

TO: Faculty Senate

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

DATE: November 1, 2024

SUBJECT: Provost Report for November 8, 2024

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### **Reflections from the Interim Provost**

Having reached the milestone of my ninth day on the job, all I can do is reflect on beginning this role mid-semester. I am breathless but very delighted to be here.

The weather has been kind, and the people even kinder. There is a wonderful vibrancy with the fall colors and the relatively warmer weather, where students are soaking up the last days in shorts and no coat temperatures. What a stunning campus.

I have experienced the generous spirit of the faculty and staff, even if at times couched cautiously due to the weariness of turnovers. People have shown me grace and patience as I endeavor to get up to speed as quickly as possible. What a wonderful community.

My office is working to set up as many meetings as possible with departments. I am starting with academics but will expand to all areas under academic affairs soon.

Please stop by, say hello, have a cup of coffee or tea. If I miss something critical, please let me know as it most likely just not knowing. Send me an email with your favorite burger joint, casual breakfast diner, easy hiking trails, best coffee shop, local artisan shops – I am partial to pottery and textiles - and recommended seasonal activities (or anything else that will allow me to enjoy Scranton and the surrounds).

### **Rankings**

For three decades *U.S. News & World Report* has ranked The University of Scranton among the top 10 best regional universities in the north, placing Scranton No. 6 and placing us No. 6 for “Best Undergraduate Teaching” in its 2025 “Best Colleges” guidebook.

The *Princeton Review* listed us among the “Best 390 Colleges” in the nation and ranked us at No. 17 in the nation for “Best Science Lab Facilities.” They also ranked us at No. 23 in the nation for “Students Most Engaged in Community Service.”

## **Ethics Across the Curriculum**

Ethics Across the Curriculum sponsored an Ethics Across the Curriculum Speaker, Kathrin Herrmann, “Beyond the 3Rs: How to Shift the Current Animal Research Paradigm” on October 24.

This presentation critically examined the prevailing use of animal models in scientific research and advocates for a transformative shift towards non-animal methodologies. Despite the adoption of the 3Rs principle—Replacement, Reduction, Refinement—animal experimentation persists, often with significant ethical and scientific shortcomings. Herrmann highlighted the limited translatability of animal studies to human health benefits, underscoring the failure of the current harm-benefit analysis (HBA) to adequately justify the continued use of animals in research. The presentation also addressed the ethical concerns and psychological toll on research personnel involved in animal testing. Driven by ethical imperatives, scientific advances, and public demand, Herrmann calls for a new research paradigm that prioritizes human-relevant methods over traditional animal models, aiming to enhance both scientific outcomes and animal welfare.

Dr. Herrmann is an expert on animal welfare science, ethics, and law, and currently serves as the Animal Protection Commissioner of Berlin. She works at the Center for Alternatives to Animal Testing (CAAT) at Johns Hopkins University where she directs the Beyond Classical Refinement Program.

## **Faculty Searches**

Searches for seventeen faculty members have been approved; thirteen tenure-track positions and four faculty specialist positions.

- CAS – 7 tenure-track positions and 1 faculty specialist position
- LCHS – 6 tenure-track positions and 1 faculty specialist position
- KSOM - 2 faculty specialist positions

**The Office of Community-Based Learning (CBL)** announced the third cohort of its CBL Faculty Fellows Program. The purpose of the program is to recognize, reward and support exemplary faculty who are eager to fully integrate CBL as an intentional pedagogical strategy into their courses and/or curricular-based projects. CBL is an academic experience which involves students working with individuals, groups, or organizations in ways structured to meet community-defined needs. The Faculty Fellows program seeks to expand, strengthen and institutionalize CBL at the University as a demonstration of its commitment to Jesuit values and the common good.

This year’s Faculty Fellows are:

- Laura Chapman
- Rita DiLeo
- Nathaniel Frissell
- Christiane McDonald
- Stacy Smulowitz

## **Graduate Academic/Student Services**

A Graduate Student Social was held on Friday October 18. Fifteen graduate students (including one PhD) and one dean attended. Students were able to socialize and get to know each other from across colleges. We served food and beverages. They participated in trivia and other activities, and all walked away with Scranton apparel.

We are in the process of migrating 117 courses to Brightspace from Engage with the support of Collegis. We have 23 courses in their final stage with another 16 awaiting faculty final review. The goal is for all courses to be in their final stages in March 2025, however, all intersession and spring courses will be

completely migrated around the end of November. Training for faculty to navigate Brightspace is currently being planned in collaboration with CTE to take place in November and January. We are also having discussions for student training. Any faculty who would like self-paced training can contact Brian Snapp in CTE.

For the 2024-2025 academic year we have 142 graduate assistants in positions for the fall, spring, or both. Their stipends range from \$1,100 per semester to \$4,400 per semester and tuition remission ranges from 25% to 75%. Graduate assistant applications for the 2025-2026 academic year will open the first week in November with a deadline of March 1. Hiring faculty will have a deadline of May 1 to submit decisions for positions.

**OSSS/CTE Update**  
**2024-**

- Graduate = 77.8% (*down 9% since 2021*)
- Overall = 82.9% (*down 5% since 2021*)
- Percent of course evaluations with student comments = 63%
- Mean number of words per eval with comments = 58

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- About 25 students plan to study abroad at partner universities in Intersession 2025.
- About 35 students plan to study abroad for the Spring 2025 semester. Typically, our Spring semester study abroad numbers are significantly larger than Fall because Spring is more-often recommended for KSOM and PCPS majors due to class schedules.

### ***Fulbright***

- Fulbright award winners for the 2024-25 year are abroad. One is undertaking Study/Research in Rwanda; and one is undertaking an English Teaching Assistantship in Spain.
- Two undergraduate students have submitted Fulbright applications for the 2025-26 Fulbright Awards. One for Study/Research in Norway; and one for an English Teaching Assistantship in Taiwan. Fulbright will announce national semi-finalists in January 2025. Finalists (winners) will be announced in April 2025.
- OGE will hold a Fulbright information session at the end of November as part of International Education Week. Students wishing to apply for Fulbright awards for the 2026-27 year begin their applications in April 2025 and finalize their submission by September 2025 (e.g., by the beginning of their senior year).

### ***International Students***

- Students and Scholars enrolled in Optional Practical Training (OPT) – 289
- Students and Scholars enrolled in Fall 2024 – 213
- New Students and Scholars Fall Enrollment – 53
- New Degree Seeking Students (F1) – 38
  - Graduate 35 – India (30), Philippines (1), Saudi Arabia 3, Taiwan 1
  - Undergraduate 3 – Mexico (1), Dominican Republic, Ireland 1
- New Exchange Students (J1) – 8
  - Undergraduate 8 – Taiwan (3), Spain (2), S. Korea (2), Mexico (1)
  - Partner Institutions: National Taiwan University (1), Fu Jen Catholic University (2), Universidad Pontificia de Comillas (1), Sogang University (2), Universidad Loyola Seville (1), Universidad Pontificia De Comillas (1), Universidad Iberoamericana Puebla (1)
- New Exchange Scholars (J1): 7
  - Research Scholar (1) arrived September from Kazakhstan working with Dr. Sean Brennan
  - Visiting Professors (2) Taiwan Ministry of Education and Alex Foundation (Japan)
  - Fulbright Scholars (4) from Tunisia, France, Spain, Germany
- Total Returning Student and Scholars: 160
  - Degree Seeking: 160 Students
  - Graduate: 153
    - Doctorate: 2
      - Countries: Saudi Arabia (2)
    - Master's: 151
      - Countries: Canada (1), Cayman Islands (1), China (1), Ethiopia (1), Ghana (2), India (137), Pakistan (1), Kenya (1), Philippines (2), South Korea (1), Saudi Arabia (1), The Bahamas (1), Vietnam (1)
  - Undergraduate: 7 students
    - Countries: China (1), Dominican Republic (1), Ireland (2), Nepal (1), Ukraine (1), Vietnam (1)



**Schemel Forum**

- The final Schemel Forum World Affairs Luncheon of the Fall 2024 semester will be held on Thursday, November 21, from 11:30 am to 1:00 pm in the Rose Room (Brennan 509). Dr.