

CAS Report to the UFC – November 2025

Prepared by Dean Keith Mellinger

There are a number of curricular innovations happening within the College that align well with the strategic priorities of the university. A newly approved **Medical Humanities** minor will launch in 2026-27, offering students an interdisciplinary approach to health and illness that integrates cultural, philosophical, and literary perspectives. Designed to complement pre-health and STEM pathways, the minor will provide competencies recommended by the Association of American Medical Colleges as essential for entering medical students, such as cultural awareness, ethical reasoning, interpretive skills, and service orientation.

UMW has approved a restructuring of three humanities majors—Anthropology, Art History, and Classical Studies—under a **single Anthropology degree program**, thereby allowing us to remove the separate degrees in Classics and Art History from our SCHEV degree inventory, yet still preserve the majors. This change introduces a shared 18-credit interdisciplinary core while preserving disciplinary depth. The streamlined structure maximizes curricular flexibility with existing staffing, encourages broad academic engagement, and strengthens mastery of skills valued across many professional sectors.

Across the 15 academic departments within the college, **37 faculty development grants** were awarded to faculty pursuing research activities in the fall semester. Most of the awards are for faculty looking to present results of their research at professional meetings.

The Center for **Historic Preservation** presented the annual Book Prize Lecture on November 11, honoring Daniel Campo, Ph.D., author of *Postindustrial DIY*. **UMW Galleries** just opened in the Ridderhof Martin Gallery *Adaptation, Innovation, and Tradition—Art from the Patawomeck Community*, as well as the juried Annual Student Art Exhibition in the duPont Gallery. The Department of **Music** is in rehearsal for several upcoming events, including a November 23 concert featuring the UMW Choirs, UMW Philharmonic, and pianist and associate professor Robert Wells—all performing Beethoven's *Choral Fantasy*, followed closely by the much-loved Holiday Concert on December 5. **UMW Theatre** opens a three-week run of *Godspell* on November 6 in Klein Theatre that will include a sensory friendly performance on November 15.

We are making significant strides toward establishing a **Humanities Center** as a hub for interdisciplinary teaching, public engagement, and career preparedness. An October symposium brought together directors of humanities centers across Virginia and generated strong faculty interest. With a target launch date of Fall 2026, the Center will support curricular innovation, expand community-based projects, and increase internship and research opportunities for humanities and social science students.

In the **Irene Piscopo Rodgers '59 School of Science**, many of our faculty are engaged in a variety of student research projects this fall. Many of these projects connect in meaningful ways to medical issues – myotonic dystrophy (a form of muscular dystrophy), contributing factors to Alzheimer's Disease, effects of aerobic exercise on anxiety, stress and social behavior, and treatments for antibiotic resistant bacteria. Some students presented their research at the **Network for Undergraduate Research in Virginia** meeting, held at UMW, and many will be presenting their research at the **Virginia Academy of Science** Fall Meeting at Virginia State University in Petersburg, VA, as well as the Jepson Fall Science Symposium on December 5.

For **Giving Tuesday** this year, we are excited to have secured \$25,000 in challenge matches that support our new schools as well as the broader initiatives of the college. We are excited to engage our donors in a new way within our new organizational structure.

Finally, I want to recognize Ms. Paddy Link '72, an engaged alumna who graduated with a major in Art History and then went on to a highly successful career with the federal government, working in public policy on the staff of both senators and congressmen. She was the first woman to head the staff of the US Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation. A model for how a liberal arts degree translates into a successful career, we could not be happier that Ms. Link is sponsoring a \$5,000 challenge for the CAS general fund this December. With the humanities center as one of our current strategic initiatives, Paddy noted, "I am happy to help in any way to get funding for the Humanities at UMW."