

RADFORD UNIVERSITY

College of Humanities and Behavioral Sciences

TO: Faculty and Staff in the College of Humanities and Behavioral Sciences
FR: Dr. Matthew J. Smith, Dean
DA: March 24, 2023
RE: Dean's Report

My tenure as Interim Dean began in the spring of 2018 and continued until I was appointed Dean of the College in February 2020 following a national search. During my interview, I spoke about three pillars upon which my tenure as Dean would be built: a prioritization of students and their educational needs, a desire to recognize people for their contributions, and an expectation of ownership within one's role. Three years on, I believe those pillars are evident in the work cited below.

Among the ongoing projects that I am most excited to see evolve in our midst is the **Wicked Initiative**. Thanks to the foundational work of Drs. Heather Keith, Steve Fesmire, Paige Tan, and Tay Keong Tan, among other devoted colleagues, Wicked has evolved from courses and a festival to a minor and a toolkit for the United Nations and has now inspired an official student group with aspirations of publishing its own online journal. I was pleased to work with Dr. Keith last fall to co-sponsor a visit from Dr. Paul Hanstedt, author of *Creating Wicked Students*, and I am even more pleased to hear President Bret Danilowicz speak about our "Wicked Students" in speeches to prospective students and their families. The best is yet to come for Wicked!

I was also pleased to formally launch the **Law Society** at Homecoming, drawing into conversation our new Legal Studies minor, alumni with legal careers, our 3 + 3 accelerated programs with George Mason University and the Appalachian School of Law, and our recently launched, co-curricular Mock Trial Team. By February our partners in University Advancement, most especially Dr. Carter Turner, helped secure an \$85,000 gift to support student travel associated with the team, and we dedicated the Courtroom in honor of its alumnus benefactor, Mr. Chris Huther '88.

Six years ago, I worked with our colleagues in the School of Communication and the McGlothlin Center for Global Education and Engagement to establish an exchange program with the *Institut des Stratégies et Techniques de Communication (ISTC) in Lille, France*. Their International Relations Director, Julie Bergues, invited me to help launch a new international week program for graduate students, so I traveled to Lille in October and spent a week presenting lectures in my area of emphasis, graphic storytelling, networking with an international contingent of participating faculty, and representing Radford on a global stage. I am grateful for this opportunity to represent the university.

Additionally, I have been devoted to the following tasks as dean:



More than 300 hundred students representing nine courses from three colleges participated in the Wicked Festival in November. Dr. Smith (left) posed in front of the photo backdrop after introducing national expert Dr. Paul Hanstedt to the crowds in Kyle Hall.

Community Building Initiatives

Strengthening our sense of shared identity across the College continues to be a priority reflected in the following efforts:

- Raised a second year of funding for the Student Travel and Research Support (STARS) grants with the help of our partners in University Advancement, including Ms. Carolyn Clayton. In all, STARS has raised nearly \$30,000 to support students since its inception.
- Arranged for a “Townhall on Mar-a-Lago” featuring contributions from Dr. Jenny Walton, Dr. Chapman Rackaway, and Mr. Don Martin
- Expanded a program to introduce individual members of the CHBS Advisory Board to individual faculty members in order to connect them to students in their courses (now up to 29 participating board members and 25 collaborating faculty)
- Provided guidance to the new Chair in PHRE, new commanding officer in ROTC, and interim chair in CRJU
- Continued to endorse the work of the CHBS Mentoring Group and the Honors and Awards Committee
- Supported the faculty in Psychology as they worked towards discontinuing the PsyD program and preparing a teach-out plan for the students currently enrolled
- Offered office space for the work study and programmatic needs of the CHBS-led “Safe Zone Training” program
- Advocated for CHBS participation in the university plans for a common read in Fall 2023 using *How to be Perfect* across the curriculum

Academic and Resource Initiatives

The following academic initiatives helped move our programs forward:

- Collaborated with Dean Bachrach in the Artis College and faculty across the university to explore efforts to create Environmental/Sustainability programming, including monthly meetings through the fall and spring semesters
- Hosted conversations about reorganizing departments within the humanities, potentially into a School, including a faculty forum on March 23
- Supported efforts to further expand the services of the Social Media And Research Technology (SMART) Lab, notably with talks with an external partner and a government earmark proposal authored by Dr. John Brummette
- Worked with Virginia Tech Dean Laura Belmonte and CHBS chairs to open dialogues about forming VT-RU relationships for potential 3+2, 4+1, and 4+2 programs for graduate admission
- Led college's effort to identify strategies for "Faculty Redeployment" with two pilots running in spring and several more slated for fall, include the creation of a Living and Learning Community in Criminal Justice

In addition, I brought together stakeholders to address these resource-related matters:

- Resourced \$10,000 in support for CHBS grants to individual faculty to underwrite several scholarly projects
- Conferred with the Office of Advancement to secure a \$350,000 gift for the Department of Psychology and three new endowed scholarship for the College
- Advocated for resources like faculty lines, especially those vacated by retirements and resignations
- Coordinated the efforts of the chairs to present one-time funding requests that resulted in over \$35,000 of support for ENGL, CRJU, PSYC, and Wicked initiatives

Searches

We have conducted the following searches within the College since my last report:

- Criminal Justice: Administrative Assistant (Audra Mayhew)
- English: Tenure-Track Asst. Prof. of Creative Writing and British Literature (pending)
- English: Administrative Assistant (pending)
- History: Assistant Professor in Virginia History (pending)
- Psychology: Tenure-Track Assistant Professor in I/O Psychology (Dr. Young-Kook Moon)
- Psychology: Tenure-Track Assistant Professor in I/O Psychology (Dr. Teresa Ristow)
- Psychology: Tenure-Track Assistant Professor in Social/Experimental (Dr. Dan Berry)
- Psychology: Tenure-Track Assistant Professor for School Psychology (pending)
- Sociology: Tenure-Track Asst. Prof./Director of AAST (pending)



The CHBS Ambassadors, Associate Dean Kim Gainer, and Dean Smith greet students and their families at Parent's Weekend. Step right up and spin the wheel for a prize!

I have also collaborated on processes for selecting internal leadership positions involving the directorship of the Governor's School (James Robey) and the Interdisciplinary Humanities Research Laboratory (Amy Rubens). Beyond our college, I have served as a member of the following university-level searches:

- Dean of the Artis College of Science and Technology (Steven Bachrach)
- Director of Institutional Effectiveness and Quality Improvement (Jessica Stowell)
- Vice President of Enrollment Management and Strategic Communications, Chair (pending)

In a related personnel management matter, I also helped supervise the process of four colleagues opting to enroll in the Faculty Early Retirement Program (FERP).

Evaluation of Faculty and Staff

A sizeable portion of the dean's responsibilities involves reviewing and recommending faculty and staff, due in no small part to the fact that we are the largest College in the University. In the past year, I have processed the following:

- 94 Faculty Annual Evaluations
- 30 reappointment reviews for contingent faculty
- 12 tenure and/or promotion recommendations
- 9 chair/director reviews
- 3 emeriti recommendations
- 8 recommendations for Faculty Professional Development Leave
- 3 staff annual reviews

Administrative Duties

In addition to those vital personnel matters, I have collaborated with stakeholders to manage the following fiduciary, academic, and managerial duties:

Fiduciary Responsibilities:

- Consult with Ms. Stacey Griffin, Executive Secretary, to manage the College's \$11 million budget
- Confer with the chairs and director to develop Equipment Trust Fund requests
- Approve all spending requests across the College through Chrome River
- Build three budget models of +1%, -2%, and -4% in consultation with chairs

Academic Responsibilities:

- Interface with CHBS Lead Advisor in the Highlander Success Center, to review all academic petitions and suspension appeals (this role has rotated from Sarah Bradbury to Parker Martin to Dana Trask to Kristina Contreras over the course of this year)
- Review all study away/abroad proposals, of which CHBS has the most in the university
- Confer with the Director of the Governor's School and the Dean of the College of Visual and Performing Arts in managing Governor's School policies, personnel, and budgets, which included identifying new administrative support this year
- Approve the work of the CHBS Curriculum Committee, including all course revisions and program approvals in the college that flow through Curriculog

Managerial Responsibilities:

- Draft agendas for and preside over weekly meetings of the CHBS Leadership Team
- Meet with individual chairs and directors on a monthly and ad hoc basis to address matters in the departments and school (e.g., personnel issues, resource requests, schedules)
- Host semi-annual meetings of our 30-member CHBS Advisory Board and quarterly meetings of its executive officers and committees
- Promote the CHBS Advisory Board's Distinguished Alumni Awards and preside over its Homecoming ceremony
- Chair weekly staff meetings for Dean's Office for internal coordination
- Supervise Ms. Kerie Hayes, the Assistant to the Dean, in planning the College's major events and managing its 144,000 square foot facility
- Coordinate with Dr. Kim Gainer, the Associate Dean, to manage projects, ongoing and ad hoc, including the College Ambassadors program and the Adjunct Faculty Handbook



Dean Smith hosted the ceremony naming the Courtroom in honor of Christopher S. Huther '88 and featuring remarks by President Bret Danilowicz in February.

University Committee Membership

As dean, I have represented the college on four standing university-wide leadership bodies:

- President's Leadership Council
- Academic Affairs Leadership Team (AALT)
- Dean's Council
- Academic Program Review and Enhancement Committee (APREC)



Dean Smith explains the functionality of "Stress Squirrels" to an attentive prospective family during fall open house.

And I served on four ad hoc committees in the past year:

- Capital Campaign Steering Committee
- Course Minimums and Faculty Workload Committee (co-chair)
- Multidisciplinary Program Working Group, Version 1.0 and 2.0
- SACS-COC Reaffirmation Academic Advisory Committee

Representing the College

I was honored to represent the College in the following events during the last year:

- Board of Visitors meetings
- Crossroads Antiracism
- Enrollment Management Forum
- Highlander Days
- Open House events
- Day of Thanks celebration
- Media and Society Roundtable
- Poli Sci Days
- Quest
- ROTC ceremonies
- State of the University address
- Veteran's Day ceremony
- Volunteer Summit
- Wicked Festival

Teaching

In the past year, I have conducted the following instructional activities:

- Taught COMS 439 /539 Communication and Leadership (3 credits) to 13 undergraduate and 3 graduate students in Spring 2022
- Taught COMS 460: Communication and Philanthropy (3 credits) to 8 undergraduate students in Fall 2022
- Guest lectured on the topic of ethnography in COMS 605: Applied Communication Research for Mr. Michael Meindl in Spring 2023

- Delivered guest lectures via Zoom to students the University of Lynchburg and the University of St. Michael's College (Canada)
- Offered communication training to 50 Advocacy Day student representatives prior to their visit to Richmond and then journeyed to Richmond with them at the request of the Office of the President and VP for Student Affairs, December-January

At present, I am planning two additional instructional activities:

- Planning to offer the topics course, "Communication and Philanthropy" in Fall 2023
- Anticipating a public lecture at the Radford Library on "Exploring Difficult Themes in Graphic Novels" with several colleagues on March 28

Scholarship

A few projects came to fruition over the course of this academic year, including:

- Published "Pilgrimage to Hall H: Fan Agency at Comic-Con" as a chapter in *Comics and Agency* with De Gruyter
- Edited and published four additional volumes in the Routledge Advances in Comics Series

In addition to those, I am still working on the following:

- Co-editing the Routledge Advances in Comics Series, with another three volumes in production
- Editing the manuscript for my twelfth book project, *The Power of Comics & Graphic Novels: Culture, Form, and Context (3rd edition)*, for Bloomsbury
- Developing the resource materials for the companion website of that textbook and submitted them to Bloomsbury for review and publication
- Awaiting the publication of the completed manuscript for "Mojo Rising: Critiquing Mass Media through Animation and Comics" with Michael Meindl and Matthew Turner in a chapter for the forthcoming *Futures of Cartoons Past: The Cultural Politics of X-Men: The Animated Series*
- Participating in ongoing discussions and planning of the grant-funded research group, "Storming the Con," which anticipates a large-scale ethnography project at Comic-Con International in 2023
- Anticipating participation in a documentary film, *Life in the Comics*, by Dr. Robert Lemieux of McDaniel College, pending funding approval by the National Endowment for the Humanities
- Continuing co-curating duties on "Marvel: Universe of Super Heroes"; currently at the Museum of Science and Industry in Portland, Oregon, and opening in May at Discovery Place in Charlotte, North Carolina; the exhibit has hosted more than 900,000 people since debuting in 2018.

Professional Service

I accomplished the following professional service projects this past year:

- Functioned as faculty mentor to two graduate students through the Comics Studies Society
- Served as an informal mentor to Dr. Lan Dong, Interim Dean of Liberal Arts and Sciences at the University of Illinois Springfield

In all, it has been a productive year, and I have sincerely appreciated the opportunity to serve the College once again. Certainly, I am grateful to everyone who has demonstrated their support throughout this time.

Sincerely,



Matthew J. Smith, Ph.D.



Dean Smith poses with one of the two student groups that he worked with while visiting the Institut des Stratégies et Techniques de Communication (ISTC) in Lille, France in October. Each class spent three days in workshops with him and their poster projects are arrayed on the wall behind them.



Dean Smith (first row, far right) at the Virginia State Capitol with the Radford team during Advocacy Day.