

Subject: College of Sciences Monday Matters: The Year Ahead

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From: Dodge, Gail

To: Dodge, Gail

CC: Bayse, Craig A., Wallach, Josh, Whitfield, Tiffany L.

Dear Colleagues:

Normally at this time of the year we would be gathering for the State of the College presentation and lunch in the Big Blue Room. We will all miss the chance to catch up with colleagues from around the college and feel the energy of the new semester.

We are very fortunate to welcome 14 new faculty to our college, including nine Assistant Professors, 1 Professor, and 4 Lecturers. Two of these new colleagues started in the Spring semester already. We also have three new staff members since January. Please read about your new colleagues on the [College of Sciences web page](#) and on our social media accounts.

Over the course of this new academic year we have a tremendous opportunity. Not only do we have the chance to enrich the lives of our undergraduate and graduate students with a high quality education (remote, in-person, in the lab, etc.), but we also have the chance to refocus on our priorities. Let me talk briefly about four of those priorities.

First we will work hard to increase the diversity of our faculty. Central to this goal will be creating a welcoming and supportive environment so that we are successful both in recruiting and retaining our faculty. The university is making this a strong priority and we will support and embrace university initiatives in this regard. In addition, the College of Sciences Diversity Committee, led by Debbie Waller, will make new recommendations to us concerning mentoring, the search process, and other issues. More information on their activities can be found at <https://odu.edu/sci/about/faculty-inclusion>. They welcome your input.

Second, we will redouble our efforts to support student success. We are already doing a lot in this regard. However, the time has come to think creatively about what else we can do to help our students realize their dream of majoring in science and prepare them well for a real job when they graduate. Associate Dean Joshua Wallach will be leading a faculty discussion about this topic – we are eager to hear your ideas. Graduate student success is an important part of this goal and Associate Dean Craig Bayse will be leading our efforts to improve and enhance the experience of our graduate students.

Third, we will focus on how we can support, enhance, and expand our research enterprise. Given the budget realities this year, this will not be about expensive new initiatives. We will examine how we spend the resources we do have, how we support faculty in their research goals, how we can improve our research infrastructure, and how we can bring faculty together within and across disciplines to build up new areas of strength.

Finally, we will endeavor to improve communication at all levels within the college. This may sound like a lesser goal compared to the others listed above. However, communication is critical to creating an environment where everyone can do their best work and where everyone feels included and valued. It is particularly challenging to ensure adequate communication under the current circumstances when we do not encounter each other at events and in the hallways as we have in the past. That is all the more reason to focus on this issue now and improve the way we do business.

In closing, let me again express my huge appreciation for the many ways that faculty and staff contribute to our mission, adapt to new realities, and serve our students. This year will be about more than just managing with COVID-19. When this year is over we will be proud of our accomplishments in many arenas, and we will celebrate those successes!

Thank you!

Gail

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