

A Note from the Dean

Dear Colleagues,

I hope this last A&S Newsletter of the semester finds you well and ready for the final push. Behind the mountain of grading awaits summer—you can do it! This newsletter is filled with celebrations of outstanding accomplishments by all of you and our students. I am incredibly proud of all the things you have done. What a semester we've had!

I am excited to invite everyone to join us on the patio of the restaurant Lucky Horse this Friday, May 9, from 3-5pm to celebrate the end of the semester. The weather promises to be perfect for sitting outside, chatting with colleagues, and reminiscing about the year.

We have so many reasons to be optimistic for the coming year. Thanks to everyone's hard work, our admissions numbers for new students in the fall are looking great. We have surpassed our target of 330 new students with majors in the arts and sciences, reaching 362 as of this morning! We will continue to recruit but also turn our attention to keeping prospective students engaged throughout the summer. We carried on our work to reimagine the Arts and Sciences and are excited to move several projects forward. While we have a few more open searches to complete, we are already looking forward to welcoming new faculty and staff in the fall.

Thank you for your tremendous work and accomplishments this year! I hope to see you on Friday!

Warmly,

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

Gesine Gerhard, Ph.D.
Dean, College of Arts & Sciences



Upcoming Deadlines and Important Dates

Date	Event/Activity
May 8	Last day of classes
May 9	Day free for study
May 9	A&S faculty and staff end-of-semester happy hour, 3-5 PM Lucky Horse Beer and Burgers
May 17	A&S Commencement
May 21	Final Grades due at 10am

Access the Full College of A&S and University Calendar 2024-25 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

Arts and Sciences Faculty and Staff: Please join us for an end-of-semester happy hour at **Lucky Horse Beer & Burgers** (2331 University Ave) on Friday, May 9, 3-5pm! There is no agenda, just an opportunity to celebrate the semester and enjoy one another's company. There will be drinks and appetizers provided by the College, with the patio reserved for us.





Welcome to Rebecca Muntz, Assistant Director of Career Services

Join us in welcoming our new hire to Drake, **Rebecca Muntz** (rebecca.muntz@drake.edu), who serves as our A&S Career Services liaison and is already making an impact for the College.

What drew you to higher education, and what experiences led you to this role?

In college, I studied International Relations and my first job post-graduation was teaching English abroad in Beijing, China. After spending two years teaching, I realized I loved working in education, so I pursued my Master's in Higher Education and Student Development. Following my Master's, I worked in international student services and study abroad for five years and academic advising and career services for three years. I'm looking forward to focusing fully on Career Services at Drake!

What are you looking forward to most about working in Career Services at Drake?

I love Drake's emphasis on experiential education, and I'm excited to be a part of students' journeys from developing a resume their first year at Drake to accepting their first job after graduation. I look forward to working with students from A&S because there's such variety in the fields they want to go into and in their motivations for choosing their programs.

How can A&S faculty partner with Career Services?

I'm currently doing a lot of learning about Drake and my role here! Please share any opportunities this summer or fall (dept. meetings, info sessions, events, etc.) where I can learn more about your department. I am also open to connecting over coffee to discuss ideas on how Career Services can partner with your department this next school year. As always, please refer students to my office as needed! I look forward to working with you!



Student & Faculty Recognition

Celebrating our newly promoted and tenured faculty



Dr. Dian Nostikasari, who joined Drake in 2019, has been tenured and promoted to associate professor in the Department of Environmental Science and Sustainability. She teaches innovative courses on Environmental Justice, Sustainable Transportation, and Civic Environmentalism, and has developed a successful J-Term Travel Seminar to Indonesia. Her project-based, community-focused teaching style and active-learning pedagogy have become recruitment tools for the department. With a background in urban planning and public policy, Dr. Nostikasari conducts community-based research focusing on justice, access, and equity in urban planning, revealing systematic environmental injustices. Her contributions to diversity and inclusion are notable, advocating for Muslim students and students and faculty of color. Beyond the university, she fosters community partnerships, increasing Drake's visibility and contributing to regional bike and trail infrastructure planning through the Active Transportation Plan Committee for the Des Moines Metropolitan Area. Congratulations, Dian!



Dr. Robert Collis, who has been an assistant professor since 2022 and previously joined Drake as a visiting professor, has been promoted to associate professor in the Department of History. Known for his highly engaging teaching style and beloved by students for sparking curiosity and enthusiasm for history, Professor Collis teaches popular classes spanning from the 1700s to the Cold War, covering countries on both sides of the Atlantic. Trained as a scholar of eighteenth-century Russia, Rob has expanded his research to explore the impact of esoterica in the intellectual and social world of early modern educated elites in Europe and America. He is the author of two monographs and multiple peer-reviewed publications, with one of his books currently being translated into Russian. Rob's knowledge of five languages allows him to interpret primary sources in new ways. Highly valued by colleagues for his service to the department and the college, Rob is a cheerful presence across Meredith Hall and beyond. Congratulations, Rob!



Dr. Eric Manley, who joined Drake in 2009 and was tenured and promoted to associate professor in 2015, is a highly effective and innovative teacher, offering a variety of computer science, data analytics, and artificial intelligence courses. Professor Manley enables students to see themselves as technology experts who can solve complex problems in creative ways, and his approach to course design serves as a model for other teachers in this fast-changing field. As an active and caring mentor, Eric guides students on group research projects, the writing of conference papers, and independent studies, serving as a CREW mentor and mentor for Inclusive Scholars of Digital Proficiency. An accomplished scholar himself, Dr. Manley shifted his research focus after the creation of the Data Analytics major at Drake, a program that he successfully co-leads and exports to other countries. He now works on the application of machine learning, one of the foundational computing disciplines of data analytics. His scholarship is as engaging and impactful as his teaching. Congratulations, Eric!



Faculty Award recipients: Dr. Rob Collis and Dr. Elizabeth Talbert



E.A. Sheslow Prize for Distinguished Leadership recipient: Carissa Phan, with Dean Gesine Gerhard

A&S Honors and Awards Ceremony

The College of Arts & Sciences celebrated our amazing students and faculty on April 17 at the Honors and Awards Ceremony. Over 100 students were recognized, and several donors were present to hand out awards! We are pleased to share some of the student, faculty, and departmental highlights of the evening with the College.

Assistant Professor **Rob Collis** was recognized as Outstanding Teacher of the Year, and last year's award winner Assistant Professor **Elizabeth Talbert**, gave the honors address.

Carissa Phan (BA '26, LPS, IR) was awarded the E.A. Sheslow Prize for Distinguished Leadership. Departmental Awards were also presented to students, and ten Arts & Sciences honors societies were recognized.

Thank you to faculty, students, families and donors who came out to help us celebrate these remarkable achievements!



Music Department student awards



*BCMB student award recipients
Isaiah Mitchell and Evelyn Parker*



Chemistry Department student awards



Political Science student awards



Biology Department student awards

Phi Beta Kappa Initiation and Reception



On Monday, May 5th, the Drake chapter of Phi Beta Kappa (PBK), the oldest academic honor society in the USA, welcomed the following students as new members. PBK recognizes excellence in the liberal arts and sciences; students invited to join must not only be outstanding students but also demonstrate breadth of study, including language acquisition. Please join us in recognizing the following new members:

Cayden Anderson; Carmon Baker; Rylee Beardsworth; Hannah Clark; Ruth Conlin; Sydney Dvorak; Summer Fields; Ella Gittemeier; Natalie Hamacher; Jackson Hill; Libby Johnson; Leif Klarqvist; Anna Knueve; Ella

Arts & Sciences professor and student are celebrated by Drake University with Presidential Awards for outstanding commitment to civic education and community service



Congratulations to **Dr. Dian Nostikasari**, Associate Professor of Environmental Science and Sustainability, who will be awarded the **2025 Presidents’ Civic Engagement Leadership Award** for her commitment to environmental justice and community collaboration. Through projects such as “Walk My Bricks” and digital storytelling initiatives with Des Moines youth, Dr. Nostikasari integrates community voices into student learning experiences, fostering meaningful connections between the university and the city.

A&S student **Chloe Lepak** will receive the **2025 Presidents’ Student Leadership Award** for her exemplary work as Drake’s Voter and Civic Engagement Coordinator. Chloe’s leadership during the 2024 general election season led to hundreds of students registering to vote and casting ballots through absentee, satellite, and in-person voting. Her dedication to non-partisan voter education continues this spring as she shares strategies with peers for remaining politically involved in between elections.

[You can read the complete announcement here.](#)



The 2025 edition of the **Drake University Social Science Journal** is now available on-line at: <https://www.drake.edu/dussj/currentedition/>

The Journal publishes exceptional social science research conducted by Drake University students. Any current Drake undergraduate (or recent graduate) is eligible to submit a paper on a topic in the social sciences (political science, international relations, anthropology, sociology, economics, history, and social psychology). The first edition of the Journal appeared in 1999 (back editions are available at: <https://www.drake.edu/dussj/>).

The 2025 edition features articles by Lauren Buchanan, Stella Depuydt, Mitchell P. Davis, Catalina Samaniego, and Chloe Q. Slater.

The Journal’s student editorial board consists of Berkeley Coyne, Anna Knueve, Lizzy O’Neel, Carson Smith, Reid Stevens, and Madison Tarr.

Congratulations to the students for their hard work and dedication to high-quality social science research!



Admissions & Enrollment Corner

President Martin’s “Report on the April Board of Trustees” to faculty included an update on Admissions. He wrote, “I am pleased to share encouraging news on that front. The following table shows comparable year-over-year deposits for our three new entering undergraduate student pathways:

	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021
EFR	711	549	670	745	797
Transfer	98	63	85	40	47
Bright	26	11	6	4	3
Total	835	623	761	789	847

As you can see, our total deposits trail only the 2021 cycle at this point. We will continue to receive deposits as we move towards the fall, particularly in our transfer and Bright College populations."

For the College of Arts and Sciences, we currently have 362 Net Tuition Deposits for EFR students, which is greater than the last two years (274 for 2024, 344 for 2023). We also had 37 Transfer Net Tuition Deposits (compared to 28 in 2024 and 45 in 2023). Law, Politics, and Society (LPS) and Psychology remain the largest single major draws, with Open-Enrolled next in size. The Zoo and Conservation Science major, while still quite new, is another significant draw for students.

HOW DID WE GET HERE? Faculty and Staff have put in significant work on Admitted Student Days, with academic meetings, mock classes, one-on-one visits, tours, and more. Admissions reports that 300 students attended these events. There also were "Last Peeks" for admitted students on April 12 and 19 who had not previously visited campus; 8 of 15 attendees for those events have submitted tuition deposits.

Faculty also volunteered weekend and evening time for department-specific 45-60 minute long virtual meetings for admitted students. These virtual meetings were a new Admissions effort this spring. They focused on allowing students and families to ask specific questions of faculty or department chairs. Drake faculty were tasked with communicating why/how Drake majors or programs are different from those at other Colleges or Universities, such as distinctive requirements or co-curricular opportunities.

WHAT COMES NEXT? ORIENTATION and MELT MITIGATION are the primary factors for summer. Orientation involves present students as Orientation Leaders as well as Drake's Advising Specialists and faculty. Students take placement exams in language and other areas to best place them in their fall classes. Their Orientation Survey helps place them in classes both in and outside of initial majors. Department and College meetings introduce them to expectations and opportunities in their first year and later in their time at Drake. The Advising Council is working on staggering communications and "to do" lists for students to maintain connection between June and August.

The College also is sending out postcards with reminders of ways students can stay engaged before classes start, from taking STEM bridge classes to making sure transfer credits are in place, to working with Advising Specialists. We encourage faculty to remain in contact with admitted students with whom they have spoken. While much of melt seems to depend on factors outside our control (such as financial situation or distance from home), we want to do what we can to keep students excited about the fall and reaching out if they have concerns or final questions.

NEXT YEAR'S CYCLE has already started, with an April Academic Fair designed for present juniors and younger students. There will be two June "Sneak Peaks" with Academic Fairs and introductions to Drake for high school students of all ages, followed by two August "Bulldog Days of Summer" programs with academic meetings and programming focusing on rising high school seniors. One-on-one visits with faculty continue throughout the summer as well. Over the coming months, faculty will receive requests to participate in fall admissions events: Oct 4, 10, 16, and 17; Nov 7 and 15.

We are excited that this year's cycle suggests the College and University will meet enrollment goals - or at least be close to them. We are surpassing stats from 2024 and looking to 2023 or previous years for benchmarks. Thank you for all your efforts for recruitment in the College!



Advising & Student Support Corner

Final Grades

Final grades are due by **10 a.m. on Wednesday, May 21**. The timely and accurate entry of grades is tied to a variety of end-of-term processes, including but not limited to, degree posting, Dean's and President's Lists consideration and academic standing reviews. Please enter grades for all students on your roster. If a student stopped attending your course early on, but did not take action to drop, please email [Mary Beth Holtey](#) so she can conduct outreach.

Resolving Incomplete (I) Marks:

If in a previous term you issued an incomplete (I) and the student has now earned a letter grade, please update the grade: MyDrake > Self Service > Course Grading > I/IP/NR Grade Updates. If you wish to extend the time by which a student has to complete the work in a class currently marked as incomplete, please email [Alina Grimm](#) or [Mary Beth Holtey](#) so they can work with the Registrar's Office to create the extension.

If working with a student who will not successfully complete your course this spring, it may seem helpful to offer the student an incomplete and urge them to re-register for the course in the fall, but please do not pursue this path. Why? Only one grade can be included on the transcript/calculated in the GPA. Repeated courses will result in an XX on the transcript and (only) the higher grade in the course calculated in the GPA. It is in the student's better interest to resolve the incomplete and not re-register for the course.

If you are considering granting an Incomplete this semester, please refer to the [General Regulations | Drake University Academic Catalog](#) for the procedures and **note the differences between an Incomplete (I) and In Progress (IP)**.

When You Have the Best of Intentions...

If a student has not attended your course for several weeks, nor submitted any work during the term, it may seem friendly to extend an incomplete, but experience (and data) has shown that these students rarely successfully complete the work or earn a high grade. Furthermore, the presence of several incompletes gives the student a false sense of hope (don't most of us have the best of intentions to complete work, only to find we take on too much?). And, students who take several incompletes may be in a type of financial aid "limbo," without resolved credits and a clear sense of hours earned.

Summer Courses and Drop Dates

If it's been a minute since you've taught a summer course, please note that beginning in the summer 2023, a new policy and set of deadlines regarding the course add/drop policy is in place. A chart detailing the relevant add/drop deadlines for summer 2025 can be found at [Add/Drop Deadlines | Drake University](#).

Celebrating A&S Highlights



Congratulations to **Dr. Inbal Mazar** for her community engagement at the recent [Des Moines Art Center symposium and exhibit](#) “*Life within Ourselves: Haitian Art in Iowa.*” Dr. Mazar contributed a presentation, which is featured in the museum lobby sharing stories of ten families who have immigrated to our community from Haiti. The exhibit will remain open to the public (free of charge) through September 7, 2025.



Chloe Lepak, a double major in Law, Politics and Society and Anthropology/Sociology was featured as a speaker at the [Urban Ambassadors event](#) on May 1, speaking on the importance of community engagement

and the power of writing to legislators. Congratulations, Chloe!



Congratulations to **Dr. Maria Valdovinos** and students in her **Adult Development and Aging** course, who partnered with [WesleyLife Meals on Wheels](#) in three tracks to serve older adults in Des Moines: storytelling while preparing meals, recording life journeys, and combatting food insecurity through meal delivery!



Dr. Tim Urness and the **CODE Scholars** (focused on inclusivity in computer science) are featured in the J.W. Roberts Digital Hub room (Johansen Student Center, 3rd floor) as the new building was [dedicated over 2025 Drake Relays weekend](#).

Like A&S on Social Media!



Please check out and share on A&S Facebook and 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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