

TO: Faculty Senate

FROM: WeiDong Zhu, Ph.D.
Provost/Senior VPAA

DATE: October 6, 2026

SUBJECT: Provost Report for October 2026

1. Educational Assessment

As part of our general education assessment plan, for the 2026-2027 academic year, we will be assessing the CA, CF, CH, CL, P, S, and D attributes. Thank you to the 9 faculty members who have offered to assess their courses this semester. If you are still thinking about assessing your course, it's not too late to sign up. If you'd like to participate but aren't sure how to get started or what is required, please reach out to Maria Squire. She would be more than willing to sit down with you to get you started. It is more likely than not that you are already doing what is needed for the assessment work.

2. Middle States Self Study

The Middle States accreditation self-study process continues to unfold. Working Groups are outreaching to various stakeholders to gather information related to each standard as they begin to develop draft reports. There will be several opportunities for campus input this fall, including through four **Campus Conversation** events scheduled for the dates below. Individuals may choose to attend one or more of these events, which are designed as a drop-in discussion format. Participants will have an opportunity to chat with representatives from each working group, share examples of *cura personalis* and *cura apostolica* related to each standard, as well as highlighting strengths, challenges, and opportunities for improvement from their perspective. Each event will be held in BRN 509.

- Wednesday, October 14, 9:00–10:00 a.m.
- Wednesday, October 14, 2:00–3:00 p.m.
- Tuesday, October 20, 10:00–11:00 a.m.
- Tuesday, October 20, 1:00–2:00 p.m.

Faculty, and staff who are engaged with student learning and academic support activities, are invited to attend an upcoming ***Middle States Self-Study 101*** workshop sponsored by the Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE) on **Thursday, October 22, from 11:30am-12:45pm in LSC 591 (CTE Conference Room)**. Attendees will learn more about accreditation and the self-study process, with a special focus on Standards 3 (Design and Delivery of the Student Learning Experience), Standard 4 (Support of the Student Experience), and Standard 5 (Educational Effectiveness Assessment). Individuals may reach out to Dr. Mike Jenkins or Dr. Sarah Kenehan, co-chairs of the Self-study Steering Committee, with any questions they may have throughout the process. More information is available at www.scranton.edu/selfstudy.

3. Rankings

As highlighted in the *RoyalNews*, *The U.S. News and World Report's 2027 Best Colleges* report listed The University of Scranton as tied for No. 137 in its National Universities category and is tied for 71st among private colleges and universities. The University community gathered in Weiss Hall on Tuesday, Sept. 22, to celebrate the reveal of the rankings.

4. Ignatian Values in Action Lecture

This year's FYS, Royal Read was a book by Rev. James Martin, S.J. titled "Searching for God at Ground Zero". Fr. Martin joined us on September 17th, for the annual Ignatian Values in Action Lecture. At the lecture Dr. Teresa Grettano and Fr. Martin engaged in a conversation with the audience recounting his days at Ground Zero. The lecture was attended by well over 1,000 people including approximately 860 first year students. Thank you to Dr. Cyrus Olsen and Mrs. Linda Walsh for organizing this event.

5. Fall Convocation

The Fall Convocation was held on September 11th in DeNaples 401. The program consisted of the Deans of the Colleges introducing their new faculty; Presentation of The Earl Award to Dr. Joan Wasilewski and Dr. Stacey Muir; and Fr. Marina offering his address to Faculty and Staff marking the start of the new semester.

6. Open Listening Sessions with the Provost

Three Open Listening Sessions were held for Faculty and Staff during the week of September 20th. The Provost opened each session with a personal and professional background that led him to Scranton and his goals for Scranton's future. He then opened the sessions to questions from the audience.

7. Division Updates

Rank and Tenure

A public meeting to inform faculty of the rank and tenure policies and procedures was held on September 14th. Twenty-Four faculty have applied for tenure and/or promotion for 2026-2027. The deadline for submitting dossiers and CVs is October 22, 2026.

Intersession Grants

We have received sixteen (16) proposals for consideration for an Intersession Grant. The deadline was October 2nd.

Curriculum Updates

New Course

PHIL 432 -Free Will, Science, & Self

Date posted

4/8/26

Academic Affairs Administrative Assistants Workshop

The Provost and Mr. Richard Walsh will be hosting a workshop for all Academic Affairs Department Administrative Assistants on October 7th. The workshop is a chance to

meet the new Provost and an opportunity for colleagues to exchange tips and tricks that could make their jobs easier and/or more productive.

IPEDS

The Fall data collection for the Integrated Post-Secondary Education Data System (IPEDS) is open.

College of Arts and Sciences

- On Friday, September 11th, CAS launched a mentoring program, and expanding to include additional physics/engineering mentees and mentors for this year.
- Faculty tenure-track lines were approved to conduct a TT search for Health/Clinical Psychology and Computer/Electrical Engineering considering recent retirements. An additional VAP line in Crime/Justice was approved.
- Medical Alumni Council has its fall meeting virtually where CAS Dean and Pre-Health Director gave updates on initiatives and plans for coming year.
- Continued work on the ICC roll out will occur this fall through the CAS Curriculum Committee. The deadline to submit for all GRIDs for ICC conversion for programs is Nov. 6th
- The Assessment Committee for CAS (ACCAS) has done an initial review for PLO's for Political Science, Philosophy, Chemistry, Military Science, Biology, Communications, Computer Science, History, Math, Psychology, and Engineering. They will continue to work on PLO assessment in partnership with the new PLO submission template that was included in the annual reports. In addition, they will begin helping to review the program reviews and impact reports that are submitted annually for program assessment. Those will include Psychology, Criminal Justice/CIC/Cybercrime and Homeland Security/Sociology, History, and International Studies. They will work together with the Associate Dean to put together an annual assessment report based on the annual report feedback which quantifies where each program is in the assessment of their PLOs within each program.
- CAS has completed program reviews and impact reports for Asian Studies, BCMB, Catholic Studies, Latin American Studies, Peace and Justice Studies, Women's Studies, English and Theater, Mathematics and Mathematical Studies, Philosophy, Political Science, Public Policy and Service, and Theology/Religious Studies.
- CAS Dean's Office is hosting the AJCU CAS Deans' Network meeting on campus October 8-10, 2026. In addition to panels on topics such as student retention, career readiness, AI, faculty workload/chair training, managing in lean fiscal times, and advancement and extramural funding approaches, we will have a presentation about the Jesuit Center (Tim Dulle), the Pillar Program (Michael Hague and Jenny Whittaker), and the state of Jesuit Higher Education (Fr. McShane). Thanks to some Scranton faculty musicians, "The Historic Hill Session" for musical entertainment during the opening reception.
- Finalized a new partnership between the Chemistry Department and Gentex to facilitate sharing of departmental equipment at a supervised hourly rate.

- Nathaniel Frissell was awarded a 5.5-million-dollar grant from NASA's Science Activation Program to promote Ham radio citizen science.

The Leahy College of Health Sciences

- **25th Annual Conference on Disability**
LCHS hosted the 25th ANNUAL CONFERENCE ON DISABILITY on October 7th, 2026, in the DeNaples Center Ballroom. The title of this year's conference was *25 Years of Progress: Honoring the Legacy of Edward R. Leahy, Jr., Disability Inclusion and Careers, Transforming Barriers into Opportunities*. For this special anniversary year, we invited back some of our most popular speakers from previous years to give us an update on their advocacy work for people with disabilities.

Kania School of Management

- The Undergraduate Accounting Program was ranked No. 33 by *The U.S. News and World Report*.
- **Geisinger MBA Graduation**
The Geisinger Wyoming Valley Master of Business Administration Graduation was held on September 29th. There were 13 candidates whose MBA degrees were conferred by Fr. Marina. The event took place in Geisinger, Danville.

Weinberg Memorial Library

- **Library Logo and Newsletter:** The Library has unveiled a new logo and published a new issue of Information Update, its semesterly newsletter. Print copies of the newsletter are available in the Library Services Desk lobby.
- **Alumni Author Event:** The Library will host Daniel J. Packer Jr., a 2009 University of Scranton alumnus, for "Scranton's Bygone Department Stores" on Wednesday, October 28, 2026, from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. Using historic photographs, advertisements, and original artifacts, Packer will explore the history of The Globe Store and Oppenheim's Scranton Dry Goods Company. The event is free and open to the public. RSVP is required through [RoyalSync](#).
- **Library Faculty Recognition:** Marleen Cloutier, Associate Professor and Cataloging & Metadata Librarian, received a Certificate of Merit from the Pennsylvania Library Association on September 22, 2026. The award recognizes outstanding contributions to libraries and the Association during the past five years.
- **Electronic Resources Assessment:** The Dean's decisions regarding electronic resource review recommendations have been published for the University community. The decisions are available through the Library Advisory Committee documents page.
<https://www.scranton.edu/academics/wml/libadcomm/libadvdocs.shtml>
- The Electronic Resources Assessment (ERA) Subcommittee of the Library Advisory Committee will review the following resources during Fall 2026:

Biological Abstracts; ATLA Religion Database; CINAHL; Harvard Business Review for Coursework; Mental Measures Yearbook; Chicago Manual of Style; Columbia Granger World of Poetry; Ethnic Diversity Source; KanopyBase; Digitalia Films; Digitalia Hispanica; Behavioral and Mental Health Online; and Historical NYT. A faculty survey will be shared asking about use of these resources to inform the review.

- **New Electronic Resource Requests:** Faculty are reminded to use the Library New Subscription Resource Request Form for new resources that carry recurring costs, including databases and journals. Completed forms should be returned to Dean George Aulisio by email or campus mail. The form is listed as “New Library Subscription Request Form” on the Library’s Policies & Forms page. <https://www.scranton.edu/academics/wml/about/policies/index.shtml>
- **Taizé Film Screenings and Prayer:** Two screenings of the 57-minute documentary Taizé: A Pilgrimage of Trust will take place in WML 305 on October 14 at 7:00 p.m. and October 15 at 11:30 a.m. The screenings precede an evening of prayer and reflection led by Brother Emile of the Taizé ecumenical monastery in France on October 15, from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m., in Madonna Della Strada Chapel, with refreshments afterward. All are welcome, and faculty are encouraged to recommend the events to students.

Hope Horn Gallery

- The Gallery’s fall season, Interior Freedom, continues with Joy in the Process: Selections from a Regional Collection through October 9. The next exhibition, Peter Hoffer: Reflections. Five Decades of Art, will run October 19 through November 20, with an artist’s lecture and reception on October 23. Gallery exhibitions, lectures, and receptions are free and open to the public.

Schemel Forum

- October programming includes Terence Keel’s World Affairs Luncheon Seminar, The Coroner’s Silence: Death Records and the Hidden Victims of Police Violence, on October 7 at 11:30 a.m.; Andrew LaZella’s six-session evening course on Karl Marx’s Das Kapital, beginning October 19 at 6:00 p.m.; and Peace Ike’s The 3 Degrees of Why: Moving Beyond Positions to the Stories That Shape Us, on October 20 at 6:00 p.m., in collaboration with the Slattery Center for the Ignatian Humanities. Program information and registration are available through the Schemel Forum website. <https://www.scranton.edu/academics/wml/schemel/index.shtml>

Conference on Confronting the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence

- Faculty are reminded that proposals for the University’s international interdisciplinary conference on Confronting the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence are due November 6, 2026. The conference will be held April 29 through May 1, 2027, and welcomes papers, panels, workshops, and other presentations

examining the ethical dimensions of AI. University of Scranton faculty are encouraged to submit proposals. Conference information and the submission portal are available online.

<https://www.scranton.edu/academics/wml/ai/index.shtml>

CIC AI Ready Initiative

- As part of the University's participation in the Council of Independent Colleges' AI Ready initiative, faculty, staff, and administrators are invited to attend the October webinar series, AI as an Accessibility Tool. The three one-hour sessions will take place on October 8, 15, and 22, from 2:00 to 3:00 p.m. Eastern Time. The series will address practical applications of generative AI to accessibility and student support, along with ethical considerations and institutional strategies. Participation is free. Registration information is available in the campus invitations that are sent via email by George.Aulisio@Scranton.edu.

IDEA Center

- The IDEA Center presented interactive 3D scanning and virtual reality demonstrations at the Girls in STEM Symposium at Lacawac Sanctuary on September 22, reaching approximately 300 students in grades 7–12. Visitors received University of Scranton stickers produced in the Center along with admissions materials. Student use of the Center has increased across campus, with work-study employees supporting the additional activity.
- Recent academic collaborations include occupational therapy classes led by Dr. Marlene Morgan and Dr. Stephanie DeNaples, as well as faculty tutorials on HoloAnatomy using the Center's virtual reality headsets. Scranton School District field trips are scheduled for October 29, and a Penn State Extension 4-H visit is scheduled for November 12. Eight additional K–12 visits and events are planned for the January intersession and spring semester.
- Planning also continues for the Diocese of Scranton STREAM event, the NEPA Girls STEM event in April, a Leadership Northeast event, and CAS Deans Conference programming. An approved PNC grant will support K–12 visits and IDEA Center programming. Ready Communities and Procter & Gamble grant proposals remain pending.

Office of Student Support and Success

The OSSS has moved locations this summer from LSC to Alumni Memorial Hall, 2nd floor. Gaining over 2000 sq. ft., the OSSS has expanded the writing center, added a dedicated tutoring space, a neurodiverse 'hub' and additional private testing space for students with approved accommodation. Our new hire, Melissa Del Rio, began training on August 17th, as the Academic Accommodation Specialist.

Fall 2026 statistics through week 5:

- Tutoring: 87 tutors have been hired and over 500 sessions have been held.

- Writing Center: We introduced 5 new writing consultants this semester, with 15 consultants total. There have been over 100 writing sessions to date. The OSSS has hosted 18 workshops (huge increase!)
- Gonzaga: There are 36 students accepted into the program. We have 26 so far working on a weekly basis with 58 total sessions.
- Two Pilot workshops were given to get students on Academic Probation into the OSSS for resources. 70 invited. 2 attended.
- There are 140 new ADA requests this semester so far – around 15% of incoming class. We have already proctored over 230 exams.
- We have hired over 115 Note takers in over 275 courses. We are still finding note takers for 55 courses.
- Disability Services: Approximately 590 students are actively registered with our office.
- Our academic coaches have held 118 appointments to date.

Graduate Academic Student Services

- **Graduate Assistant Information**

Currently, 132 graduate assistant positions are held by graduate students across the University, providing meaningful opportunities for graduate students to gain professional, teaching, research, and administrative experience while contributing to the University's academic and operational priorities.

Graduate assistant agreements have been comprehensively reviewed, updated, and finalized for the 2027–2028 academic year. The revisions reflect input from faculty and administrators and are intended to clarify expectations, responsibilities, eligibility requirements, workload, and the terms associated with graduate assistant appointments.

The updated agreements will be distributed to graduate assistant supervisors, graduate program directors, and department chairs who oversee graduate assistants. Communication will highlight the key changes and provide guidance to ensure consistent implementation across programs and departments.

- **Graduate Program Council**

The first GPC meeting for the 2026-2027 academic year was held in September.

- **Graduate Student Survey and Federal Regulatory Updates:** Kate Yerkes presented the results of the Graduate Student Survey, highlighting key findings and areas of strength and opportunity identified by graduate students. She also provided an overview of recent federal regulatory changes and discussed potential implications for graduate students' Title IV financial aid eligibility and graduate programs.

- **Graduate Assistant Agreement:** The Committee was presented with and discussed updates to the Graduate Assistant Agreement for the 2027–2028 academic year. Following feedback from faculty and administration over the summer and into the fall semester, the revised agreement has been finalized. The updated agreement provides greater clarity and consistency regarding graduate assistant eligibility, responsibilities, workload, and other terms of appointment.
- **Graduate Student Ambassador Program:** Melissa Afshari introduced a proposed graduate student ambassador program that would provide current graduate students with opportunities to support recruitment and outreach efforts. Ambassadors may participate in information sessions and other activities designed to engage prospective graduate students and share their experiences with the University. Additional details, including program structure and expectations, are currently being developed in collaboration with Admissions.
- **Registration PIN Process:** Joe Redington provided an update on the current registration PIN process. Intersession 2027 and Spring 2027 are expected to be the final registration periods using the existing process. The Registrar's Office will explore alternative approaches, including the potential use of advisor clearance, to provide a more streamlined registration process for students and advisors. The Graduate Programs Committee will be included in future discussions as potential alternatives are evaluated.

Center for Teaching Excellence

- **Launch of the Online Course Evaluation Tool, Blue Explorance**

We launched Blue on Sunday, 9/27, for H1 courses. The objective selection will open on 9/30 for N1 courses. The website has been updated for [faculty](#) and [students](#). The faculty card on MyScranton also has updated links and a link called "Historical Course Evaluation Records" where faculty can download copies of previous course evaluation reports from the old system. IT cautions that the old system cannot be repaired if it breaks. The student course evaluation card on MyScranton has also been updated.

We held open office hours to assist with course objective selection on Tuesday, September 29, from 12:15 - 1:00. Two faculty members joined with questions. A second session will be on Tuesday, October 6, from 12:15 - 1:00 [using this Teams link](#).

Our Blue partners have an introduction session planned for faculty on Thursday, Oct. 8 at 11:30 on Teams. [Faculty can join using this Teams link](#). The session will

be recorded for those who cannot attend and posted on the [course evaluation page on our website](#).

- **Download Historical Course Evaluation Reports**

The historical data from the previous course evaluation system cannot be transferred to our new tool, Blue. Faculty who would like copies for their records should go to MyScranton and select the “Historical Course Evaluation Record” link on the Faculty Course Evaluation card. This will allow you to download reports from previous evaluations for your files.

- **CTE and New Faculty Orientation Sessions**

Tara Hamilton-Fay’s CTE and New Faculty Orientation sessions are underway for Fall 2026. On Monday, 9/29, Dr. Jill Warker facilitated an engaging conversation about using Cognitive Psychology in the Classroom. Faculty participated from the following areas: 3 CAS, 2 LCHS, 1 KSOM, and 2 WML.

Upcoming CTE sessions include the following:

- October 22 at 11:30 – 12:45: Middle States Self-Study 101 in LSC 591
- November 17 at 11:30 – 12:45: Outcome Designs and Mapping presented on Teams

Upcoming New Faculty Orientation Program Sessions include the following:

- October 29 at 11:30 – 1:00: Course Evaluations
- November 24 at 11:30 – 1:00: Plagiarism & AI

Email OCE@scranton.edu if you are interested in attending any of the upcoming sessions.

Office of Global Education

Intersession & Spring 2027 Study Abroad

- Faculty-Led Study Abroad (FLSA) courses planned in Intersession 2027 include:
 - Brazil - HAD 595: South American Health Systems led by Dr. Steven Szydlowski
 - Ireland - BLDR 384 (special topic): Global Leadership: Ireland led by Stephen Whittaker and Ashley Stampone
 - South Africa – BIOL 296 Tropical Ecology – led by Dr. Gary Kwiecinski and Dr. Marc Seid
 - Dominican Republic - OT 480: Level I, Clinical III- Physical Rehabilitation led by Dr. Chandra Nealon
 - Belize - OT 380: Level I, Clinical I – Pediatrics led by Dr. Stephanie DeNaples and Dr. Laura Zagacki
 - Egypt – TRS 339 - Eastern Christian Spirituality – led by Dr. Michael Azar
 - Two faculty-led courses that were tentatively planned will not go abroad due to low student numbers. (Ireland - NURS 496 Healthcare Systems and Nursing Practice Abroad); and (France - PS 384: Migration & Citizenship in Europe)

- About 70 students have submitted applications to study abroad in Intersession 2027 on a program hosted by one of our study abroad partner institutions. This includes approximately 30 students for Ireland; 30 students for Italy; about 5 in Japan; and 5 across Australia, Ghana, France, and the Netherlands.
- About 30 students have submitted applications to study abroad in Spring 2027 at one of our study abroad partner institutions. This includes 11 for Italy; 7 for Spain; 5 for Ireland; 3 for Australia; 2 for multi-destination Europe; 1 for the UK; and 1 for Denmark. Our Scranton deadline for Spring semester applications was October 1, 2026.

Fulbright U.S. Student Scholarship & Marshall Scholarships

- Two undergraduate students are planning to submit applications for the 2027-28 Fulbright Awards. One is for Study/Research in Biochemistry in Ireland; and one is for a master's degree in Wild Animal Biology in the UK. The deadline for Fulbright applications for 2027-28 is October 6, 2026.
- One of the Fulbright applicants (the Ireland candidate) also submitted an application for the prestigious UK Marshall Scholarship to study for a master's degree at the University of Cambridge. The deadline for the Marshall was September 29, 2026.

Changing Rules for International Students

In July, the Department of Homeland Security announced a new set of forthcoming rules for international students. Included in it were major changes, i.e.,

- **Fixed stay limits:** Replacing Duration of Status (D/S) with a fixed admission period
- **Shorter grace period:** Reducing the post-graduation grace period from 60 days down to 30 days.
- **Academic restrictions:** Limiting changes of major or school transfers

Just before the government's scheduled implementation on September 15, a federal court issued a nationwide preliminary injunction blocking the rule from taking effect. As a result, the immigration regulations for F-1 students and J-1 exchange visitors remain unchanged while litigation continues.