



from Drake Opera Theatre's Production of Carmen. Dress rehearsal photo by Christine Blanner.

A Note From the Dean

Dear Colleagues and Friends,

I hope this message finds you well amid the busy rhythm of the spring semester. As we approach the midpoint of the semester, I want to pause to acknowledge both how much has already been accomplished—and how busy the second half of the semester promises to be. The weeks ahead are filled with midterm projects and grading, advising for fall registration, recruitment activities, and the planning of our two signature events: DUCURS and the Honors and Awards Convocation, both on Thursday, April 16. This is an especially intense stretch of the semester, and I am deeply aware of the extra effort it requires. Thank you for the great care and commitment you bring to this work in support of our students.

This newsletter offers a snapshot of that work, highlighting the many accomplishments across the College. A special shout-out to everyone involved in last weekend's beautiful production of the opera *Carmen*. Three performances were held to sold-out crowds in the Performing Arts Hall, with outstanding performances by our students both on stage and in the orchestra pit. Bravo! It was a powerful showcase of the creativity, collaboration, and excellence that define our programs in the Arts & Sciences.

Thank you as well to our faculty in the Political Science Department for organizing a well-attended informational panel on the war in Iran. The panel, which was featured in the morning news, took on added significance in light of the tragic loss our Drake community has recently experienced. Our thoughts remain with Declan's family and with all who are grieving this tremendous loss.

Looking ahead, please save the date for our End-of-Semester Social on May 8, when we will come together to celebrate the close of the term and to recognize colleagues who will retire at the end of this academic year.

I also encourage everyone to attend the All-College Meeting this Friday, March 6, from 2:00–4:00 pm in the Cowles Library Reading Room. These gatherings are a great chance to reconnect across departments, work together on college priorities, and continue building a strong community for faculty and staff.

Spring break is around the corner. I hope you will find some time to relax and recharge as we head into the remainder of the semester.

Thank you for all you do for our students and for one another. I look forward to seeing many of you on Friday!

Warmly,



A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Gesine". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Gesine Gerhard
Dean and Professor
College of Arts and Sciences

Upcoming Deadlines and Important Dates

| Date | Event/Activity |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Friday, March 6 | All College Meeting, 2-4pm, Cowles Reading Room |
| Friday, March 13 | Spring semester midpoint |
| Monday, March 16 - Friday, March 20 | Spring Break (classes do not meet) |
| Wednesday, March 25 | Midterm grades due by 10am |
| Wednesday, April 1 | Student Award forms for Honors Convocation due to Dean's office |
| Thursday, April 2 | Last day to submit AOI proposal to University Curriculum Committee for Fall 2025 |

Monday, April 6

Summer 2026 and Fall 2026 registration opens for degree-seeking students (tentative)

Thursday, April 16

A&S Honors and Awards Ceremony, Sheslow Auditorium, 6:00pm

[Access the Full College of A&S and University Calendar 2025-26 Here](#)

[Academic Calendar](#) [University Events Calendar](#)

College of Arts & Sciences

Harmon Fine Arts Center
1310 25th Street
Des Moines, IA 50311

Phone: [515-271-3939](tel:515-271-3939)

Email: ask.as@drake.edu



Spring Arts and Sciences Milestone Events

Final Call for Nominations: Arts & Sciences Outstanding Teacher of the Year Award

We are now accepting nominations for the prestigious [Arts and Sciences Outstanding Teacher of the Year Award](#). The award is announced at the Arts and Sciences Honors and Awards Ceremony.

TO NOMINATE: Submit the professor's name, your name, and a detailed statement of nomination (one to two pages) indicating what makes the nominee an excellent teacher by **end of day on March 6**.

Letters of nomination should address the nominee's (1) use of innovative teaching practices, (2) enthusiasm for teaching and/or the subject matter (3) personal commitment to students, and/or (4) overall effectiveness in facilitating student learning.

Please submit nominations using [this form](#).

More information is available [here](#).

COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

Honors and Awards Ceremony

APRIL 16, 2026

Reception: Levitt Hall - 6:00 PM

Ceremony: Sheslow Auditorium - 6:30 PM



The College of Arts and Sciences invites you to attend the 2026 Student Honors Convocation. Join us to celebrate the accomplishments of our outstanding students and faculty! Bring your friends and family!



Available on live stream:

youtube.com/@sheslowauditoriumlivestrea9770

Drake
UNIVERSITY

DUSCI (Drake Undergraduate Science Collaborative Institute) Announcements

Drake University Conference on Undergraduate Research in the Sciences (DUCURS)

Join us for DUCURS 2026 on the afternoon of Thursday, April 16! Please see the [DUSCI website](#) for the conference [schedule](#), keynote lecture information, and links to register for the conference and [submit an abstract](#) for a poster/oral presentation. Abstracts are due by **April 3!**

In addition to student-faculty collaborative research presentations, DUCURS will feature:

- community partner tables where students can connect with local organizations for STEM internships and career opportunities.
- a keynote lecture “Maternal Antibodies Protect Infants from Enteric Pathogens” by Drake Alumna Dr. Kathryn Knoop (AS '06), Associate Professor of Immunology at the Mayo Clinic.

DUSCI Summer Research Fellowship Program- Call for applications

Pending funding, DUSCI will host ~10 summer research fellows for an 8-week, full-time, paid summer research experience in which students work on a significant research project with a faculty mentor. [Applications](#) for the DUSCI summer research program (May 26-July 17, 2026) are due by Monday, April 1 and should be submitted by students in collaboration with a faculty mentor. You can learn more about the summer research program [here](#).

DUSCI Directorship: Call for Applications

The DUSCI Faculty Advisory Board invites applications for a DUSCI Co-Director (beginning April 2026) who will

be the next DUSCI Director in August 2027. Interested faculty are invited to submit a brief ~2-page application/vision statement describing their goals and priorities for DUSCI over the next 2-3 years. Please email your statement and current CV to the current DUSCI Director [Heidi Sleister](#) by Tuesday, March 24.

The main responsibilities of the Director, in collaboration with the DUSCI Faculty and Student Advisory Boards, include planning the annual [Drake University Conference on Undergraduate Research in the Sciences](#) (DUCURS), [DUSCI Summer Research Fellowship Program](#), and [DUSCI Research Colloquium Series](#). Additional priorities include building on the strong foundation of DUSCI to secure funding for the institute's activities and engage in outreach with alumni and the STEM community. The DUSCI Director receives a modest stipend or one course reassignment per year.



Faculty Development Corner



Course Ready Textbook and Course Material Reminders

With student registration on the horizon, many students will already be seeking information about their summer and fall 2026 courses during registration. As a reminder, Course Ready is a University-wide program that offers students a more seamless experience to obtain their course materials (more information is available [here](#)). We wish to share a friendly reminder that earlier adoptions allow the Course Ready team to begin sourcing content from publishers and resolving any sourcing issues (such as identifying alternative vendors).

Here are some important dates to watch for:

- Monday, March 9: Faculty Admin Support Tool (FAST) opens for textbook and course materials submissions.
- Friday, April 3: Faculty Admin Support Tool (FAST) closes for textbook and course materials submissions.
- Monday, April 6: Bookstore is live and student registration begins (compliance with the Higher Education Opportunity Act publishes material prior to student registration).

Thank you for your prompt submission through the FAST tool, which is located on the main Blackboard page (see 'Technology Support for Instructors' and then navigate to the 'eCampus FAST Book Adoption tool'). Please reach out to our campus representative, Katie Kiser (kkiser@ecampus.com), with specific questions about the Course Ready process.

We wish to share a friendly reminder that earlier adoptions allow the Course Ready team to begin sourcing content from publishers and resolving any sourcing issues (such as identifying alternative vendors)

Professional Development Opportunity: Chronicle's Preparing Students for the AI Work Force Webinar on March 16



Join colleagues from across the country for a professional development webinar! On Monday, March 16 (1pm CT/ 2pm ET), Ian Wilhelm of the Chronicle for Higher Education, will host a moderated discussion of how Artificial Intelligence is impacting curriculum, entry-level jobs for college graduates, and AI skills/ competencies in higher education. This one-hour webinar is free and virtual, offering a timely consideration for how the College of Arts & Sciences can respond to the changing landscape of artificial intelligence in thoughtful and forward-thinking ways. Sign up or learn more here: <https://www.chronicle.com/events/virtual/preparing-students-for-the-ai-work-force>



Humanities Reads Celebration/Book Chat: Assembly

Drake Center for the Humanities in partnership with Nos Books

Friday, March 6, 10:00-11:30am

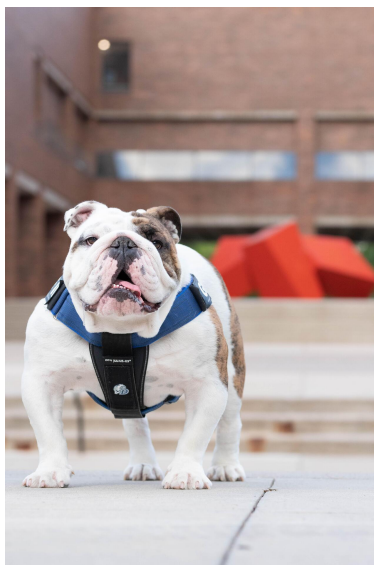
Cowles Library Reading Room

Over **100 people** participated in this year's Humanities Reads--that calls for a celebration! There will be tea sandwiches, scones, croissants, fruit, tea, and coffee. Stay for a few minutes or the entire time. There is no formal program. We will have discussion questions written by English students to spark conversation (e.g. "what pieces assemble your life?"), but there is no obligation to stick to the questions. Cowles Library will also present a physical display of books you may want to read next if you liked *Assembly*.

Join the Humanities Center Listserv

Are you a faculty member doing work in the humanities? If so, please consider signing up for the Drake Center for the Humanities listserv. This is the best way to find out about events, funding, and opportunities to engage

with other faculty. Just send an email asking to be added to Holly Boorman (holly.boorman@drake.edu). Questions? Ask the director, Will Garriott (william.garriott@drake.edu).



Arts & Sciences Council News

Call for Participants: Artificial Intelligence (AI) AD Hoc committee: Council is forming an *ad hoc* Committee on Artificial Intelligence (AI) to develop a College of Arts & Sciences AI position statement by the end of spring 2026 and to recommend college priorities related to AI for the 2026-2027 academic year (e.g., faculty development needs related to AI, student communication related to AI).

We invite faculty and staff from across all disciplines to participate. Ideally, the committee will include a diversity of perspectives and experience levels with AI.

Committee responsibilities will include:

- Drafting a College of Arts & Sciences AI position statement by the end of spring 2026
- Recommending college priorities related to AI for the 2026-2027 academic year (e.g., faculty development needs related to AI, student communication related to AI).

If you are interested in serving on the AI *ad hoc* committee, please let us know [here](#) by Monday, March 9.

A&S Council welcomes your input and participation! You're invited to the next A&S Council meeting on Monday, March 23, 3:30-5:00pm in Cowles 201. The meeting agenda will be emailed to college faculty and staff about a week before the meeting.

If you'd like to share ideas, ask questions, and/or offer suggestions, please reach out to any of our [elected A&S Council members](#). You can also use this [link](#) to anonymously submit questions and suggestions for Council to consider.



Celebrating A&S Highlights



On February 28, 2026, Drake University students representing the Drake Undergraduate Science Collaborative Institute (DUSCI) and Arts & Sciences volunteered at the **Girls in Science Festival** at the Science Center of Iowa. The event welcomed more than 1,600 visitors for a day of interactive STEM activities.

Drake student volunteers **Khushi Agrawal, Jaisel Bott, Emily Kim, Patricia Kowalkowski, Sophie Meronek, and Divyanshi Srivastava**, with faculty mentor Dr. **Heidi Sleister**, led a hands-on fruit DNA extraction activity. Participants squished fruit and observed visible strands of DNA, turning an abstract concept into a memorable discovery.

Drake's Community of Digital Excellence (CODE) Scholars **Tyson La Grone, Nick Humphries, Bernardo Martinez, Malak Saad, Kate Dransoff, Leah Pollock, Charis Waititu, Caroline Cromley, Emma Brenizer, Iris Donais, and Nick Guyette**, with faculty mentors Dr. **Meredith Moor** and Dr. **Tim Urness**, showcased robotics and computing through plug-and-play educational robotics platforms, highlighting how these technologies foster engaging, puzzle-based problem-solving experiences.

Additionally, **Maryum Khan** and **Kate Schelske**, Drake Student STEM Ambassadors for the NASA- Iowa Space Grant Consortium, participated in the Science Center for Iowa's Girls in STEM Day. The Iowa Space Grant Consortium (ISGC) STEM Ambassadors promote NASA's mission and engage the public in STEM education through outreach and community engagement activities.

Throughout the day, Drake students shared their enthusiasm for science and served as role models, reflecting DUSCI's and the College's commitment to community engagement and experiential learning in STEM fields.



Congratulations to Dr. **David Skidmore**, who was selected as a recipient of the Education Leadership Award of the 2026 Iowa Chinese Achievement Awards! The Education Leadership Award is based on the candidate's leadership for learning, communication, professionalism and community involvement. Dr. Skidmore is Professor of Political Science and Vice Dean for the Qingdao-Drake United College.



Congratulations to Teaching Artist of Vocal Coaching **Cassie Makeeff** and Teaching Artist of Voice and Choirs **Ted Brimeyer** for their leadership at this year's Iowa Choral Directors Association (ICDA) 9th Grade Opus Honor Choir. Ted and Cassie led an incredible ensemble of 180 ninth-grade singers from across Iowa at the 39th Annual Opus Honor Choir Festival.

The festival brought together more than 3,000 nominated students statewide, with just 720 singers chosen across four honors choirs, making this an especially meaningful and competitive opportunity for the students.



Please congratulate the following **Drake voice majors** who were selected as finalists to compete in the National MTNA Young Artist competition in Chicago, Illinois in March. They were chosen from entrants across the United States who prepared videos of required repertoire for professional adjudicators. The students are from Leanne Freeman-Miller and Alyssa Becker's studio, with Amanda Jones and Cassie Makeeff as collaborative pianists. Congratulations to **Emilia Jurzyk, Cadence Lowery-Hart, Gabe McKee, Leah Mendelin, Olivia Tice!**



Congratulations to Associate Professor of Anthropology **Daria Trentini**, who presented at the "Political Violence and Its Legacies" Workshop at the MacMillan Center for International and Area Studies at Yale University on February 12. The title of her presentation was "Vanishing Kings of Mozambique: Memory, Resistance, and Violence." Dr. Trentini is pictured here outside of Pierson College at Yale University.



Congratulations to Assistant Professor of Theatre **Erik Meixelsperger**, whose full length play *AFTER EVER HAPPILY* and two ten-minute plays *WAITING FOR SNOW* and *FISHBOWL* are going to be published by Heuer Publishing! Electronic and hardcopy formats will be available in mid August.



Student Support Corner

The **Starfish Progress Survey** opened on Monday, Feb 23. Please take the opportunity to provide feedback for students. Your responses allow the Student Support Team to reach out to those students whose attendance can improve, or to provide resources such as academic coaching and tutoring. When students who need support have multiple flags raised, it helps to establish a pattern, allowing our team to identify those students most in need of intervention. The survey will close on Friday, Mar 13.

New Forms from the Office of Access and Success

To help support proactive planning and clear communication between instructors and students, the Office of Access and Success has developed a [Flexible Attendance Collaboration Worksheet](#). While completion of the worksheet is not required this semester, it is strongly encouraged that students complete it in collaboration with each instructor as early as possible. Students who qualify for flexibility in attendance received this form via email on February 17. The hope is that this planning tool will provide clarity and reduce confusion later in the semester.

And, Access and Success will be connecting with all students who have the [Audio Recording Accommodation](#) to ensure the agreement is reviewed and signed. Their plan is to upload a copy of the completed agreement to each student's Starfish profile, so it is accessible to instructors as needed.

Responding to Students of Concern

If you are concerned about a student in your course, please raise a flag in Starfish. Depending on the type of the flag, students will either be able to see your comments or receive a follow-up from the appropriate office. Another option is to complete an [early alert form](#) that feeds directly to the dean's office and facilitates our proactive outreach to students who need assistance and connections to key college and university resources.

Forecasting Midterm Grade Entry

Midterm grades are due by 10 a.m. on Wed, Mar 25. The entry of midterm grades gives students a sense of where they stand in your course and helps them to make a decision(s) on whether to continue in a course(s) or drop with a W.

A few reminders about the impact of a W, most notable being that if a student is enrolled in 12 credits, dropping a course with a W, will not take them to part-time standing. But, please see information on other considerations below:

- **Financial** – A student registered for 12 credit hours withdrawing from a course, is still attempting credit for 12 credit hours, so remains a full-time student. The transcript will reflect that 12 hours were attempted for a given term, but the GPA will be calculated on the completed coursework. Withdrawing from too many courses can impact ability to qualify for financial aid. See <https://www.drake.edu/finaid/genpolicies/>
- **Academic** – A student who withdraws from a course does not earn credit for the course and has a W posted to their transcript. If the course in which a student earned a W is retaken, both the new grade and the W will appear on the transcript.
- **Athletic** - Withdrawing from a course may have implications for athletic eligibility. Per NCAA standards, at certain points 40, 60 and 80% of a degree must be completed. Please consult with athletics before withdrawing from a course.

Registration for Summer and Fall 2026

Registration for Summer and Fall begins on Monday, April 6. A great reference for all-things registration can be found [here](#).



Career Services Update from Rebecca Muntz, Assistant Director and Liaison to Arts and Sciences

Please share these great opportunities for Arts and Sciences students hosted by Rebecca Muntz and Career Services!

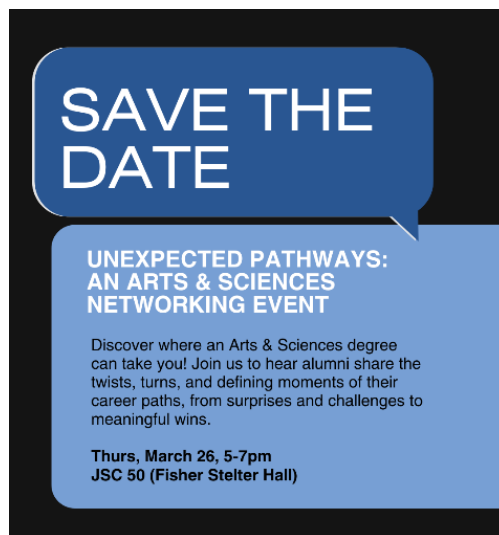


Internships & Mocktails

Thurs, March 5, 5-6pm

Johansen Student Center 50 (Fisher-Stelter Hall)

Sip, connect, and get career-ready! Join us in Johansen Student Center 50 (Fisher-Stelter Hall) for appetizers, mocktails, and networking while learning about Cintas internship opportunities. Everyone who comes will be entered into a free suit giveaway!



Unexpected Journeys: Arts & Sciences Alumni Networking Event

Thursday, March 26, 5-7pm

Johansen Student Center 50 (Fisher-Stelter Hall).

This alumni networking event gives students the opportunity to hear from Arts & Sciences alumni about the unexpected paths their careers have taken, gain practical insights from their experiences, and connect with alumni during informal, table-based conversations.



Upcoming Events



Drake University Jazz Ensemble Two
Wayne Page, director,
Sunday, March 8, 7:30pm
Patty and Fred Turner Jazz Center



Sheslow Auditorium Events

Drake Choirs
Eric Barnum, Ted Brimeyer, and Josh Boggs, conductors,
Sunday, March 8, 3:00pm

Drake University Symphonic Band
Bryan Hummel, conductor
Tuesday, March 10 7:30pm

Drake University Wind Symphony
Vince Kenney, conductor
Wednesday, March 11, 7:30pm

Transformative Impressions

Richard Black
International Print Exhibition
with Jurors Raluca Iancu & Sang Lee

Drake UNIVERSITY

February 5–March 13, 2026
Opening Reception and Award Ceremony:
February 5, 5–7 pm, Anderson Gallery

Transformative Impressions: Richard Black International Juried Print Exhibition

Feb 5 - March 13

Anderson Art Gallery

Transformative Impressions, an exhibition with the theme of transformation through print, exploring the boundaries of the printmaking medium, will run through March 13.



Masterclass: Stella Chen, Violin

Friday, March 13, 4:00pm

Patty and Fred Turner Jazz Center

Drake Undergraduate Science Collaborative Institute (DUSCI) Research Colloquium Series

Friday, March 27, 2026 at 12:30 pm, Olin 206

Kate Hagemeyer (Psychology, Zoo & Conservation Science)
Faculty Mentor: Dr. Olga Lazareva



Choosing Sides: An Evaluation of Laterality in Tropical Cockroaches

Lateralization is the tendency for cognitive processes or behaviors to be specialized on one side of the brain or body. It is well-documented in vertebrates and is easily observed in humans through handedness. Although insects account for approximately 75-80% of all known animal species, they remain underrepresented in lateralization research and research in general. This presentation examines laterality in two species of tropical cockroaches through the evaluation of turning bias and antenna grooming behavior.

Ujan RoyBandyopadhyay (Computer Science, Music)
Evan Scherrer (Computer Science, Artificial Intelligence)
Faculty Mentor: Dr. Adam Case



Lessons from four years of competitive programming

Four years ago, the promise of free food lured us into our first programming contest; this year, we qualified for the [ICPC North America Championship](#). In this talk, we'll discuss what a programming contest is, reflect on our journey, and share some lessons we've learned along the way.



Stay for snacks and socializing after the talks!



Drake Undergraduate Science Collaborative Institute (DUSCI) Research Colloquium Series

Friday, March 27, 12:30pm

Olin 206

Join us to support and celebrate two STEM student talks on Friday, March 27 at 12:30pm in Olin 206! Stay for snacks and social time after the talks!



Little Women

Directed by Shayne Mims; music directed by Taylor Mayne

Thursday, April 2 - Saturday, April 4 at 7:30pm; Sunday, April 5 at 2:00 pm
Performing Arts Hall.

Tag A&S on Your Social Media!



Please tag Arts & Sciences in your social media posts so we can share what you're up to. When you create your post, add @DrakeUArtSci to tag us in Facebook, and @drakeartsci in Instagram.

In partnership with UCM, we would love to spotlight faculty, students, staff, and alumni and feature your programs through the College of A&S accounts: please send your suggestions to jennifer.cooper@drake.edu. Thanks!

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