Welcome from the Dean
Welcome to the Fall 2015 issue of The Dean's Desk, with news about a few of the many recent accomplishments of our College of Liberal Arts and Sciences students, faculty and alumni. We recently welcomed the Class of 2019 to campus, and the new academic year is off to a great start. To stay up-to-date on the very latest news and happenings, connect with us on the Web, Facebook and Twitter.

Sincerely,
Adele Lindenmeyer, PhD
Dean

FACULTY FOCUS

Two Communication Professors Receive Honors
Associate professors of Communication Jie Xu, PhD, and Heidi Rose, PhD both received national honors. Dr. Xu received a Plank Center Educator Fellowship, which allowed her to work with Deveney Communications in New Orleans for two weeks this summer. The Fellowship aims to bridge the gap between education and practice. Dr. Xu was selected as one of seven Fellows from around the country.

Dr. Rose, who is also director of Graduate Program in Communication, was recently honored by the National Communication Association with the Lilla A. Heston Award for Outstanding Scholarship in Interpretation and Performance Studies. The Award recognizes outstanding published research and creative scholarship in interpretation and performance studies which serve to further the field.

Nathaniel Weston, PhD, Receives National Science Foundation Grant
Associate professor of Geography and the Environment Nathaniel Weston, PhD, received a $331,649 grant from the National Science Foundation for a project on which he is the principal investigator. The project, titled “Collaborative Research: RUI: Human Alteration of Sediment Delivery to the Coast – Legacies of Land Use, Coastal Wetland Accretion, and Future
Vulnerability to Sea Level Rise," will allow Dr. Weston to involve both undergraduate and graduate students in the research. This summer, as part of the grant, Dr. Weston took a group of students to Plum Island, Massachusetts for sample collections. The overall budget for the project is $665,000 and includes three other institutions.

Two National Science Foundation Grants Awarded to Dr. Andrej Prsa
Andrej Prsa, PhD, assistant professor of Astrophysics and Planetary Science, was awarded two grants from the National Science Foundation to support his work. One is a $170,000 grant for "A uniform sample of Kepler eclipsing binaries as benchmark stars to constrain stellar models on the lower main sequence." The second is a $300,000 grant for "One percent accuracy in fundamental stellar parameters? Not without an extensive redesign of eclipsing binary models." Dr. Prsa's research focuses on eclipsing binary stars. He recently was a part of the NASA's Science Working Group studying exoplanetary science within the Kepler mission.

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

CLAS Senior Serves as White House Intern This Summer
Emily Tifft ’16 CLAS spent this summer as an intern in the White House. An English, Gender and Women’s Studies and Honors major, Emily worked in the White House Visitors’ Office. A highlight of her internship was event planning for the Fourth of July party on the South Lawn, when the President and First Lady hosted military heroes and their families for a barbecue, concert and fireworks. She also helped plan Pope Francis’ visit to the White House later this month. Emily previously interned at the U.S. Supreme Court and spent the spring of 2015 studying abroad at the University of Oxford in England.

Two Documentaries Chosen for Student Academy Awards
Two documentaries produced through the Department of Communication’s Social Justice Documentary Program were selected as finalists in the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences’ 42nd Student Academy Award competition. The films were two of only seven to advance in the Documentary category, and joined an elite group of 33 films that remained in the competition out of the original field of 1,686. More than 500 colleges and universities in the U.S. and abroad entered the competition. The Villanova finalists were “Rise and Shine,” a film that tackles the issue of educational inequality, and “In Transition: Tony Chennault,” the story of a former Villanova basketball player who rose above tragedy to find a new purpose in life.

ALUMNI ACHIEVEMENTS

Kate Allison ’79 CLAS Leads Way in Communication Strategy
Kate Allison is the CEO and founding partner of The Karma Agency, a communications firm that maximizes strategies, ideas, language, design and influencer relationships for business results. She is a recognized thought leader on reputation as a driver of value and brand equity for global organizations and nascent enterprises. She is active in a number of community endeavors and currently serves as Vice Chair of the Board of Managers of The Philadelphia Foundation. Kate is a member of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences’ Dean’s Advisory Council and the recipient of the 2004 Ethos Award for Character and Excellence in Communications presented by Villanova’s Department of Communication.

CLAS Alumnus Named Head of Philadelphia-Area FBI
In August, William F. Sweeney, Jr. ’92 CLAS (Political Science) was named the new special agent in charge of the FBI Philadelphia field office. Before joining the FBI, he served in the US
Navy aboard the guided missile cruiser Vella Gulf. A 17-year veteran of the FBI, Sweeney started his career in Newark, NJ, where he directed an investigation that led to a bribery conviction of an influential politician. Before his reassignment to Philadelphia, Sweeney was special agent in charge of the FBI’s counter-terrorism unit in New York City.

Recent Graduate Serves as Liaison at World Meeting of Families
Stefan Johnson ’14 CLAS (Political Science) has a backstage pass for Pope Francis’ visit to Philadelphia this month. Stefan is serving as liaison to the World Meeting of Families’ (WMOF) 15 committees, as well as for the papal Mass at the Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul. While at Villanova, Stefan interned with the Archdiocese of Philadelphia’s communications office, where he got to know Donna Crilley Farrell. She is now the executive director for the WMOF. In addition to his internship with the Archdiocese, Stefan was an intern at City Hall and the White House, as well as winning a Truman Scholarship. When his tenure with the WMOF ends in December, Stefan will attend graduate school, where he hopes to get his Master’s in Public Policy and perhaps, a law degree.

Alumnus Returns to Teach Physics After Working for NASA
After working as an astrophysicist with the NASA Goddard Space Flight Center from October 2004 to January 2015, David Chuss, PhD ’95 CLAS (Physics) returned to the Villanova Department of Physics to teach. He always wanted to teach and when a tenure-track position opened in Physics last spring, he jumped at the chance to return to his alma mater. He is currently working to build a new ground-based instrument, the Cosmology Large Angular Scale Surveyor (CLASS), which will test the inflationary theory of the universe’s origin. Dr. Chuss was also recently awarded a two year, $60,494 NASA grant for “Testing the AME/PAH Connection.”

OTHER NEWS
- Dr. Christine Palus Appointed Dean, Graduate Studies
- New MS in Environmental Science Announced
- Clinical Mental Health and School Counseling Graduate Programs Receive Accreditation
- CLAS Sponsored Panel on Pope’s Environmental Encyclical