

Provost's Corner

Bette S. Bergeron, Provost & Senior VP for Academic Affairs

December 16, 2020

Finals Week Edition

We have made it—our unprecedented Fall, 2020 semester is successfully wrapping up, and finals are nearly behind us. I want to again thank each of you for your persistence, creativity, advocacy, and resilience in what I know was an incredibly challenging semester for you and your students. It is a privilege working with each of you.

As noted in a recent memo from President Esterberg, our campus' successes this fall are due in large part to the diligence of every member of our SUNY Potsdam community in adhering to the health and safety guidelines necessitated by the pandemic. Throughout the semester, the campus experienced a relatively small number of cases of COVID-19—under 15 cases prior to our planned pivot to virtual instruction (updates on our cases can be found on our [Coronavirus Case Detail site](#)).

SUNY's Chancellor has developed very specific guidelines for all SUNY campuses related to expectations around testing, move in/move out, calendars, and remote instruction. These guidelines can be accessed [here](#). SUNY Potsdam's Emergency Response Resource Group (ERRG) has finalized our campus' spring reopening plan, which has been submitted to SUNY System administration. This plan includes details of our spring calendar; more information is included in this Newsletter. In order to continue our campus-wide communication related to COVID's impact, virtual town halls will resume in the New Year. In addition, I will continue to meet regularly with the Academic Affairs Continuity Working Group, and hold "Virtual Chats" with the Council of Chairs and Program Directors, in order to share updates, gather feedback, and work collaboratively to resolve issues (and address opportunities!) as they arise.

As a reminder, our [Coronavirus Update](#) website includes information and resources related to [Learning Remotely](#) and [Teaching Remotely](#). I also want to direct your attention to the new [Readiness Self-Assessment](#) developed to assist students in self-identifying the most appropriate learning modality that best aligns with their learning style. Please be sure to share this with your students.

I hope that you, your students, and your families have a restful and joyous winter break!

New Faces/New Positions

Interim Dean, The Crane School of Music. I want to congratulate *Jill Pearson* once again on her recently announced appointment as Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs at Indiana University South Bend, a position she will assume in February, 2021. Over the past 17 years, Jill has served SUNY Potsdam and The Crane School of Music with distinction. She joined the Crane faculty in 2003 as an Assistant Professor of Voice, and later served as voice area coordinator for two years before being named Assistant Provost in 2009, the same year she was promoted to associate professor. In 2013, Jill was named a full professor and also led the Department of Performance as interim chair. Beginning in 2015, she joined the Provost's Office full-time, as the Associate Provost, after briefly serving in the position in an interim capacity. Additionally, she led the Center for Creative Instruction as acting director, starting in 2017. Finally, in July 2020, Jill was named Interim Dean of The Crane School of Music, upholding the School's history of excellence as she oversaw Crane's safe resumption of in-person musical activities, balanced with creative virtual experiences, in response to the pandemic.

Jill has been a creative academic leader who has supported a variety of strategically important initiatives on campus including facilitation of the creation of OneStop and the campus' Middle States accreditation. Her many leadership skills include a keen understanding of process management, and she has led efforts across Academic Affairs to identify efficiencies and significantly improve outdated processes. Jill has been very active in the state as well, as has often worked directly with SUNY to advocate for Potsdam's academic programs. With the professional goal of a position as a provost, Jill has participated this year in the Association of American Colleges and University's highly selective Becoming a Provost Academy. Jill's selection as Executive Vice Chancellor at IUSB is a well-earned culmination of the leadership, innovation, and expertise that she has clearly brought to our campus over her 17-year tenure at SUNY Potsdam.

I am thrilled to announce that *Lonel Woods* will assume the role of Interim Dean, effective January 1st. Lonel holds a Doctor of Musical Arts from the University of Michigan and has been teaching in The Crane School of Music for over a decade. Lonel has an outstanding record both in his teaching and professional career resulting in receiving the highest award in the SUNY System, the Chancellor's Award for Faculty and Professional Service. In addition, Lonel serves on many important campus committees and has been a staunch advocate of our campus' diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts. Lonel will serve as Interim Dean through June 30, 2022.

I am also very pleased to share that *Chuck Guy* will be stepping into the role of Chair of the Music Performance Department. Chuck is a Professor of Tuba and Euphonium, and a member of the Potsdam Brass Quintet, Orchestra of New York, and Northern Symphonic Winds. His orchestral experience also includes performances with the Syracuse Symphony, Rochester Philharmonic, Michigan Opera Theatre, and Midland Symphony Orchestras.

With Jill's departure, *Alan Hersker*, Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs and Director of Graduate and Continuing Education, will become the provost's designee. With this new responsibility, Alan will serve as my representative on selected committees and as my official designee when I am away from campus.

Congratulations to Jill, Lonel, Chuck, and Alan on their new leadership roles and appointments!

New Roles.

- *Tracy Lipke-Perry* (Crane) will be serving as the interim WAYS 301 coordinator for the Spring 2021 semester.
- *Heather Sullivan-Catlin* (Environmental Studies) is serving as the Council of Chairs and Program Director's tri-chair representing A&S.
- *K. Chad Graham* (Elementary Education) is serving as the Council of Chairs and Program Director's tri-chair representing SOEPS.
- *Jerod Sommerfeldt* (Music Theory, History, & Composition) is serving as the Council of Chairs and Program Director's tri-chair representing Crane.
- *Arlene Stillwell* (Psychology) is continuing in her role of Secretary for the Council of Chairs and Program Directors.
- *Marta Whalen* is now in the role of Administrative Assistant 2 in the Office of the Dean, Arts and Sciences.

Campus Updates

Campus Searches. *Gretchen Galbraith* (Dean, A&S) and *Lonel Woods* (Interim Dean, Crane) are serving as co-chairs for the national search for our next ***Assistant Vice President for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion***. All campuses are required to have Chief Diversity Officers under a policy established by the SUNY Board of Trustees. Currently, *Claudia Ford* (Environmental Studies) is serving as our Interim CDO. Search committee members include *Ariel Adams*, *Tewentenhawihtha Aldrich*, *DianeMarie Collins*, *Deborah Conrad*, *Tammy McCarthy-Burnett*, *Justin Johnson Penn*, *Michael Popovic*, *Alexandra Rivera*, and *John Youngblood*.

Sal Cania (College Advancement) is chairing the national search for our next ***Vice President for Enrollment Management***. Interim Vice President *Ronald Brown* has been working diligently on a strategic enrollment management plan for our campus; his placement through the Registry was extended to ensure we had time to hire a highly qualified permanent candidate. Search committee members include *Tiffany Brann, Laura Brown, Donnita Firnstein, Terry Francis, Jim Fryer, David Heuser, William Lake, Mark Misiak, Morgan Newtown, Mindy Thompson, Mona Vroman, and Nicole Zeledon*.

A huge thank you to all search committee members! These are critical campus leadership positions, and we encourage everyone to share job advertisements within your networks.

Spring Calendar. With the guidance finalized from SUNY regarding the reopening of campuses for the Spring, 2021 semester, our campus has recommended the following calendar:

- Week of January 25th- students begin the process of moving back to campus (no classes during this week).
- February 1st- classes begin; the first two weeks of classes will be virtual.
- Per SUNY guidance, spring break will be cancelled. However, five “reading days” are planned throughout the semester. All classes, whether F2F, hybrid, or remote, **will be cancelled** on these five days. It is also requested that faculty avoid assigning work or group projects on these scheduled days off:
 - Tuesday March 9
 - Thursday March 18
 - Wednesday March 24
 - Tuesday March 30 (**NOTE: Tuesday Classes will be held on Monday March 29**)
 - Thursday April 8 (**NOTE: Thursday Classes will be held on Friday April 9**)
- Week of May 17th- finals begin
- May 22nd- commencement. The format for commencement has not yet been determined, and will be dependent on guidance from SUNY and the state relative to health and safety.

Student teachers will follow the calendar and break schedule of their assigned K-12 school.

It is strongly suggested that faculty avoid any tests or assignments due the day after the scheduled Reading Days, so that students can truly have the opportunity to have a break. Please note the Tuesday/Monday and Thursday/Friday shifts for the two final break days. This ensures that the break schedule does not unfairly impact those classes or labs held on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Chairs are asked to work closely with their adjunct faculty who teach at multiple institutions, and whose schedules may be complicated by the Tuesday/Monday or

Thursday/Friday shifts. Depending on the unique situation of the individual adjunct's schedule, accommodations may need to be made in consultation with the chair and the dean.

Please note that this calendar has been recommended based on our current knowledge of the pandemic and recent guidance from SUNY. It is recognized that this calendar could change, based on the projection of the pandemic over the coming months. It is also important to note that all faculty will need to be prepared to move their instruction to remote modalities at any time, based on directives from SUNY and/or the governor.

SUNY Guidance: Expectations for Remote Instruction. Students across the SUNY system have participated in two surveys over the fall semester to ascertain the degree to which they are satisfied with their campus experiences, including academics and student life, and how campuses can best support them in the coming spring semester. Two particular issues have arisen as consistent themes in each of these surveys: the need for breaks, and concerns with the quality of instruction in some remote classrooms. Both of these issues are negatively impacting students' decisions whether or not to return to their campuses in the spring. The Chancellor has provided very specific guidance regarding allowable breaks for the spring semester (see the section on the spring calendar, above). In addition, in the recently released guidance for [Academic Continuity](#) for the Winter and Spring 2021 terms, SUNY included the following related to remote instruction:

- *Transparency:* Before the beginning of each semester, campuses must publish [on their website] the percentage of courses which will be offered in-person and remote.
- *Regular Interaction:* The institution must provide for the opportunity for substantive interactions with the student on a predictable and regular basis commensurate with both the length of time, and the amount of content, in the course or competency, must monitor the student's academic engagement and success, and must make clear that the instructor(s) are responsible for promptly and proactively engaging in substantive interaction with the student when needed on the basis of such monitoring, or upon request by the student.
- *Substantive Interaction:* The institution must engage students in teaching, learning, and assessment, consistent with the content under discussion, while also including at least two of the following:
 - Provision of direct instruction;
 - Assessment and/or the provision of feedback on a student's coursework;
 - Provision of information and/or responding to questions about the content of a course or competency;
 - Facilitation of group discussion regarding the content of a course or competency; or

- Other instructional activities approved by the institution's/program's accrediting agency.

Faculty are also encouraged to utilize SUNY's [Instructional Support](#) website. Additional support and guidance on academic continuity can be found in SUNY's [FAQ document](#).

If you have ideas about how to best implement these recommendations, including Potsdam-specific professional development or opportunities for faculty-to-faculty sharing of best practices, please don't hesitate to contact me directly (bergerbs@potsdam.edu).

Advising for Spring, 2021. Many of your advisees may have holds keeping them from registering. They should still be encouraged to meet with you as soon as possible to discuss plans and select courses for spring. This will allow students to register immediately once their holds are resolved. With the potential for cancellation of low-enrolled courses, it is imperative that students register early before those decisions are made over winter break.

As you work with your advisees, it is also important to discuss with them which course modality best aligns with their learning style. *It will be especially important to emphasize with students the importance of choosing their preferred modality ahead of time (to "pick and stick")*, as they might not have the option to switch back and forth between F2F and remote learning depending on the modality of the instructor. For students who may be new to virtual/online learning or our learning platform, Moodle, they can be directed to the following resources:

- [Learning Remotely Resource Site](#)
- For frequently asked questions on how to use Moodle, go to [Student FAQ's](#)
- For information on our campus' tutoring services, direct students to: <https://www.potsdam.edu/academics/resources/tutoring>
- For a new *self-assessment tool* to help guide students in making the decision regarding the best modality for their own learning style, direct them to: <https://www.potsdam.edu/studentlife/wellness/healthservices/campus-health-alerts/coronavirus-updates/student-information/learningremotely>

Advisor Support Now Available in Teams. All faculty and staff advisors have been added to the new [Advising Hub](#) in MS Teams. With two General Education programs to manage and constant COVID-related impacts, the hope is to keep everyone up-to-date as you advise your students for the spring semester. The Teams page includes regular updates; links to essential resources; instructions on how to get the most out of BearPAWS, BearDeN, and Navigate; and a forum for posting your burning advising questions.

You are encouraged to visit this site often and consider enabling notifications from the team when new information is added. If you have questions about the Advising Hub, please reach out to *Kristin Jordan* (jordankm@potsgdam.edu).

Updates from the Registrar. As a reminder, final grades are due at **10:00am on Tuesday, December 22**. In addition, the first iteration of the Summer, 2021 and Fall, 2021 schedules are currently live in the Campus Planning Interface (CPI). The first round of schedule changes is due on **Monday, February 8th by 8:00am**.

As a reminder, **never publicly post grades using students' P# or any other personally identifiable information**. This is a direct violation of FERPA regulations.

There is a new online request form for students who would like to request an Incomplete. The form can be found [here](#) and is set up to be routed from the student, to the instructor, and then to the appropriate dean's office. Should you have any questions about the form, please contact *Krista Medo* (medokl@potsgdam.edu).

Campus Bookstore Update: Course Packs. The Campus Bookstore is asking that faculty members submit their course packs or manuals that will need to be printed to the Bookstore no later than **January 8, 2021**. With many classes planned to be offered as remote for the spring semester, the College Store will need to ship many packages directly to students prior to the start of the semester. Students cannot order course packs or printed manuals until they have been priced and are entered into the Bookstore's system, which can't occur until the materials are submitted by faculty members.

Students' textbook orders will start to be filled and shipped in mid-January. If the printed manuals are not yet ready, necessitating a second shipment, students will be charged twice. Given that many of our students are facing substantial financial challenges, the College would very much like to keep the students down to one shipping charge. The other side benefit of getting materials printed more promptly is to avoid overwhelming Central Printing at the beginning of the semester. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact *Janet Robbins*, Course Materials Manager, at robbinjl@potsgdam.edu.

Student Emergency Fund. Potsdam has been selected to participate as an expansion site for the Student Emergency Fund program supported by the *SUNY Impact Foundation* and the *Hecksher Foundation* for the calendar year 2021. The grant awards \$50,000 to support students with emergency needs.

Potsdam was also awarded \$50,000 in *SUNY Impact Grant* funding earlier this year in response to the COVID crisis. This fall, we have received 71 applications for support. Thirty-four of those have been funded, 25 were supported through other means, and 12 applications are still being reviewed. If you are in contact with a student with emergency funding needs, please direct them to the Student Success Center at ssc@potdam.edu.

Thank you to *Sal Cania, Sherry Paradis, Karen Clary, and Judy Singh* for their work in the application process and *Tommiann Russell* for her ongoing work in determining student eligibility!

Education Abroad Updates. Due to the ongoing impacts of the global pandemic, all SUNY Potsdam administered education abroad programs for the Spring, 2021 and Summer, 2021 semesters have been cancelled. This is consistent with decisions being reached throughout the SUNY system. An up-to-date list of SUNY cancellations can be found [here](#).

At the current time, we are permitting our students to participate in other SUNY campus study abroad programs that are still operational. All programs will require application to, and approval by, the SUNY Provost's Office to proceed. In those cases, the administering SUNY campus will be responsible for any liabilities and risk management - including full oversight of academic continuity for students should an overseas program be suspended while the student is abroad. We will ensure thorough guidance on this for any students that wish to proceed.

We are also recommending that we continue to permit incoming exchange students to study at our campus - following all required health and safety protocols, including any mandatory quarantine period upon arrival. This decision will continue to be monitored, and may change as any new guidelines are provided by SUNY and/or the state.

Diversity Attribute. The Diversity Attribute Review Committee will soon be accepting course submissions for Fall, 2021. The Diversity Attribute is designed to help students more easily identify diversity-rich courses. The Diversity Attribute (DEI) does not have any curricular requirements and is not associated in any way with Potsdam Pathways or General Education.

- [How do I know if my course is diversity-rich?](#) Use the diversity-attribute checklist and examples of diversity-rich syllabi found in the link above to guide your course/syllabus preparation. To have your diversity-rich course(s) appear in the Fall, 2021 schedule of classes with a DEI attribute, submissions will be due **February 8, 2021**. Directions for how to apply will be shared with the campus community soon. You will

be expected to submit a syllabus and demonstrate how your course meets the goals outlined on the diversity-attribute checklist.

Please direct questions to *Lauren Diamond-Brown* (Sociology & Criminal Justice) at diamondla@potsgdam.edu.

First Year Connect (1YC). The *Soliya 1YC Program* builds on a fundamental strength of our campus—our commitment to diversity. Many of our students have had only very limited opportunity to engage with diverse populations. To help our incoming first-years with becoming a member of a diverse and inclusive community, students meet on Soliya’s custom virtual video-conferencing platform in groups representative of our campus diversity and are introduced to facilitated dialog as a form of communication. The curriculum helps students to experience diversity positively and deepens understanding and respect for constructive engagement across differences. Students learn and practice how to ask good questions and listen actively. They will also gain an opportunity to reflect on their own social identities and experience others as multidimensional human beings.

After improving and revising the program this fall, the campus is preparing to launch the larger second phase of the pilot in January, 2021. Students will meet for three weeks during winter break to engage in these virtual facilitated dialogues.

The 1YC program serves as a starting point for Ways 103 courses. The important skills of 1YC are integrated into the Ways 103 classes through a common assignment this spring. If this pilot phase is successful, we will be working on a more permanent integration of Ways 103 and 1YC. If any of your advisees are taking Ways 103 in the spring, please encourage them to still enroll in the program (even though the deadline has passed) by responding to one of the emails they have received from Soliya and Michael Popovic over the last few weeks.

Our campus’ plan is to have all incoming first-year students enroll in the program as part of Orientation during Summer, 2021. If you have any questions about 1YC, please visit our [SUNY Potsdam First-Year Connect Program](#) page and look at the FAQ section. You can also contact the Coordinator for 1YC *Michael Popovic* (popovimj@potsgdam.edu) at any time.

CFES Brilliant Pathways. CFES Brilliant Pathways is partnering with SUNY Potsdam and SUNY Plattsburgh to create a virtual mentoring program for students in Grades 6 through 9 in seven different GEAR UP schools in the Adirondack Region. CFES Brilliant Pathways is a nonprofit organization that works with high poverty schools and develops programs based on three core practices: Mentoring, Essential Skills, and Pathways to College and Career.

Sixty-two student-athletes from Potsdam and Plattsburgh have volunteered and are committed to this program. Each athlete is vetted through their respective schools, and then completes an interest inventory and a detailed mentor training program with CFES Fellows. The middle school students are coordinated in small teams to meet with their college mentors and have the opportunity to explore college majors, and discuss college opportunities including the dedication it takes to be a college student-athlete. The athletes will learn how to facilitate conversations with these adolescent students to teach and build their Essential Skills: Teamwork, Agility, Resilience, Networking, Leadership, and Goal Setting. They will also discuss how using the Essential Skills has helped them on their own path to success. Our ultimate goal is to build strong relationships and assist students with making good decisions as they create their own pathways towards college and career readiness.

CCI – Events and Workshops. You can find links to many SUNY, SUNY CPD, and CCI events and workshops on the CCI [Events Calendar](#) page. Please visit the site for event information and for registration links. Also, if you missed the EIT session, feel free to watch the [First Steps toward meeting EIT Accessibility](#) presentation. For more accessibility training opportunities and resources, visit the [How do I adhere to ADA guidelines and laws?](#) webpage.

CCI – Support. The CCI is experiencing an increase in requests for assistance. To improve response time, the CCI will now use Request Tracker (RT) for support requests. Please send all your requests directly to cci@potsdam.edu. These requests will immediately go to RT and a ticket will be created. Both CTS and CCI staff will be able to see and respond to tickets quickly and, when necessary, escalate requests to tier 2 support staff.

Instructional Resources. The following (free) resources may be helpful as you continue to navigate the unprecedented challenges—and opportunities—of this most unique semester.

- The Library faculty have created a separate tab, "*Diversifying the Ivory Tower*," to their [Library Guide Resource Site](#). If you have suggestions for articles or other resources to add, send the links to *Marianne Hebert* (hebertm@potsdam.edu).
- [Cite Black Authors](#) recognizes and amplifies black academic voices, in order to shift from traditional citation practices that are passive and white-centric to active citation practices that both quantify and equilibrate racial representation.
- The website <https://www.citeblackwomenscollective.org> is helpful for those teaching citation ethics and practices.

Remember, if you need support in these challenging times, don't hesitate to contact the [College Counseling Center](#) (for students) or take advantage of the Mental Health Resources team in Microsoft Teams (for employees). Additional coping resources are available [here](#).



Potsdam Pathways

PPCC Openings. In Spring 2021, elections for five positions on the Potsdam Pathways Curriculum Committee (PPCC) will be held. PPCC positions are for a three-year term (August, 2021 to May, 2024). Interested faculty may nominate or self-nominate, although the Pathways Director will confirm with nominees before including those names on the ballot.

Responsibilities as designator liaison include reviewing syllabi for your designator as well as working as a secondary reviewer on another designator. Reviewed syllabi are then presented by liaisons to the PPCC as a whole for voting/approval. PPCC meetings are generally every other week, on Wednesday afternoons. We are looking for liaisons for Thinking Aesthetically (TA), Thinking Foundationally (TF), Thinking Scientifically—Social World (SW), Connecting Globally (CG), and for a Library Representative. The nomination deadline is **March 1, 2021**.

Nominations should be submitted to *Christine Doran*, Interim Director of Pathways (dorancm@potsteam.edu). Questions should also be directed to Christine.

WAYS 301 Updates. *Tracy Lipke-Perry* (Crane) is starting in January as the WAYS 301 coordinator. She will be holding an interest meeting early in the spring semester for faculty who would like to teach the interdisciplinary team-taught course. WAYS 301 offers faculty a chance to teach with a colleague from another department on a topic of shared interest and expertise. It is part of the new Pathways program but, because it is better suited for junior-level students, it did not roll out in Fall, 2020 with the other WAYS courses. More information about details for the interest meeting will be shared in January, with the meeting itself to be scheduled for the second week of the spring semester. Questions? Email *Tracy Lipke-Perry* at (lipkeptd@potsteam.edu) or *Christine Doran* at (dorancm@potsteam.edu).



Middle States Updates



Middle States Re-accreditation. Our campus is half-way through our three-year re-accreditation process with the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE). As a reminder, this process is an evidence-based self-study of our university, focused on a thorough assessment of our self-identified campus priorities: Strategic Enrollment Management, Creativity, Inclusive Excellence, and Strategic Decision Making.

Earlier this semester, our MSCHE Vice President liaison, Paul Starkey, virtually visited the campus to learn more about our process and goals. Following that visit, Paul formally accepted our self-study design, which you can find on [SUNY Potsdam's Middle States' website](#).

We are grateful for the incredible efforts of our [working group members](#), who have been working hard all semester to assess and analyze our campus priorities and the Middle States standards. We also want to thank the many individuals across campus who have participated in interviews and provided documents for us to review. While the accreditation process is a lot of work, it is an opportunity for our campus to be self-reflective and to identify areas for improvement and innovation. We are excited for the possibilities of this process and continue to welcome feedback. If you have not yet been contacted by a working group but would like to provide feedback, we invite you to reach out to the Middle States co-chairs: *Julie Dold* (doldjm@potsdam.edu) and/or *Gordon Plague* (plaguegr@potsdam.edu).

Around SUNY and the State

Become a Mindful Leader. Beginning in January, SUNY is offering a series of three courses focused on Mindful Leadership. Mindful Leadership can be thought of as cultivation of leadership presence, and as “non-judgmental, moment to moment awareness.” Being present is quite a complex assignment in today’s chaotic world where time is a precious commodity, the past is seen as the most reliable tool to analyze and assess how to venture forward into the future, and we are undergoing massive disruptions, leaving little time to develop our leaders.

SUNY SAIL’s Mindful Leadership courses explore how meditation, reflection, communication, and other contemplative practices impact the development of the fundamental qualities of living and leading well. Led by Mindfulness and Meditation experts from across SUNY, the following three courses are offered:

- Foundations of Mindfulness
- Mindful Communication
- Mindful Leadership

You may register for courses individually; successful completion of all three course will lead to a Mindful Leadership Certificate of Completion and digital badge. Classes begin on January 5th.

Click on the link to [register](#), or to learn more visit [SUNY SAIL Mindful Leadership](#). For more information, please contact leadership@suny.edu.

Coming Due

Walker Fellowships. I am pleased to announce the continuation of the *T. Urling and Mabel Walker Research Fellowship Program* for 2021. The purpose of this program is to encourage faculty from the region's 11 institutions of higher education to undertake research on critical issues confronting North Country communities, and to make recommendations for possible solutions. The program is designed to promote greater community-academic cooperation. Proposals that include a strong statement of support from a local individual or organization that clearly explains how the community will benefit from the project results will be given preference.

Funding for this program comes from the Campaign for the T. Urling and Mabel Walker Research Fellowship Program, which is administered by the SUNY Potsdam Provost's Office. A maximum of two research projects of up to \$5,000 can be awarded each year. The Walker Fellowship Steering Committee will determine the amount of the award for each approved project. In the past, funds have been used to pay a student assistant, support travel costs, and purchase software and supplies. Only in limited cases have funds been used as a stipend for the researcher.

Proposals are due by **January 29, 2021**, close of business. For further information and an application, please visit the [Walker Fellowship website](#).

CIT Conference Proposals. Online presentation submission is now open for the *29th Annual SUNY Conference on Instruction & Technology (CIT)*, sponsored by SUNY FACT² (Faculty Advisory Council on Teaching and Technology). CIT is SUNY's largest and most prominent event on instructional technology, providing a forum for faculty, instructional support

professionals, and policymakers to present, discuss, and explore innovative avenues for integrating technology into the teaching and learning environment. Proposals are due by **December 31, 2020**.

This year's theme *Working Together to Prepare all Students for a Lifetime of Learning* is supported by the following tracks:

- Diversity, Equity, Access and Inclusion
- Emerging Technologies and Digital Strategies
- Measuring Effectiveness
- Open Education
- Pedagogically Speaking

Abstract submissions are being accepted at the Introductory, Intermediate, and Advanced levels and in the following formats: Presentation, Panel, Birds of a Feather, Ignite, Workshop, and Poster. To submit your abstract go to <https://sunycpd.eventsair.com/cit2021/21cit>.

Mark Your Calendars

Assessment Institute. The [Assessment Institute in Indianapolis](#), hosted by IUPUI, is the oldest and largest U.S. higher education event focused on assessment and improvement. [Complimentary registration](#) is being offered for the 2021 Assessment Institute. Interested participants are encouraged to [register](#) early to ensure a spot in the 2021 conference.

In Case You Missed It

Statement on Academic Freedom. Recent events, including the White House Executive Order related to diversity training, has reminded us of the critical importance of Academic Freedom within the academic enterprise. A *Statement on Academic Freedom* reflective of our campus' commitment to these principles has been added to the Provost's website: <https://www.potsdam.edu/about/leadership/provost-academic-affairs>.

Expectations for Renewal Documentation: COVID's Impact. As it still remains uncertain how long before we are on the other side of the current global pandemic, it is evident that COVID-19 continues to significantly impact our lives both personally and professionally. While SUNY Potsdam has so far been very successful in keeping cases to a minimum, due in large part to the incredible efforts of our students, faculty, and staff, the long-term stresses caused by the pandemic on our teaching and on our students' academic experiences cannot be overstated.

Several faculty members have expressed specific concerns related to expectations for course evaluations and documentation for renewal and/or discretionary requests given the continued extraordinary circumstances we are currently under. While the campus does not require any specific type of student opinion survey, one option that is now available to all faculty members is the use of EvaluationKit, which is an electronic form of course survey. If you are unfamiliar with the use of this tool, you can find additional information on the [Tech Tools](#) site or contact the CCI staff at cci@potsdam.edu. As was the case in the Spring, 2020 semester, however, please be reassured that it is *your reflection on your teaching practices*—and not the tool itself—that is most important. For example, it would be appropriate to include a narrative describing what types of modalities you tried this semester and what you have learned from this process, what improvements you plan to make in subsequent semesters, what you have applied to your instruction from professional development opportunities/training, and your future goals for continued reflection and improvement.

It is also recognized that research and creative activities continue to be impacted by challenges posed by both the pandemic and fiscal barriers. In some disciplines, there are expanded opportunities to present and attend conferences free (or at a greatly reduced cost) in a virtual environment, and to participate in virtual performances or exhibits. These activities are valued, and should be included in any documentation. However, it is also understood that these virtual opportunities are not available in all disciplinary areas, and some faculty members' scholarly work is dependent on sitework which at the current time may not be possible. Therefore, it is important for faculty members to consult with their chairs and deans on appropriate alternatives, if warranted. Please know that the administration will support these alternatives as appropriate to your disciplinary area and your unique challenges. Again, a descriptive narrative outlining individuals' challenges, possible alternatives, and future goals related to scholarly and creative endeavors is important to include in any documentation.

Finally, while access to Zoom and Teams has increased our ability to virtually attend meetings and participate in campus-wide service, it is also recognized that the amount of time in these meetings has substantially increased. We would ask senior faculty and chairs to be especially mindful of their junior faculty colleagues, and work with them to identify only those service

activities that are most critical to the individual faculty member's professional progress and goals.

While it has been said often—these are indeed unprecedented times. We recognize the stress and challenges that are a result of many current factors, including the pandemic, racial injustices, and economic fragility. Therefore, it is also recognized that expectations for documentation in the renewal and discretionary processes must be reconsidered. Faculty are encouraged to continue to work with their chairs and deans to clearly identify alternatives for documentation that are appropriate to the discipline, and to focus on reflection and lessons learned during this “new normal.”

Do you have ideas or news to include in the next Provost's Corner? Be sure to let me know! Just email me at bergerbs@potdam.edu.