

College of Arts & Sciences

TOMORROW, AND TOMORROW, AND TOMORROW

This year Drake has been engaged in strategic planning, getting a collective sense of the challenges and opportunities that higher education, and the University in particular, will be facing over the next five to 10 years. This process has included discussions with faculty, students and staff. In spring, a planning committee will be working with President David Maxwell to identify our priorities and map our strategy to become, in the words of President Maxwell, “one of the most relevant, effective, innovative and distinctive institutions of higher education in the United States.”

All this talk about the future has me thinking about, well, the future. In addition to strategic planning, another prompt has focused my attention on this matter: succession planning. As you may have heard, the University completed successful searches for a new provost (Dee Jones, currently dean of education and human services at Longwood University) and a new vice president of business and finance (Deborah Newsom, currently vice president of business affairs and treasurer at Eastern Kentucky University), perhaps the two most critical people, after the president, charged with the responsibility for navigating the University into its future.

HOMEGROWN LEADERSHIP

While Jones and Newsom will be joining us from other institutions, Drake has a tradition of growing our own leaders. For instance, the deans of the College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences (Raylene Rospond) and the School of Education (Jan McMahill) were faculty members before becoming administrators, as was Kathleen Richardson, director of the School of Journalism and Mass Communication. In the College of Arts and Sciences, three of the past four deans were faculty before moving into administration. With Drake’s strong history of cultivating leadership, it is no wonder that we also look to our own faculty as a source for the chairs, directors and deans of tomorrow.

This brings me to another reason I am thinking ahead. As mentioned in previous *Blue* articles, the faculty in the College of Arts and Sciences has undergone a fairly profound demographic shift. Due to retirements and new positions, the college has hired 63 tenure-track faculty members over the past nine years. Present company excluded, we are a very young group, with more faculty under the age of 40 than over the age of 50. Only 16 percent of our faculty is at senior rank. While this talented group is to be credited with getting the University to where we are now, it is the associate professors, those in mid-career, whom I see as the next generation of University leaders.

DRAKE: THE NEXT GENERATION

Let me introduce you to some of them, as these are the names who will be guiding Drake — and writing columns like this one — in 2025, and probably sooner. And, as always when I mention particular names, I need to add my customary apology: The people I mention are indeed exemplary, but they are just that — examples of the wealth of talent, intelligence and integrity to whom we are entrusting the future of Drake. For every one individual I name, another two could have been cited.

My introductions do not emphasize teaching and scholarship: It should go without saying that to have tenure and rank at Drake you have to be an accomplished teacher and scholar. Instead, introductions feature the leadership roles these faculty members are already taking, not only at the University, but in their local and professional communities as well.



Rachel Paine Caufield

Let me begin with **Rachel Paine Caufield**, associate professor of politics. This past fall she again served as the director of the Iowa Caucus Project at Drake, acting as the liaison between Drake and the campaigns and supervising a small army of students who worked with candidates and the media. It was Rachel who orchestrated the ABC News Presidential Debate held on campus in December (a spectacle months in the making). She is also a research fellow at the American Judicature Society Hunter Center for Judicial Selection and Drake’s liaison to the Washington Center in D.C.



Mark Vitha

Earlier I mentioned our successful provost search. **Mark Vitha**, associate professor of chemistry and Windsor professor, chaired that search and was a member of the most recent Arts and Sciences Dean’s Search Committee — a group that made an excellent choice, if I do say so myself. In addition, he has served on nearly every legislative body at Drake: the A&S Council, Faculty Cabinet and the University Faculty Senate. Notably, he was selected by John Wiley and Sons Publishers to be the general editor of the Chemical Analysis Series, thus directing the publication of books that will influence the study of chemistry for years to come.



Craig Owens

Craig Owens, associate professor of English, is a man of many hats. He is the director of the Center for the Humanities, which supports faculty and student research, guest speakers and colloquia. He is also the academic affairs fellow, working with the Provost's office to oversee faculty development and faculty-grant programs. And, in whatever little free time he has left, he is the president of the Midwest Modern Language Association and an evaluator for the Higher Learning Commission, the agency responsible for the accreditation of colleges and universities across the Midwest.



Maria Valdovinos

Maria Valdovinos, associate professor of psychology, is Craig's counterpart in the sciences. Maria is the director of the Drake University Science Collaborative Institute (DUSCI). DUSCI sponsors a variety of programs, including lectures by Drake faculty and visiting scientists, summer research grants to students and the annual Drake University Conference on Undergraduate Research in the Sciences. Maria is busy off campus as well, serving on the editorial boards of journals and on the board of directors for the Iowa Association for Behavior Analysis.



Keith Summerville

Finally, I cannot overlook the associate dean of the college, **Keith Summerville**, associate professor of environmental science and Windsor professor. Keith oversees the student side of things, including admissions, curricular policies, enforcement of academic regulations and scheduling. Keith is also a member of the Faculty Senate Executive Committee

and next year will be the president of the Faculty Senate. Off campus, he has organized summer biology learning experiences for high school students and sits on the boards of directors for the Iowa Audubon and the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture.



Harmon Fine Arts Center

WE'RE IN GOOD HANDS

I began by referring to Drake's strategic plan, and Keith brings me full circle: with Dean Raylene Rospond and former provost Ron Troyer, Keith organized and led the discussions that paved the way for our strategic planning committee, on which he also sits. In short, with people like Keith, Maria, Craig, Rachel and Mark, we are not waiting to put Drake's future into their hands: they already hold the reins. What gives me the most confidence that they are, in fact, good hands, is the common theme of citizenship that colors the descriptions of their activities. Drake's mission stresses responsible global citizenship, the engagement in and service to the many environments we inhabit — university, community, profession. These faculty members, and indeed, faculty throughout the University, embrace this mission, not just as words on a page but as a way of living and leading.



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