

Provost's Mid-Year Update to the Academic Division February 2024

While the beginning of the Fall Semester always brings with it the excitement of a new academic year, the start of the Spring Semester is my favorite. There is plenty of cold weather ahead, but we can already see the promise of spring and the added energy that gradually lengthening days bring. I hope that you, too, look forward to the new semester. When the faculty meets on February 8, you will have the opportunity to hear from Faculty Representative Doug Casson and congratulate colleagues who have received tenure and promotion. The faculty will also have the opportunity to discuss the results of the 2023 National Survey of Student Engagement (see a brief summary of the results, below). Time permitting, Shelly Dickinson, Assistant Dean of Academic Advising, will provide some tips on a very effective strategy called “appreciative advising.”

This report serves as the mid-year update to the academic division as well as the report for the February faculty meeting. It covers:

- Returning colleagues and students
- New appointments and promotions
- A request/reminder
- Oracle implementation update
- Progress on 2023/24 goals for our division
- A brief summary of the NSSE results
- A long (!) list of faculty and staff accomplishments.

Welcome Back

Please join me in welcoming back to campus those returning from a sabbatical or other leave:

- Emmanuel Cudjo, Dance
- Ryota Matsuura, MSCS
- Danny Muñoz-Hutchinson, Philosophy
- Edmund Santurri, Religion and Philosophy
- Mary Trull, English
- Anne Walter, Biology
- Charles Wilson, Religion.

Anton Armstrong and Chung Park are returning from Choir and Orchestra tours.

Also returning to campus are the 468 students who enrolled in 24 study abroad/away courses. (417 studied abroad or away in January 2023.) As we continue to restore student and faculty engagement in this distinctive aspect of our curriculum, we owe a debt of gratitude to the Smith Center. How can you help support the Smith Center team? Answer their requests for information promptly and keep in mind that they must juggle international and national law as well as St. Olaf policies and practices, all while supporting faculty members and students.

New Positions and Promotions

Congratulations to:

- Mijung Kim, SSS TRIO: Promoted to Academic Advisor

- Jennifer Kwon Dobbs, English and Race, Ethnicity, Gender and Sexuality Studies: Associate Dean of Interdisciplinary and General Studies (starting July 1)
- Sophia McComb, SSS TRIO: Promoted to Senior Academic Advisor
- Jon Naito, English: Associate Dean of Humanities (starting July 1)
- Kelly Roehl, AAA: Team North (World Languages). Kelly has over 25 years of administrative support experience with a degree in Travel Management. Kelly and her husband own B&D Composting and have three children who are very active in 4H.
- Abbey Showalter: Government, Foundation and Corporate Relations: promoted to Associate Director
- Susie Smalling, SWFS and Associate Dean of Social Sciences: Director of Faculty Inclusion and Belonging (starting February 1).

And welcome to [faculty colleagues](#) joining the college this spring!

A Request/Reminder: Providing Timely Feedback to Students and Early Alerts

Students benefit from early graded feedback in their courses. In order to help make it possible for students to seek other options (if that is the best option), they need to get feedback before the add deadline (Feb. 20), and certainly before the drop deadline (April 12). Also, please make sure to submit an early alert if you see an issue emerging for a student, such as too many missed classes or assignments, a poor or failing grade, or concerning behaviors

Oracle Implementation

Several modules of the new Oracle Enterprise Information System went live December 2023. These include Core HR, Recruiting, Onboarding, Benefits, Payroll, Expenses and Invoicing, Time and Absences, Accounting, Cash Management, Fixed Assets, and Projects (Grants and Capital). Faculty and staff had a number of opportunities to learn about these aspects of the new system in the period leading up to the transition. Drivestream, the College's implementation partner, will continue to provide support and respond to issues arising in Human Resources, the Business Office and Finance during the next two years. Our colleagues in HR, Payroll and Finance, as well as Susan Canon (IE&A), Wendy Woitalla (ITS) and Tracy Goodwin (Office of the Dean of the College) have done extraordinary work on our behalf. If you get a chance, make a point to thank them. And, if something isn't working perfectly—as we can expect to happen from time to time—please exercise some grace and understanding.

The next phase of implementation pertains to Oracle Student, the new Student Information System (SIS). Work on implementation of Oracle Student had its official kick-off in January 2024.

Progress on 2023/24 Goals for the Academic Division

1. Launch the new collaborative academic advising model and flexible 4-year pathway; explore with the faculty, Academic Success Center and Piper Center opportunities for students to expand their exploration of vocation, leadership and academic pursuits during their four years on campus. Identify ways to ensure that 100% of the entering class in 2024/25 is assigned and academic advisor who is also a professor in one of the student's fall courses. *We are working on it!*

⇒ *We launched the year with an in-service faculty gathering where colleagues from Academic Success, Student Life, and the Piper Center discussed how*

developments in their own programs can intersect with academic advising. Faculty had time to reflect on how advisors can refer students to Success Coaches, the Dean of Students, and Piper Center Coaches.

- ⇒ *It's too early to see how close we can get to assigning 100% of 2024's entering first year students to a professor who is also teaching one of their courses (or to a specialized advisor), but we know we are already close to achieving this.*
- 2. Ensure a smooth launch of the 5-course load, paying particular attention to curriculum and resources. Review and refine the changes made. *Over all, the implementation has been extremely smooth, thanks to the Fall 2022 work of departments and programs and Associate Deans.*
 - ⇒ *We've identified some pinch points and the Associate Deans are working with department chairs and others to address these.*
 - ⇒ *Chairs and Directors will be discussing the first year of implementing the 5-course load later this spring, in Academic Leadership.*
- 3. Continue to advance St. Olaf's vision and goals for equity and inclusion through projects addressing the gap in experiences for different student cohorts.' Work to close the gap in staff and faculty members' experiences, drawing on 2023/24 interviews being carried out on behalf of the VP for Equity and Inclusion.
 - ⇒ *Departments and programs are working with Louis Epstein, Special Assistant to the Provost for Student Belonging and Retention to pilot a number of "interventions" that faculty members can use in their courses and communications with students. The pilots will begin Spring 2024.*
 - ⇒ *The 2023 NSSE results identify that the experiential gap has closed for some student cohorts, but remains for others.*
 - ⇒ *Appointment of the Director of Faculty Inclusion and Belonging.*
- 4. Support a campus-wide review of the academic calendar to best support St. Olaf's academic, co-curricular and residential program.
 - ⇒ *The Academic Calendar Review and Revision Committee gathered information and ideas from all areas of the college during the fall semester. It introduced two options for the calendar to the Faculty Life and Curriculum and Student Life committees, the Deans and Directors, and the President's Leadership Team.*
 - ⇒ *It will invite feedback from the entire college community early in the spring of 2024 and is on track to finish its work on-time, before the end of the 2023/24 academic year.*
- 5. Support the implementation of the Oracle Enterprise Information System as we begin work on the SIS modules. *On-track and on-time.*
 - ⇒ *The first phase of the Oracle implementation—entailing business systems, payroll and HR—is largely complete.*
 - ⇒ *Finalizing the specifications for the Student Information System ("Oracle Student") has begun.*

2023 National Survey of Student Engagement

Results from the spring 2023 National Survey of Student Engagement indicate strengthening student responses in regard to experiences in the classroom, co-curricular activities and services. In some cases, the reported experiences of different cohorts of students came more closely into alignment since the last administration of the survey in 2021. That improvement, however, is not

even. A gap in reported experiences continues in particular for students of color, international and first-generation students.

Students—senior and first-year respondents—saw an emphasis on equity and inclusion in the classroom, continuing an improvement that we saw in 2021. 2023 first-year and senior responses regarding “institutional” emphasis on equity and inclusion were stronger than 2021 responses for every item, though 2023 seniors were less positive than first-year students. First-year St. Olaf students were more likely than peers at other institutions to report seeing evidence of institutional emphasis on diversity, inclusion and equity, with senior responses being similar to those at other institutions. However, seniors’ responses in regard to institutional emphasis on DEI remain less positive than those regarding DEI in the classroom. Responses regarding a sense of belonging and a supportive environment also strengthened and generally were the same as or stronger than at other institutions. This good news is tempered by the gap between responses of some groups of students. In particular domestic first-year and senior students of color, and seniors who are international or first-generation were less likely to report they felt as though they belong. First-year student perceptions of academic advising in 2023 were in every case improved over those from 2021, and were similar to or more positive than those at other institutions. Senior responses in 2023 were similar to those in 2021 and similar to those at peer institutions. In sum, we continue to build strengths and to narrow some gaps in students’ experiences, and we still have progress to make.

An Executive Summary (2 pp.) and the Full Report (12 pp. and appendices) is included in the materials for the Faculty Meeting.

Faculty and Staff Accomplishments

Congratulations to the following for major publications, exhibitions, performances, awards and honors, and grants:

- Alden Adolph, Physics: National Science Foundation supplement to her CAREER grant
- Jo Beld, VP for Mission: Council of Independent Colleges NetVUE grants for
 - “Reframing the Institutional Saga”
 - “Vocation Across the Academy-Life on Purpose”
- Emily Carroll, Nursing: received the [Distinguished Alumni Humanitarian Award](#) from the University of Minnesota School of Nursing Alumni Society
- Maggie Broner, Romance Languages: elected President of the Modern Language Association-Association of Language Departments Executive Committee
- Chuck Huff, Psychology: co-authored with Almut Furchert (former visiting Assistant Professor of Psychology) *Taking Moral Action* (Wiley)
- Rehanna Kheshgi, Music: 2023/24 St. Olaf Social Justice Award
- Jennifer Kwon Dobbs, English: Metro Regional Arts Council in partnership with the Minnesota Humanities Center to offer “Our Ancestors Are Us: An Asian Adoptee Life Writing Workshop”
- Steve Lindley, Financial Aid: Minnesota Office of Higher Education for emergency assistance for post-secondary students
- Chung Park, Music:
 - St. Olaf Orchestra featured on *Performance Today*

- Appointed to the [Monteux](#) 2024 guest conducting faculty
- Naomi Rushing, Environmental Studies: Northfield Shares grant supporting research on climate history and historical environments in southwestern Minnesota
- Hannah Ryan, Art/Art History: co-published *Nourish and Resist: Food and Feminisms in Contemporary Global Caribbean Art* (Yale)
- David Schalliol, SOAN: his film [The Area](#) is streamed on PBS and PBS Passport
- Nancy Thompson, Art and Art History: grant from the Kress Foundation to support indexing of the journal *Different Visions: New Perspectives on Medieval Art*
- Charles Umbanhowar, Biology and Curator of the Natural Lands: Minnesota Historical Society grant supporting seed sourcing for prairie restoration.

Also, the Fall 2023 athletic season was the most successful for St. Olaf ever! I encourage you to congratulate coaches and student athletes on their achievements, and wish our spring teams and coaches well, too.

Upcoming

Feb.	6	J-term grades due, 9:00 a.m.
Feb.	8	Faculty meeting
Feb.	13	Town Hall (11:30 a.m.): President's report on Board of Regents meeting
Feb.	15	Academic Leadership
Feb.	20	Last day to add a class
Mar.	7	Celebration of Major Declaration
Mar.	14	Faculty meeting
Mar.	21	Academic Leadership
Mar.	23-31	Spring Break!
Apr.	8-12	Quiet Week for Advising (please refrain from scheduling events and meetings during this time, apart from meeting with advisees)
Apr.	12	Last day to drop a class

Handy Links

[Academic Leadership](#)

[Calendars](#)

[CILA Programming](#)

[Committees, their membership, and minutes](#)

[Deans Council membership and excerpted minutes](#)

[Early Alert Form](#)

[Oracle Reference Page](#) to view videos and reference guides and [Checklist of Information to Confirm in Oracle](#)

[Strategic Planning](#)

[Vision](#) for Equity and Inclusion and [Plan](#)