



May 2022

Dear Colleagues,

What a graduation it was: The Robins Center was abuzz throughout last weekend with SPCS, Law, and the undergraduate schools holding exuberant ceremonies for 1,020 graduates. ROTC students were commissioned as officers. And the student-athletes competing during the weekend were celebrated in the caboose commencement on Monday. Joy and pride were everywhere.

Many thanks to those of you who took part in the ceremonies and activities – your being there made the celebration even more special for the graduates and their families.

Perhaps the end was so sweet because the year was sometimes bitter, primarily because the difficult challenges of 2020-2021 continued: COVID and naming. Neither is fully behind us. But there has also been important headway on both. The removal of building names was a significant step. While there is more to do, we are in a better place to make further advances in the vital ongoing work on inclusion and belonging at the University.

There was notable progress in many other areas. It is worth taking account of some of the academic highlights of 2021-2022:

- Through difficult circumstances, there was **incredible teaching and mentoring**, often inspired by scholarship and creative activity, and/or tied to experiential learning. That is the heart of what we do, and the pulse was strong. Hats off to faculty and staff for that inspiring work.
- There was significant progress on **implementing the new General Education curriculum**, a seminal statement on what faculty think our students should study to prepare for lives of purpose. Many thanks to co-chairs Saif Mehkari and Tracy Roof, and the [GECIMP committee](#) for their ongoing work.
- Dr. Jennifer Cavanaugh will soon join us as the **new Dean of Arts and Sciences**. Thanks to all involved in recruiting her. We owe an enormous debt to Dan Palazzolo for his skilled and caring leadership as Interim Dean. Thank you, Dan, for your dedicated and thoughtful work.
- **Africana Studies** takes official flight as a new program in the fall. Ernest McGowen has led the formation of an advisory board, a faculty-approved curriculum and A&S has hired the first of three faculty in this area.
- **The Humanities Commons** programming is up and running. Cheers to Nathan Snaza for the outstanding series of lectures and conversations this Spring.

- The new high-performance computing cluster **SPYDUR** is up and running. Kudos to the engaged [DA/DS committee](#), SPYDUR support specialist George Flanagin, and IS colleagues.
- The **Faculty Hub** has provided another terrific year including increased opportunities in inclusive pedagogy, a new digital pedagogy cohort and grants program, and course design institutes.
- The **Faculty Fellows Program** for tenured undergraduate faculty will double in size to ten fellows starting with applications in the Fall. Over a normal six-year sabbatical cycle, that will provide an additional semester of course relief for 60 of the 189 tenured faculty in those schools.
- Two **new minors** were approved: Data Science and Statistics; and, Sustainability.
- CIE **Benchtop** piloted a two-semester course involving students from different schools. They created a new venture called “Absurd Snacks” that is gaining traction in local retailers. That model of applied learning has sparked interest in other areas.
- **2022 Faculty Scholarship Fund** remains open to applications for \$2000 scholarship support until August 22.

Exceptional hiring across schools continued last year. The searches were very competitive and yielded excellent new faculty. Search committees and deans did an outstanding job attracting and landing candidates. That attention and the commitment to using diversity and search advocates (DASAs) are having an impact on the overall composition of the faculty as seen in the chart below.

**Faculty Hiring -- % of Tenure Track Hires**

|                            | 2014-2017 | 2018-2021 |
|----------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Faculty of Color (FOC)     | 14%       | 29%       |
| International Faculty (IF) | 10%       | 27%       |
| FOC or IF                  | 25%       | 55%       |
| Female                     | 42%       | 57%       |

One of the highlights of the year was the return of on-campus intellectual community. Among the many wonderful events were the Jepson *Ethics of Choice* conference, the *MOVE!* dance concert, the Humanities Commons *Repair and Recovery* Series, the Robins C-Suite conversations, Hub Talks, the Law School’s nationally recognized *Junior Faculty Forum*, the theatrical production of *Standing Together Six Feet Apart*, and the return of in-person departmental and programmatic lecture series.

Congratulations to all, especially given the circumstances, on an outstanding 2021-2022 academic year.

I hope you find time for well-deserved rest and relaxation amidst your summer activities.

Take care and stay connected,

Jeff