

Year-End Report

1. **Council:** Research, Scholarship, and Creative Expression Council
2. **Academic Year:** 2024-2025
3. **Council Members:** Chair Nick Hirshon (COHSS), Anna Baiata (OSP), Bhanu Chauhan (COSH), Alison Dobrick (COE), Jan Pinkston (Professional Staff Rep), Saeed Shekari (CCOB), Babita Srivastava (Adjunct), David Williams (Library)
4. **Council Charges and Summary of Council Activities:**

Standing Charges

1. *Promote Faculty, Librarian, Professional Staff, and Adjunct Faculty scholarship; identify, on an ongoing basis, current and anticipated faculty, librarian, professional staff and adjunct faculty needs with regard to scholarship and research and recommend strategies designed to meet those needs.*

The Council has traditionally fulfilled this charge by coordinating Explorations, a multi-day series of faculty and student research presentations held each spring. Council members typically recruit presenters from their respective colleges, contributing to the event's interdisciplinary scope.

This year, Explorations was reimaged as a 90-minute session held on April 29 in the Library Auditorium, followed by the University Author Reception.

Two Council members were directly involved in this year's event, with the broader Council contributing to promotion efforts. David Williams served on the library's program development committee, which coordinated the symposium. In addition, Nick Hirshon, representing the College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences, delivered a presentation alongside two of his students about their experience reporting live from the White House on Election Day.

The full schedule of presentations is listed below:

College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

Inside the White House: Meet Students Who Reported Live on Election Day

Nick Hirshon (Communication), Alexander Felix and Julia Menn (students)

College of Science and Health

An Exploration of Self-Perception of Weight Status, Weight-Related Variables, and Preferences for Weight Management Strategies Among South Asians in the U.S.

Maya Joseph and Lydia H. Albuquerque (Nursing)

College of Education

Bookji and Middle School Reading Culture: Peer Influence, Emojis, and Reading Engagement

Ellen Pozzi (Educational Leadership), Neil Grimes (Library)

“You Have to First Recognize That There's a Problem Before You Can Enact Change”: A Mixed-Method Study of General and Special Education Co-Teachers' Critical Consciousness and Agency in Enacting Socially Just Inclusive Practices

Latifa Sebti (Special Education)

You Are Not a Kinesthetic Learner: The Troubled History of the Learning Style Idea

Thomas Fallace (Teacher Education)

Case Studies to Support Aspiring and Current Building and District-Level Educational Leaders

Jolene Battitori (Educational Leadership)

Library

Library Research Contributions: Advancing Knowledge and Practice

Cara Berg, Linda Salvesen (Library)

The Council has long taken pride in helping organize Explorations. However, the combination of increased teaching responsibilities, expanded service obligations, and reduced support from the Office of Sponsored Programs has prompted a re-evaluation of the Council's capacity to sustain Explorations without significant administrative support for logistics such as speaker recruitment, space reservations, food, and website updates.

Council Chair Nick Hirshon emailed Faculty Senate Chairperson Wendy Christensen on May 9 to advocate for continuing Explorations in 2026 as a day-long symposium—more manageable than the former month-long format, but more robust than the single 90-minute session in 2025.

The Council continues to seek guidance from the Senate regarding its role in Explorations.

2. Support the continued efforts to build academic research networks on and beyond the William Paterson campus.

The Council supported academic research networks through multiple initiatives this year, including its work on Explorations and its development of revised Assigned Research Time criteria. These efforts encouraged interdisciplinary collaboration, elevated faculty and student scholarship, and strengthened connections both within and beyond the University.

3. Review, yearly and as needed, the policies, procedures, and guidelines for each of the following:

- a. Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects,***
- b. Scientific and Academic Fraud and Misconduct,***
- c. Assigned Research Time Application and Selection.***

As it had in 2023-2024, the Council continued to discuss whether it is the appropriate body to review the policies, procedures, and guidelines of the Institutional Review Board and Scientific and Academic Fraud and Misconduct. Current Council members, including several with multi-year service, could not recall a time when the Council was asked to review these policies. As a result, the Council has recommended a charge for the 2025–2026 academic year to consult with the Faculty Senate to clarify the Council's role in this area.

Following the April 14 announcement of an agreement between the administration and the

Union on Assigned Research Time, Provost Powers asked the Faculty Senate to draft revised ART criteria. The Council developed the prospective criteria listed below and shared them with Faculty Senate Chair Wendy Christensen on May 1. At the May 8 Senate meeting, senators requested additional time to review the proposed criteria with their departments. Christensen informed Council Chair Nick Hirshon that incoming Senate Chair Murli Natrajan plans to revisit the matter at the first Senate meeting in Fall 2025.

Prospective ART Criteria

- **Feasibility:** Do the proposed studies demonstrate strong intellectual merit and sound scientific fundamentals? Is the applicant capable of completing the project? (For example, if the proposal involves reading foreign texts, has the applicant demonstrated or claimed language competence?)
- **Timeline:** Is the timeline realistic? Has the applicant divided the project into logical steps and requested an appropriate amount of release time?
- **Travel, Expenses, and Supplies:** Are departmental facilities sufficient to support the proposed studies? Are travel and related expenses handled realistically? (For example, would a lack of funding lead the applicant to abandon the project after receiving release time?)
- **Collaboration:** For collaborative projects, is the division of work clearly and appropriately outlined?
- **Progress:** Have any preliminary or feasibility studies been conducted? What work has already been completed, and how far along is the project?
- **Outcomes:** Will the research or creative work be shared with the broader community through conferences, public lectures, exhibitions, or publications?

Additional Charges

1. Collaborate with the Provost's Office and/or the Office of Sponsored Programs (OSP) to create and promote a website for Explorations that clearly states the mission and dates of the annual symposium and identifies the RSCE Council members in charge of scheduling presentations for each college.

At the November 8 meeting, the RSCE Council asked Anna Baiata, the interim director of the Office of Sponsored Programs, to reactivate the Explorations website. Over the course of the academic year, the Council requested updates to the site to include contact information for the RSCE Council representatives responsible for recruiting and scheduling presentations in each college and, eventually, promote the April 29 presentations.

2. Collaborate with colleges, individual departments, the library, and OSP to publicize student research (as well as faculty grant activity) at events such as Honors Research Week and Explorations (including the University Author Reception).

Throughout the academic year, the Council discussed the future of Explorations, especially in light of declining faculty and student participation. Council members identified the loss of ART-supported course release time and a lack of clear incentives as contributing factors. The Office of Sponsored Programs also noted its limited capacity to support Explorations due to staffing

cuts and competing priorities.

To address these concerns, the Council invited Provost Powers to speak at its December 8 meeting. He proposed reimagining Explorations as a one-day event—rather than a month-long series—by combining it with the annual University Author Reception in Cheng Library. He encouraged the Council to reflect on what had and hadn't worked in past years in order to create a more focused, manageable format that better highlights student and faculty scholarship.

3. Investigate the feasibility of awarding Pioneer Life badges from the Office of Campus Activities, Service & Leadership to students who present at Explorations and write a three-paragraph reflection describing how they participated and what they learned.

The Council invited Donna Minnich Spuhler, the director of Campus Activities, Service, and Leadership, and librarian Gary Marks to discuss the feasibility of awarding Pioneer Life badges to students who present at or attend Explorations.

At the November 8 meeting, Minnich Spuhler noted challenges in ensuring students remain for the entirety of Explorations and participate actively. She proposed several methods for tracking attendance, including sign-in sheets and Qualtrics forms. She also suggested that the Library's LEARN badge could potentially be extended to students who participate in Explorations.

At the December 4 meeting, Marks explained that the LEARN badge is part of the WP Leads Badge System, a co-curricular credential earned through tiered library events. Students could receive credit toward the badge through Explorations by scanning a QR code—shared only at the end of a session—to confirm participation via a brief survey. Marks noted that students can track and download their badges through a university website.

The discussion about badges was temporarily set aside as the Council shifted focus to the broader need for dedicated staffing and resources to support Explorations.

4. Liaise with OSP to review and offer feedback on Cayuse.

After consulting with the RSCE Council, the Office of Sponsored Programs launched the Cayuse Research Suite on April 15, marking a major upgrade to William Paterson's research administration systems. The new platform links proposal submissions, IRB approvals, and HR data to simplify workflows. It supports every stage of the research process—from submitting proposals to closing out funded projects—and stores all records in one place, with easy access for faculty and administrators.

5. Recommended Charges for the next Academic Year:

- 1) Assess faculty research needs and report findings to the Faculty Senate. (This revives a charge originally added in 2023–2024.)
- 2) Collaborate with colleges, departments, Cheng Library, and the Office of Sponsored Programs to publicize student research and faculty grant activity through events such as Explorations, the University Author Reception, and Honors Research Week.

- 3) Consult the Faculty Senate to determine whether the Council's standing charges should continue to include review of policies, procedures, and guidelines related to the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects and Scientific and Academic Fraud and Misconduct.