwandan Gender Quota on the Bureaucracy and Legislative Staff" and Ms. Adrian Laudani is in Spain as an English Teaching Assistant in Málaga.

7. Curriculum Updates

Program Change

	Date Posted
Physics	11/20/24
Business Administration – MBA Enterprise Resource Planning	12/6/24
SCM MBA Specialization	12/6/24
Peace and Justice Concentration	12/6/24
Legal Studies	12/6/24
Mathematical Science's Actuarial Science	1/31/25
Environmental & Sustainability Studies Concentration	1/31/25
Accelerated Cybercrime Investigation and Cybersecurity	1/31/25

New Program

Kinesiology Concentration	9/20/24
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Course Change

PHYS 493: Research Seminar I	11/20/24
PHYS 494: Research Seminar II	11/20/24
MKT 370: Digital Marketing	12/4/24
BIOL/NEUR 357: Developmental Neuroscience	12/6/24
ME 240: Introduction to Mechanical Engineering	12/6/24
MKT 564: Consumer Behavior	12/13/25
MATH 204: Introduction to Statistics	1/31/25

BIOL 350: Cell Biology	1/31/25
PSIO 320: Cellular & Integrative Physiology	1/31/25
CYBR 360: Ethical Hacking	1/31/25

New Course

PHYS 392: Foundations of Research	1/14/25
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8. Updates:

- **Master of Science in Nursing with Psychiatric Mental Health**

The Nursing Department is currently accepting applications for fall 2025 admission to the online Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) with Psychiatric Mental Health (PMH) Nurse Practitioner Specialization and the Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner Specialization.

These programs meet the societal need for psychiatric mental health services across the United States. Strong national job growth for PMHNPS is predicted. Regional needs for psychiatric mental health nurse practitioners is similarly strong. The nursing profession's seminal documents support the need for PMHNPs with the competencies achieved by the completion of this specialization in order to meet the profession's obligations to society.

- **Grad HUB in MGH 152**

The LCHS has established a study room/lounge area in 152 McGurkin Hall that is exclusively for use by graduate students. The room is furnished with both individual and group seating including: rearrangeable soft seating with associated worktables; 2- and 4-person round study tables; a high-top table with 3 individual stools; and a 10-person worktable with electrical connections for device charging. There are two additional device charging towers, and 2 wall mounted dry erase boards and a movable dry erase board. There is an LCD panel for the display of graduate-student specific messaging (managed by the Director of Graduate Academic Services) so that students can be made aware of various graduate-specific announcements and opportunities on campus. The doors to the Grad HUB are controlled access and swipe-key access is given to all enrolled graduate students from 7 am-11 pm.

- The second cohort (of 13 students) at the Dallas SCI graduated on December 18th, 2024. Several of the graduates have applied to Villanova's B.A. program at SCI. The third cohort at Dallas SCI began this January with several days of orientation and now are taking classes in World History, Bible, and Sociology. Meanwhile, several members of CAS will be guest lecturing at Waymart SCI this semester, including Dean Barry, as well as Drs. Mike Hague (Biology) and Megan Heeder (Theology/Religious Studies).
- Dean Barry and Associate Dean Dzurec have worked with humanities representatives during the fall through spring semester to compile a mission and purpose for a Humanities Commons, defining how it will intersect with the Slattery Center and engage with the university and community beyond campus. Also, the group has identified how best to configure the space to support the work of the Commons, along with the digital humanities software and hardware. A space on campus is in the process of being identified and then estimates for an architectural plan will occur.

- Ethics Across the Curriculum (EATC) donor-funded initiative is in year 2 of a 3-year plan. A call for individual course development grants has an upcoming deadline of March 3, 2025. Program-level grants are also being reviewed on an ongoing basis. To date, 13 faculty from across the 3 colleges/schools completed the EATC Faculty Development workshop, in which they worked on integrating ethics and ethical decision-making into their courses. This year, EATC has funded several FYS-related events, including a very well-attended lunch and refugee panel, which connected to this year's Royal Read, a European Union simulation, EU simulation, a portions of a faculty-led study tour to Uganda for Dr. Jenny Whittaker, a Business Honors speaker series, an AI and Emerging Technology curriculum team that is researching possibilities to bring a program to Scranton that would have a strong ethical component, and a Sustainability Faculty Development workshop that will help faculty from across the disciplines incorporate issues of sustainability into their courses (this Summer).
- The CAS Advising Center administered a survey to all first-year students during Fall 2024 semester. Across the entire semester, the advisors had 1392 student appointments from 49 different majors. 67% of those appointments were walk-in and 32% were scheduled in advance. The majority of the students went to the advising center 2x (52%) or 3-4 times (33%). Overall, the quality of CAS advising reflects our mission, in that 98% said “advisor communicates with them in an inclusive and respectful manner” and 96% said that their “advisor made an effort to get to know them on an individual basis.”
- The Office of Health Professions unexpectedly had their part-time administrative assistant leave the university in December. A search for a full-time administrative assistant has been posted with hopes of filling the position as soon as possible. Also, the search for the permanent Pre-Health Director is underway with the goal of having a permanent person in place by mid-summer. We are grateful to Interim Director, Dr. Maria Squire, Pam Harper (Pre-Health Professional Advisor) and Dr. Mike Fennie (Pre-Health Faculty Advisor) for their work overall, and particularly during this time of transition.
- The second round of applications for undergraduate student research occurred in December. The number of student applications more than doubled from the October deadline; as a result, the amount of funding available to provide each student was greatly reduced. Plans are underway to partner with advancement to secure more funds for a clear student need moving forward.
- A search has been posted for a reconfigured CAS Associate Dean position with a priority application deadline of 2/21/25. Elections are underway by the Faculty, Staff, and Student Senate for their respective representatives for the search committee. The position has expanded duties, including an emphasis on data analytics and building partnerships. The search has been posted internally, but if needed will become an external search with the selected candidate beginning in mid-July.
- Steven J. Szydlowski, DHA '98, G'00, G'01, professor and chair of the Department of Health Administration and Human Resources, was selected as the 2025 Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Management Education (CAHME)/Dolores Clement Fellow of the Year. The award recognizes a CAHME fellow who has a history of service and helping programs to succeed and a demonstrated commitment to advance the quality of healthcare management education.