

DEAN'S NEWSLETTER

Message from the Interim Dean

By Dr. Kristin Latham-Scott

Welcome to the tail end of Fall term, which has been a busy time for the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences (CLAS).

This academic year began with enthusiasm for a new year, new first-time students to our college and new faculty and staff, who brought zest and appreciation for our employees and programs. This Fall term has also been a time of transitions, as our college works with the rest of campus to implement a new faculty Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA), a new SEIU staff contract, and new initiatives for academic affairs. I find that transitions can be challenging, as we are all anticipating improvements to our systems, processes, and methods of our workflow, while at the same time entering unfamiliar landscapes and not yet having lived experience of how these updates will work going forward. I want to commend our faculty and staff for the work they have already put in, and preemptively for the work they will put in for the remainder of this year to implement our updates. I find that everyone I talk with in CLAS has student success at the heart of all that we do, and these changes will allow us to continue to do that work in more efficient, transparent, and effective ways.



Our University and our Division of Academic Affairs have released new strategic plans, that will empower and focus us in our initiatives and decision making to center our students, continue development and delivery of our high-quality education experiences, and embrace diversity, community, sustainability, accessibility, as we work to decrease equity gaps. The next step is the development of a CLAS college-level strategic plan. To lead this work and engage stakeholders of our college, I am building a CLAS Strategic Planning Leadership Team, consisting of faculty, staff, and students. I would like to acknowledge the division chairs and faculty who have been nominated and committed to this team - Dr. Steve Taylor (Natural Sciences & Mathematics), Dr. Paula Baldwin (Humanities), Dr. Halley Read

(Behavioral Sciences), Dr. Shaun Hansen (Business & Economics). I am still seeking staff and student members to round out this leadership group.

We are at a time where discussions are focused on the benefits of higher education and what we gain from students going through a college degree. I firmly believe that higher education benefits everyone – our students, their families, our communities, our society, and our nation and I will continue to advocate for the importance of college degrees and the benefits of college campuses. We are also at a point in Oregon where we have arrived at the enrollment cliff, with lower birth rates, fewer high school graduates, and students deciding whether college is the right next path for them. Our state also has been reckoning with state funding of

higher education at reduced levels. These are challenges; however, our college has shown our ability to adapt, innovate, and meet students where they are at, using our resources wisely, and creativity in seeking out additional resources. We will tap into our collective institutional memory and fresh ideas from newer colleagues. We have a history of being all-in on student support, finding new ways and methods to meet our collective student, staff, and faculty needs. I look forward to the challenges of this work as I believe it will allow CLAS to be more stable and sustainable for years to come.

Best wishes,

Kristin

CLAS NEWS BULLETIN

- ✓ In conjunction with programs in the College of Education, and the Admissions Team, CLAS is working with academic programs to **attract and retain transfer students from regional community colleges to WOU**. We have student-centered transfer processes, policies, and procedures to promote a seamless transition experience, and transfer students are a growing percentage of our overall student population. So far 11 programs have shared materials for this program, if your academic program is interested, contact **Paige Jackson, Assistant Provost for Enrollment Management and Student Success**.
- ✓ A **Workforce Ready Grant** of \$2M from the Oregon Legislature, administered by the Higher Education Coordinating Commission, was developed and awarded to faculty in CLAS and COE to support students majoring in **psychology, sociology, gerontology**, or those in **Chemeketa Community College's Behavioral Health program, Western's Master of Science in Rehabilitation and Mental Health Counseling program, and the Occupational Therapy Doctorate program**. The grant will run from 2025 through June 2026 to help train more counselors and mental health professionals, with a focus on bilingual (Spanish-English) behavioral health initiatives.
- ✓ The inaugural **Career Mobility Accounting Cohort** will finish their program this Fall, with a commencement ceremony in January 2025. This cohort was a **partnership between the State of Oregon, WOU, and faculty in Business & Economics** who taught the classes and coordinated the program for the cohort students. The commencement will celebrate the State of Oregon workers who completed their accounting and tax auditing education and are embarking on their application process to fill open positions with the state.

- ✓ The **Polk County Resource Center**, now located in Monmouth, collaborated with the **Gerontology Department** on a day-long **aging services summit** on Friday, December 6th at WOU. The summit brought together community partners, City Managers, Polk County Commissioners, WOU faculty and students together to discuss older adult services (55+), barriers to housing, barriers to transportation.
- ✓ CLAS Dean's office **Lunch and Learn** inaugural session was held Nov. 14th, with a follow up second session Dec 10th, 2024 and we explored learning about **Generative AI** and sharing tips and tricks.
- ✓ FEM in STEM and NSM staff member **Julie Grammer** shared our love of science and creativity at the **Annual Oregon Girl Scouts Day** in November, on the **Chemeketa** campus. We spent a full day with over 1800 individuals, hopefully including some future Wolves!
- ✓ **Occupational Therapy Doctoral program** welcomed their first cohort, and the faculty of the program were well-represented at the **Occupational Therapy Association of Oregon (OTAO)**, along with five of the new cohort students, at the conference in November 2024.
- ✓ A **Criminal Justice** course in principles of forensic investigation, hosted a **Murder Mystery Party**, replete with a full-sized tent, mockup camp site, investigation, misaccusation, and final revealing of the true murderer – all within Bellamy Hall.
- ✓ **Aquarium Sciences** program along with other students and faculty in Natural Science & Mathematics have developed displays of live organism habits in the NS building. Stop by to check out their work!
- ✓ **Cannon Gallery of Art** in Campbell Hall is featuring **James Kirk: Process, Figure and Form**, which showcases watercolors and drawings by the late Professor Emeritus of Art James Kirk (1925-2021).
- ✓ **Write Place** has recently “unfurled” the new issues of their online magazine, **Traverse**, including motherhood and beekeeping, war-torn Ukraine challenges and hope, beached whales, and cape trails along the water.
Find more here: <https://writeplace.org/magazine/traverse/>
- ✓ Staff in CLAS gathered for our quarterly **lunch** on Dec 5th 2024 in the WUC Summit room. We learned new fun facts about each other and enjoyed lively conversations!

FRONT TO BACK:

Renee Ray
Sharyne Ryals
Melissa Eddings
Ara Duddlesten
Tracy Boyson



BACK TO FRONT:

Amy Stewart
Laura Killip
Kristin Latham-Scott
Karen Scott
Debbie Braun
Katrien Cokeley

STUDENT RECOGNITION

Two undergraduate students, **Heather Seals and Maddie Coudriet**, joined Gerontology faculty in Seattle for the **Gerontological Society of America** annual scientific meeting which brings over 4,000 attendees from all over the world to share interdisciplinary research, education, and practice in the field of aging.



Charlotte Gunning (WOU OTD student), received an **Occupational Therapy Association of Oregon Student Scholarship** to the conference this Fall.

In September 2024, a number of WOU students from the NSM division joined faculty and staff from the **WOU-Tree Advisory Committee**, to give talks about unique trees on our campus, and planted a tree in support of WOU as a **Tree Campus Higher Education Institution**.



FACULTY RECOGNITION

Dr. Halley Read was awarded the **Grace Black Award of Honor**, highest award for an Occupational Therapy (OT) practitioner in Oregon. This award was established in 1976 to express recognition for contributions to the advancement of OT in Oregon. It is the highest honor that the **Occupational Therapy Association of Oregon** awards, thus a big honor, congrats Halley!



Three faculty from CLAS had been selected as **Provost Faculty Fellows**, a new initiative to recognize faculty's commitment to academic leadership, while also recognizing the significant contributions faculty make to the university community. Congratulations to CLAS faculty in this year's first cohort, **Dr. Patricia Gimenez-Eguibar, Dr. David Szpakowski, and Dr. Feier Hou!**

WELCOME TO CLAS!

****New Faculty Members****



Dr. Lauren Bouchard
Assistant Professor
of Gerontology



Dr. Alice Naftaly
Assistant Professor
of Biology



Dr. Brianne Salvati
Assistant Professor
of Occupational Therapy



Kindra Steenerson
Assistant Professor
of Theatre



Dr. Matthew Schroder
Faculty member in
Communication

****New Admin / Office Staff Members****



Melissa Eddings
APA Computer Science



Katrien Cokeley
OC CLAS Dean's Office

****Familiar Faces, New Positions****



Tracy Boyson
APA Behavioral Sciences



Aidan Hare
Dean's Office Graduate Assistant

Happy Holidays!

