

# CAS Report to the UFC – September 2024

*Submitted by Dean Keith Mellinger*

## **Faculty Hiring**

Several new faculty members joined the College of Arts and Sciences this fall. In tenure-track, or otherwise *continuing* positions, we hired four:

- **Lauren A. Cirino**, in the Department of Biological Sciences. Lauren joins us from a post-doc position at Oklahoma State after receiving her PhD in Entomology and Nematology from the University of Florida.
- **Evan Coleman**, in the Department of Computer Science. Evan's PhD from Old Dominion is in Engineering with a concentration in modeling and simulation, and his Master's degree from Syracuse is in Mathematics. He joins us after serving as a scientist, senior software engineer, and program manager out at the Dahlgren Naval Base.
- **Coorain W. Devin** joins the Studio Art program. Coorain earned an MFA in Photography from Georgia State, after completing both a BA in Philosophy from Tufts and a BFA in Fine Art from the School of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston.
- **Emma Rohde** joins us in the Department of Athletics, Health & Physical Education as our new head volleyball coach. Emma comes to us after a highly successful run as the head women's volleyball coach at Kenyon College in Ohio. She is also an alum of UMW and was our assistant coach for a year shortly after graduation. Emma has an MS degree in Sports Management, an asset that will prove quite useful as we continue to expand the Sports Management minor program, one of the most popular minors on campus.

In addition to the continuing positions noted above, Arts and Sciences also brought in six additional visiting professors to help us deliver curriculum in areas where we are not yet ready to commit to full-time tenure-track positions. These include:

- Rebecca M. Boyd (Classics) to teach introductory Classics and Latin courses. Note that we had two retirements in this area last spring.
- Joshua Clements (Computer Science) to teach introductory computer science.
- Kaitlyn E. Haynal (Communication) to help cover classes in this high demand program with one faculty member on a full-year sabbatical leave.
- Suzanne Nguyen (Chemistry), who is helping us to catch up in this high-demand area where we continue to struggle with high DFW rates.
- Adharsh Raghavan (Chemistry) is our second visitor helping to meet enrollment demands in chemistry. This position will convert to a full-time continuing RTA position for next year.
- Abed E. Shalabi (Studio Art) will cover course work in sculpture, an area where we saw a retirement last spring.

A small number of faculty searches were approved to start this fall. Again, these positions are all in high-demand areas where we have a critical need and which align with our strategic direction. These include:

- Nursing – This is a high demand program and needs a replacement position due to retirement.

- Computer Science – Again, this position is in a high demand program and is necessitated by a retirement.
- Studio Art – They lost two faculty last spring (one retirement, one resignation), and will be searching for one new position this year. A second position is under consideration for search next year once we do a careful assessment of programmatic direction and needs.
- Chemistry – As noted above, this program has a notoriously high DFW rate in their lower-division courses and our goal is to stabilize this through concentrated attention toward those courses. Our new non-tenure-track hire will be charged with focusing attention on these courses.
- Music – This will be for an instrumentalist who will take over one of the major ensembles, and potentially build something new that will attract students. Our goal is to better leverage our music program in our recruitment efforts. Currently, the Pep Band, the UMW Philharmonic Orchestra, and the Eagle Pipe Band are all run by contingent faculty. With more stable leadership, these programs should naturally become recruiting tools.
- Biology – The addition of this position will help us to build a program in Kinesiology. Part of our strategy for growth in the biological sciences has us developing a major program in Kinesiology and this requires us to have a bit more expertise within the department.

### **External Grant Activity**

Within the past eight months 18 CAS faculty members have submitted a total of 22 external grant proposals for funding to support new curriculum initiatives, research projects and the development of open-resources for several of our classes. The total funding requested from the 22 applications comes to \$5,366,984. Some notable examples include the following. Four faculty members from the departments of Geography, Computer Science and Communications and Digital Studies received grants from the Library of Virginia to develop open textbook resources for specific classes within those disciplines. From the biological sciences, three of our faculty received research grants averaging \$6,600 from the Virginia Academy of Sciences to support projects in the areas of immunology, potential cancer therapy and animal behavior. Each of these projects have the participation of students who are pursuing independent studies. Marco Millones, in the Dept. of Geography, received a \$90,000 grant from the United States Agency for International Development that enabled him to work on a program in Peru during the current fall term utilizing his skills in remote sensing to evaluate the relative success of USAID programs. Associate Professor of Religion, Jennifer Barry, was the successful recipient of a prestigious National Endowment for the Humanities summer grant to support her work on Scandalous Christian Histories. Jared McDonald, from the Department of Political Science and International Affairs, has received \$45,000 to assist the Southern Political Science Association in their upcoming conference planning. Anand Rao, from the Department of Communications and Digital Studies, has authored several ambitious grant proposals to SCHEV and the National Endowment for the Humanities, that address the growing field of Artificial Intelligence and the importance of considering its potential throughout the humanities. In the physical sciences, Pam Grothe and Tyler Frankel, members of the Dept. of Earth and Environmental Sciences, have submitted significant research proposals. Pam has requested \$400,000 from the National Science Foundation to fund her continuing climate reconstruction project and Tyler requested \$173,000 from the Mitsubishi Corporation Foundation to pursue a study on ecosystem health and diversity in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Finally, Associate Professor of Physics, Varun Makhija, has submitted an \$800,000 grant proposal to the National Science Foundation to support his work in quantum information science and molecular dynamics.

## **Summer Research Programs**

Two groups of students were on campus this summer conducting faculty-mentored research projects. During the first summer session, 13 students worked with their mentors on projects in communication, music, psychology, and sociology as part of our Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences Summer Institute ([AHSSSI](#)). This is the third year of AHSSSI, modeled after our long-standing Summer Science Institute ([SSI](#)), which celebrated its 25<sup>th</sup> year. The newly renamed Irene Piscopo Rodgers ('59) Summer Science Institute funded 31 students, who conducted faculty-mentored research in biology, chemistry, computer science, environmental science, geography, mathematics, and physics throughout both summer sessions (May 15-July 26). Both programs culminated in a symposium where students presented their projects. You can read about some of the projects in these two stories: [Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences Summer Institute](#); [Irene Piscopo Rodgers \('59\) Summer Science Institute](#).