

College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

The following is from the transcript and was not prepared as a formal written statement.

It is my pleasure to present, in collaboration with Associate Deans Lauren Cedeno and Djanna Hill and on behalf of the incredibly dedicated faculty and staff of the college of Art, Humanities and Social Sciences.

We have many faculty and staff highlights.

Retirements - Leslie Nobler. Aaron Tesfaye, Yingcong Dai, Diane Falk-Romaine. Madhuri Mukherjee, David Dempsey, Judith Broome, and Zhiyuan Cong.

Promoted to full professor - Natalie Linderman. Robin Nemeroff and Ryan Rebe.

Tenured and promoted to associate professor - Jason Silva, Jungyun Won and Wendy Wright.

New appointments:

Mitch Butler, Music, is the new jazz coordinator.

Al Clark, Communication, is a long-time member of our community and has now been appointed to a position as full-time instructor.

Hannah Carr, Music, will be our new chorale director.

Phil Clifford, Music, is a William Paterson graduate, was working at Montclair State, and we're so pleased we'll be coming here in support of our sound engineering and acoustics program.

Miles Dunnigan, who will join us in January, will join our art faculty in the area of foundations, and in particular, specialties in printmaking.

Nafin Elias, a William Paterson graduate, has joined our psychology department as a graduate program staff member.

Points of Pride

We have so many it was hard to narrow down. We opted to align what we share here with the university's current strategic pillars.

Decolonization – The college of AHSS takes great pride in being amongst the leaders in this area. All of our departments are actively engaged in decolonization work. In support of these efforts the college offered pedagogy workshops focusing on inclusive practices and differentiated instruction and assessment to help shore up the work that was done in our departments.

Alternative Credentials, we have 26 innovative programs, 23 on the undergraduate level, and 3 on the graduate level.

UCC - there are 85 approved courses, and of those, 59 are from the AHSS.

Attrition – In the College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences we are incredibly proud of the work that we've been doing in the area of attrition and persistence.

The fall of 2024 census of our first year, first time, student retention numbers were 74.2%. That's up from 70.4% in 2022. This kind of growth is significant and outpaces other divisions in the university in terms of the growth of FYFT retention. This is attributable in large part to the work that's being done by Associate Dean Lauren Cedeno, Dr. Tia Cherry, and every single faculty and staff in our college. We are all committed to helping our students be successful in their academic journeys. In addition, our current continuing student retention is almost 90%. This is something that we are very proud of and will continue to improve.

Opportunities

Artificial Intelligence Offerings – The college has three courses developed and anticipate a certificate will be presented at the senate this fall.

Summer HS bridge programs – in collaboration with the office of Transfer Programs and Special Sessions we offer courses in creative writing, graphic design, and podcasting to HS students as a way to get students engaged with our university in the summer, in hopes that they will see the wonderful things that are happening at our institution and choose to come here.

Integration of technologies across the college – We understand the importance of the integration of technologies. As a college we have certificates in data storytelling and GIS.

We have invested in creating digital innovation spaces with emphasis on animation, graphic design, and GIS. We have two podcasting spaces on campus, and we also have our digital collaboratory. The goal here is to make sure that we are infusing technology into every single program that we offer in our college.

College Achievements

Career Readiness. A few years ago, we centralized our internship experience in the college. We are a very diverse college and we don't have a "sector" per se. Essentially, we have a variety of sectors that are represented in our college. In the past some departments had robust internship experiences, others did not. We wanted to make sure that every student, regardless of their major, had an opportunity to have a quality internship experience. Since

we centralized, we have seen incredible growth. This past year, we had 266 students who participated in the internship program. This is 30 more than we had the year before.

In addition, ninety students received an internship stipend from monies we raised during our fall giving drive.

We restored the pre-police Academy internship program.

We did some data analysis to get a sense of how things are going. Our interns say.

- 81% to have more clarity in their career goals,
- 76% improved their key professional skills
- 49% shifted their career trajectories based on their internship experience.

In addition to our internship experience, we held our 7th annual Aspire Immersive Career Readiness Program, where our students hone their career readiness skills in a one-day experience.

Other college achievements are our multidisciplinary *Context* conference. Last year's theme focused on youth rights, and this year we'll focus on liberty and justice for all.

And finally, we have highly regarded, accredited programs in music, art, psychology, and very proud to say that our social work program was accredited with a strong recommendation.

Reflections

We were asked to reflect on the future of our college. As I mentioned before, our college is broad, and we don't have a particular sector. My reflections are focused more on us as a college. We are acutely aware of the turbulence in higher education and how it's impacted all of us.

Most of the programs in the college of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences fall within the scope of what one would traditionally call the liberal arts. When we talk about the value of a liberal arts education, we are not only speaking about what it offers to individual students, we are also speaking about what it offers to the well-being of our nation and world. A healthy democracy requires citizens who can think critically, communicate effectively, and engage with perspectives different from their own. These are the habits of *mind and heart* cultivated through the liberal arts.

It is why it is so important that a college education be integrated with courses that allow students to grow not only in their disciplinary choice but also have an opportunity to grow through exposure to courses in the liberal arts. In my opinion this broader exposure is what defines what it means to be college educated. The History major needs math and science and the Business major needs literature and political science.

The liberal arts sharpen our ability to ask hard questions, to discern truth from falsehood, and to weigh evidence before making decisions. In an age of information overload and the proliferation of "experts" these skills are not a luxury, they are a necessity. They allow our citizenry to evaluate policies, hold leaders accountable, and participate in civic life with both rigor and compassion. Without this foundation, our democratic institutions lose vitality and risk becoming ineffective.

But the liberal arts also provide something deeper: they nurture imagination and empathy. They help us recognize our shared humanity across differences. In a time of polarization, this capacity is critical. Democracy depends not only on an understanding of the mechanics of voting or governance but also on our ability to live together, to

listen, and to compromise. The liberal arts teach us that our lives are connected, that our stories overlap, and that our futures are bound together.

The Liberal arts are important.

I must also acknowledge that affirming the value of the liberal arts is not enough. For far too long, we have assumed their worth was self-evident, when in fact we must continually demonstrate their relevance. Our students and our workforce demand adaptability, technological fluency, and practical pathways to meaningful careers. If the liberal arts are to remain central to American life, we must be willing to evolve, innovating our curricula, forging new partnerships, and ensuring that our students graduate not only with broad knowledge but also with tangible skills that open doors.

This is not a contradiction but a continuation of our mission. To be nimble and innovative does not mean abandoning the liberal arts; it means living up to their deepest promise, that is preparing individuals who can respond creatively to new challenges, who can bridge disciplines, and who can imagine solutions to problems we can't yet imagine.

Included on this slide which will be made available are two sources. One a podcast that expands on what I have stated and an article that gives historical context on the liberal arts.

Our headline - Leading with purpose. Arts, humanities, and social sciences expands Impact and Excellence. The last couple of years our college theme was Building community. Our efforts focused on making sure that we were bringing students back, building our student clubs, building opportunities for faculty and staff to engage with each other so that we can have that foundation to move our college forward.

Leading into our next 3 years, our theme is going to be Growth with Purpose. Therefore, our headline 5 years from now, is an extension of that, *Leading with purpose*.

The things that we hope to see would be in three areas. The first would be retention and graduation. We have seen phenomenal growth in our college. We believe that we can continue to improve but our goal is to have retention number in the 80s. Another headline would be in active community engagement. We want to serve as a resource for local governments and nonprofits. And finally, the integration of technologies across the disciplines, especially in the area of Arts and Humanities. We want our students to be well prepared for wherever their trajectory takes them.