

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 26, 2021
RE: Dean's Report

I began my tenure as Interim Dean in the spring of 2018 and continued in that role until appointed Dean of the College on February 25, 2020, following a national search. During my interview, I spoke about the 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 for one's larger responsibilities within one's role. I believe those pillars are already evident in the works cited below.

So much has been different about the role of the dean in the pandemic era. For instance, rather than attending in-person events, I found myself tasked with a number of new duties necessary to managing the times. For example, I reviewed 31 work-from-home arrangement requests in the fall and 20 more in the spring. There were also numerous meetings with the Leadership Council and our own CHBS Leadership Team in planning for and reacting to the situation. Still, there were opportunities for interaction, such as Zooming with each department at the start of the new year, and moments of triumph, such as launching our Student Travel and Research Support (STARS) initiative with over \$5000 in donations during the Highlander 10 Challenge. Ideally, there will be many more of those celebratory moments moving into a post-pandemic world.

Community Building Initiatives

As I laid out in my job interview, I continue to expand efforts to strengthen the sense of shared identity across the College, and to that end pursued the following initiatives:

- Commissioned a REAL Marketing Task Force to explore ways to better position CHBS programs in the new General Education program (with members Geoff Pollick, Laura Vernon, John Brummette, and Sarah Bradbury)
- Supported updates to the CHBS Mentoring Group based on input from probationary faculty
- Introduced a "Valedictory Series" to honor retiring faculty in Spring 2020 (converted into a series of online essays)
- Facilitated the virtual presentation of the CHBS Awards for Distinguished Teaching, Scholarship, and Service via a pre-recorded video presentation in the fall
- Coordinated the semi-annual meetings of the CHBS Advisory Board and initiated a program to connect members to individual faculty
- Contributed to "The Power of Animation" Screen Studies Roundtable in February 2021
- Hosted a welcome tour of CHBS facilities and personnel for Provost Lepre in December

Academic and Managerial Initiatives

Additionally, I undertook the following College-relevant initiatives, as dictated by circumstance and responsibility:

- Worked with faculty, chairs, and administration in devising a new administrative structure for FORL and ENGL
- Assisted Industrial/Organizational Psychology faculty in proposing a new center, The Work Place
- Supported the School of Communication in the development of the Social Media Watch Center into the SMART Lab
- Collaborated with our Pre-Law faculty to bring discounted LSAT testing fees to our students and to initiate a 3+3 agreement with Appalachian School of Law
- Partnered with our ROTC officers to renew our contractual affiliation with the United States Department of the Army
- Drafted supporting memos for the Academic Program Reviews for ENGL and CRJU
- Coordinated with the Office of Enrollment Management to build out new promotional materials for PSYC and CRJU
- Directed College leadership in revising schedules to accommodate pandemic protocols
- Conferred with the Office of Advancement—especially our gifts officer, Dr. Carter Turner—to launch strategies towards College fund-raising goals and priorities
- Advocated for resources like faculty lines, especially those vacated by retirements and resignations
- Chaired weekly staff meetings for Dean’s Office to improve internal coordination

Searches

I believe that the single most important administrative task we undertake is the hiring of colleagues, as these decisions impact our students for years to come. As such, as dean I consider time collaborating with departments on searches to be time well spent, including the following searches we have conducted within the College:

- School of Communication: Director (pending)
- School of Communication: Special Purpose Faculty (pending)
- Criminal Justice: Chair (Dr. Eric Williams)
- Criminal Justice: Full-Time Temporary Assistant Professor (Dr. Stacy Clifton)
- Criminal Justice: Special Purpose Faculty (pending)
- Political Science: Chair (pending)
- Political Science: Full-Time Temporary Assistant Professor (Dr. Iulia Hoban)
- Psychology: Full-Time Temporary Special Purpose Faculty (Dr. Sterling Barfield)

I have also worked on interim leadership positions involving the Communication, Criminal Justice, and Political Science programs.

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:

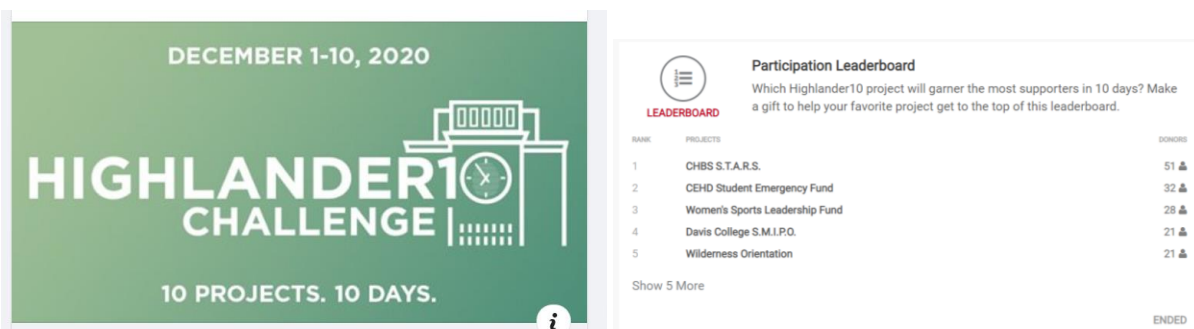
- 106 Faculty Annual Evaluations
- 34 reappointment reviews for contingent faculty
- 10 tenure and/or promotion recommendations
- 9 chair/director reviews
- 7 recommendations for the Honors Faculty Fellows program
- 4 recommendations for Faculty Professional Development Leave
- 4 emeritus recommendations
- 3 staff annual reviews

Administrative Duties

In addition to those vital personnel matters, I have also maintained responsibility for the following fiduciary, academic, and managerial duties:

Fiduciary Responsibilities:

- Consult with Ms. Stacey Griffin, Executive Secretary, to manage the College's \$11 million budget
- Collaborate with the chairs and director to develop ETF funding requests
- Approve all spending requests across the College through Chrome River



CHBS raised more than \$5000 with support from the most donors of any initiative in the competition during the Highlander 10 Challenge.

Academic Responsibilities:

- Interface with Ms. Gloria Tuckwiller, the Director of the CHBS Advising Center, to review academic petitions and policy changes, and to prepare for her office to transition to the Academic Success Center
- Review all study away/abroad proposals, of which CHBS has the most in the university
- Confer with the Director of the Governor School and the Dean of CVPA in managing Governor School policies, personnel, and budgets
- Approve the work of the CHBS Curriculum Committee, which this year has included dozens of REAL program alignment proposals and hundreds of course revision proposals

Managerial Responsibilities:

- Draft agendas for and preside over weekly meetings of the CHBS Leadership Team
- Meet with individual chairs and directors to address matters in the departments and school (e.g., personnel issues, resource requests, schedules)
- Promote the CHBS Advisory Board's Distinguished Alumni Awards
- Supervise Ms. Kerie Benson, the Assistant to the Dean, in managing the College's 144,000 square foot facility, and in launching a quarterly CHBS Newsletter for faculty, staff, students, and alumni
- Coordinate with Dr. Kim Gainer, the Associate Dean, to manage projects, ongoing and ad hoc, that benefit from her superior organizational abilities

University Committee Membership

As dean, I have represented the college on four standing university-wide leadership bodies, and served on four other ad hoc committees in the past year:

- President's Leadership Council
- Academic Affairs Leadership Team (AALT)
- Dean's Council
- Academic Program Review Committee (APRC)
- Capital Campaign Steering Committee
- REAL Implementation Steering Committee & its Academic Management Subcommittee
- Course Minimums and Faculty Workload Committee (dean's representative)
- New Student and Family Programs Advisory Committee (dean's representative)

Representing the College

I was honored to represent the College in the following events (mostly virtual) during the last year:

- Board of Visitors meetings
- Highlander Days
- Psi Chi (PSYC honorary) induction
- Quest
- ROTC ceremonies
- RUC Operations Advisory Group
- Summer Research Celebration
- Taubman Museum collaboration

Teaching

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

- Taught COMS 439/539: Communication and Leadership (3 credits) to 20 undergraduate and 4 graduate students in Spring 2020
- Taught COMS 611: Strategic Communication Ethics (3 credits) to 3 graduate students in Fall 2020

At present, I am working on one additional instructional activity:

- Teaching COMS 439 /539 Communication and Leadership (3 credits) to 13 undergraduates and 7 graduate students in Spring 2021

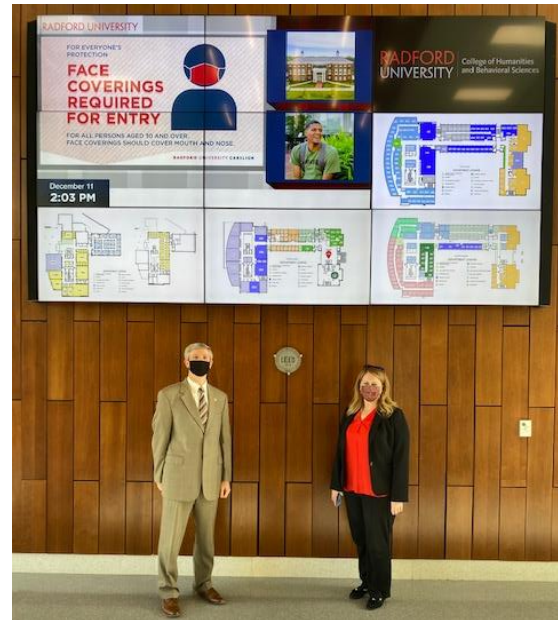
Scholarship

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

- Submitted a proposal and received a contract for my twelfth book, *The Power of Comics and Graphic Novels: Culture, Form, and Context (3rd edition)*, for Bloomsbury
- Contributed to a group authored article, “Comic-Con@Home: Virtual Comics Event Declared a Failure by Industry Critics, but Fans Loved It” that debuted online on *The Conversation* on September 9, 2020
- Created an online essay, “From Dr. Octopus to the Superior Spider-Man and Back Again: Critiquing the Illusion of Change” for *In Media Res* on April 14, 2020
- Chaired “Authors Assemble! A Roundtable on Advancing Comics Studies” for the Comics and Popular Arts Conference on August 10, 2020 (online)
- Presented “Pilgrimage to Hall H: Fan Agency at Comic-Con” at the Annual Conference of the German Society for Comics Studies on October 10, 2020 (online)
- Delivered “Crisis Management: *Arrowverse* Cross-Overs as Media Consumption Strategy” and served as respondent on an additional panel at the National Communication Association conference on November 19, 2020 (online)
- Reviewed a book proposal, *The International Politics of Superheroes*, for Routledge
- Appeared as a featured commentator on the SiriusXM podcast, “Origins,” for *Marvel Declassified* debuting on December 17, 2020, and available for download on the SiriusXM app

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

- Co-editing the Routledge Advances in Comics Series, with three additional volumes in production currently

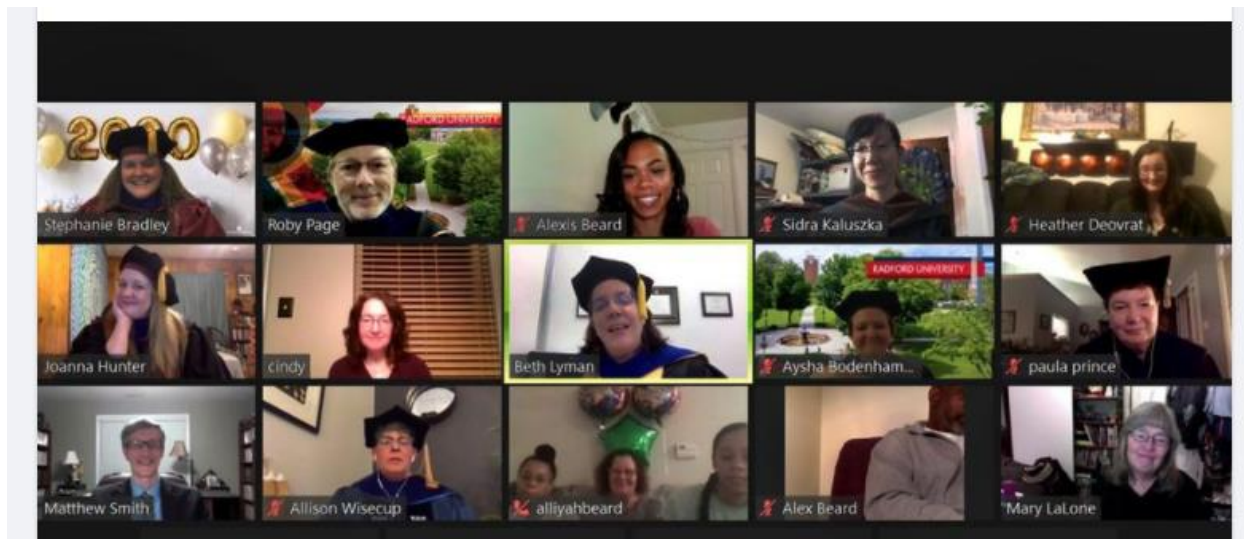


Dr. Smith welcomed new Provost Lyn Lepre to CHBS for a socially-distanced tour of the facility.

- Revising a completed draft of “Mojo Rising: Critiquing Mass Media through Animation and Comics” with Michael Meindl and Matthew Turner as a chapter for the forthcoming *Futures of Cartoons Past: The Cultural Politics of X-Men: The Animated Series*
- Joining the Board of Editors in founding the *Superhero Journal*
- Anticipating participating in a documentary film, *Life in the Comics*, by Dr. Robert Lemieux of McDaniel College, pending National Endowment for the Humanities approval
- Co-authoring an invited article on storytelling and comics for the journal *New Area Studies* due in July
- Continuing co-curating duties on “Marvel: Universe of Super Heroes,”; slowed by the pandemic, the exhibit has still hosted more than 850,000 people since debuting in 2018; it is presently open at the Museum of Science and Industry in Chicago.

Professional Service

I am serving as President of the Comics Studies Society with more than 300 members internationally, and coordinating the business of this learned society, including chairing its Executive Board meetings, serving on the conference planning committee for 2021, and overseeing recruitment efforts for a new interest group for academic librarians. We recently completed a major overhaul to our bylaws that will impact the society for years to come.



Among the most enjoyable virtual events that Dr. Smith got to participate in this year was the winter commencement celebration sponsored by the Sociology faculty.

I have sincerely appreciated the opportunity to serve the College this year, and I am grateful to everyone who has demonstrated their support throughout this difficult year.

Sincerely,

Matthew J. Smith, Ph.D.