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UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS | SPRINGFIELD

# Academic Affairs Update

News for faculty and staff  
from the **Provost's Office**

## Academic Affairs News - April 2024

### From Provost Schwab

Dear Colleagues,

As we approach the end of the academic year, I want to extend my heart-felt thanks to the campus community for making my first year at UIS a positive one. (At least from my perspective!) I am grateful for the support I have received and am thankful for the many dedicated faculty and staff at UIS who are so committed to supporting our wonderful students. This is a difficult time globally, and we face many challenges across higher education and within the UIS community. That said, I believe we can all feel proud of the work we do to change lives for the better. It is not easy, but it is important work.

Despite the challenges ahead, I am confident that our collective strength and determination will guide us through. With your expertise, creativity, and passion, we will emerge stronger, more resilient, and better able to meet the evolving needs of our students and community. We can go far if we go to together.

As we soon shift to summer, I wish you well whether you are working on campus, diving into research, teaching a summer course, exploring the opportunities of generative AI, traveling or enjoying a "stay-cation." Whatever you do, I hope it includes time to rest and recharge and enjoy time with those you care about and care for you.

Thanks again and all the best,

Brandon

### Provost's open hours

- Provost's open hours for faculty/staff and for students will resume in the fall.

### Opportunities to make a difference

- **High-Impact Practices:** Our new High-Impact Practices (HIPs) Director, **Ryan Flynn**, wants to know how you incorporate high-impact practices into your teaching. As part of the **Strengthening Institutions Program** grant, Ryan will be taking inventory of the HIPs that are already a part of our repertoire. So, if you help students with senior capstone projects, use collaborative assignments and projects, teach about diversity or global learning, use ePortfolios, teach a first-year seminar, collaborate on internships, participate in a learning community or require service or community-based learning, mentor undergraduate research, or teach writing-intensive courses—**please reach out to Ryan after May 13** so he can catalog the rich learning experiences you provide. Don't be surprised if he reaches out to you too after he settles in.
- Employees are encouraged to take advantage of available **training opportunities offered through Academic Impressions** focused on understanding foundations of diversity, equity and inclusion, combatting implicit bias, understanding intersectionality, and a training on how to support others (how to be an ally) effectively. All UIS faculty and staff can access a wide range of resources offered by Academic Impressions by using their UIS email to create a free account at <https://www.academicimpressions.com/>.

### **Diversity training:**

- [Get Comfortable Being Uncomfortable: Engaging in Dialogue About Race and Bias](#)
- [DEI Foundations: Implicit Bias in Higher Education](#)
- [DEI Foundations: Intersectionality in Higher Education](#)
- [DEI Foundations: Allyship in Higher Education](#)

### **Additional training for UEOs and administrators:**

- [Inclusive Leadership: Understand Your Intersecting Identities to Better Serve Others](#)
- [Managing Change as an Inclusive Leader](#)

Although these trainings are only a first step, we hope they will serve as a foundational basis for continuous improvements in campus climate.

### **Resource refresh**

- **Lodging Rental Brokers:** Rental brokers (e.g., Airbnb, Tripping, Home Away) provide university travelers with flexibility and alternative options to expensive hotels when on university business. The use of a lodging rental broker is allowed as a travel expense as long as the daily rate does not exceed the University of Illinois System's [Lodging Allowance Rates](#). Find more details about the university's policy regarding [lodging rental brokers](#).
- Explore and register for [upcoming training events from University Accounting and Financial Reporting](#) about year-end procedures and deadlines, property accounting, and more . . .
- **Segregation of Duties/Prohibited Role Combinations (reminder):** OBFS policy 9.1.2

mitigates the risks of non-segregation of duties by prohibiting certain role combinations for enterprise-wide systems. Access to enterprise-wide applications by an employee with a prohibited role combination is only allowed after obtaining advance approval for an exception request. [Read more about the Segregation of Duties policy and access the exception request form](#)

### News worth celebrating

- **Chris Denq**, a mathematics major, has been awarded the [Outstanding Undergraduate Research award](#) for best paper and presentation at the March 15 Mathematical Association of America (MAA): Illinois Section 2024 Conference. Denq's winning project is titled "A Meshfree Deep Learning Approach for Numerical Solution of Differential Equations." His research explores the field of physics-informed neural networks, an innovative area at the intersection of applied mathematics and artificial intelligence. Denq conducted this award-winning research under the guidance of his advisor, **Dr. Liang Kong**.
- Congratulations to eleven students recognized with Best Presentation Awards at the spring **STARS** event: **Rabbiat AlHassan** (Technology; faculty mentor **Te-Wei Wang**), **Prashanth Ravella**, **Abhishek Nemani**, and **Trushna Bharwad** (Business, faculty mentor **Neetu Singh**), **Alaynna Alderman** (Humanities, faculty mentor **Livia Woods**), **Helena Soares** (Humanities, faculty mentor **Hei-Chi Chan**), **Kelsie Burrows** (Natural Sciences, faculty mentor **Angela Doehring**), **Elijah Eshun** (Social Sciences, faculty mentor **Suyang Yu**), **Maxine Touchette** (Arts, faculty mentor **Mike Miller**), **Savannah Saltsgaver** (Arts, faculty mentor **Mike Miller**), and **Sophia Britt** (Arts, faculty mentor **Shane Harris**).
- Also recognized at the STARS event were Faculty Mentor Award recipients **Dr. Xiaoqing Li** (Business), **Dr. Livia Woods** (Humanities), **Dr. Natalya Zinkevich** (Natural Sciences), **Dr. Liang Kong** (Natural Sciences), and **Dr. Betsy Goulet** (Social Sciences).
- **Connor Krater**, a 2023 master's in history graduate, was honored on April 12, 2024, with the [Outstanding Master's Thesis Award](#) for the 2022-2023 academic year. **Professor Heather Bailey** served as Connor's thesis advisor.
- Congratulations to three faculty recently selected to receive CBM Faculty Awards: **Dr. Zihan Liu – Scholar of the Year**, **Dr. Serkan Karadas – Teacher of the Year**, and **Dr. Neetu Singh – Service of the Year**.
- CHST announced the following faculty and staff award recipients: Exemplary Organizational Citizen Award for Faculty - **Carrie Switzer**, Psychology; Exemplary Organizational Citizen Award for Staff - **Becky Wort**, Dean's Office; Inspirational Educator Award for Tenured/Tenure-Track Faculty - **Tia Bolivar**, Psychology; Inspirational Educator Award for Non-Tenure Track Faculty - **Dylan Blaum**, Psychology; Inspirational Educator Award for Adjunct Faculty - **Casara Marsaglia**, Mathematical Sciences and Philosophy; Pinnacle of Discovery Award - **Liang Kong**, Mathematical Sciences and Philosophy. Congratulations!

- **Donna Bussell**, English, was recently awarded a \$20,000 Intergovernmental Agreement with the Illinois EPA for English Department summer writing workshops to assist with document creation that aligns with the Plain Text mandate(s).
- The College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences (CLASS) is part of a \$25,000 **National Endowment for the Humanities** (NEH) grant aimed at helping public colleges and universities navigate the world of **artificial intelligence**. The funding was awarded to CLASS Dean **Miriam Wallace**, and Emily Todd at Eastern Connecticut University, through a partnership with the Council of Public Liberal Arts Colleges (COPLAC). [Read more about the Navigating AI grant](#)
- Congratulations to **Beth Ribarsky**, director of the School of Communication and Media, for recognition in early April at the annual conference of the Central States Communication Association for Basic Course Interest Group Top Paper Award, Undergraduate Education and Administration Top Paper Award, Communication Education Interest Group Top Panel Award, and for being elected chair of the Undergraduate Education and Administration Group.

### Important dates

- Monday, April 29, 2:30 pm – **Faculty Honors Reception** (registration required)
- [Link to the schedule of Commencement week events](#)

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Office of the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and Provost

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