Message from the Dean

The COVID-19 crisis has brought out the best in the faculty, the students, and the staff of the College of Natural Sciences and Mathematics.

Our faculty’s commitment to our mission during these challenging times, with their swift transitioning to remote teaching in Spring 2020 and ensuring to respond to the students' needs throughout the year, is admirable. Our students have also showed tremendous resiliency and dedication, as has our college, which has continuously contributed to the surrounding community.

The achievements included in this newsletter are but a select few of the accomplishments made by faculty, programs, and students, over the past year.

As we move forward into a new semester, with all of its uncertainties, I am confident that our college will continue to achieve and exceed its goals, as faculty, students, and staff continue to demonstrate their dedication and determination to succeed, regardless of our circumstances.

Pictured: Dr. Michaels Fultz and Dr. Molly Seidler of Charleston Area Medical Center load $5k of personal protective equipment donated to the hospital by WVSU. Image courtesy of WCHS.
Student Council

This semester marked the beginning of a new student council, a group of students with varying personal goals, but with a unifying sense of dedication to their fellow students, their college, and their university.

Some of the students were new to our college, while others were known members of our student body. Regardless, they worked together to develop ideas and plans to get others involved, despite the limitations placed on our campus by COVID.

This was a successful semester and we look forward to the recommencing of our student council in the spring.

American Chemical Society:
Our Chapter, Our Students

An active student group within our college and university is the student chapter of the American Chemical Society (ACS), and the work of this group has not gone unnoticed.

This year, our student chapter of the ACS was recognized for the group’s continued commitment to foster a love for the sciences in the youth of our state throughout 2019–2020, receiving both the Outstanding Chapter and Green Chemistry Student Chapter Awards.

The WVSU ACS chapter was the only chapter in West Virginia to receive the Outstanding Chapter Award, an honor bestowed to only 72 student chapters nationwide.

The chapter’s receipt of the Green Chemistry Student Chapter Award this year, one of only 22 to receive the honor nationally, marks the 11th consecutive year for our chapter.
1890 Scholarship Program:  
Because of Our Past. For Our Future.

As a land grant institution, agriculture is an integral part of our university’s history, but it is just as much a part of its future.

This fall, in conjunction with the USDA, WVSU launched the 1890 Scholarship Program, a program which offers unique opportunities to students interested in pursuing careers in the food and agriculture industries.

Eligible students who meet the program requirements have the potential to receive full or partial scholarships, funded by Congress, which would cover costs such as tuition, room and board, as well as support for books and supplies.

Students interested in pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Biology, with a concentration in plant and soil science, or in Business Administration, with a concentration in agribusiness, or a Bachelor of Arts in Economics, with a concentration in agricultural economics should review the eligibility requirements listed on the 1890 Scholarship Program page, located under the Research tab on wvstateu.edu.

First2 Network

Started in 2016, the First2 Network is a network of people and organizations seeking to improve STEM persistence among rural, first-generation, and other underrepresented college students so they can contribute to an innovation economy in the state of West Virginia.

The First2 Network aims to support and encourage students pursuing STEM degrees to help them succeed.

The network provides funding opportunities for First2 Scholars, as well as opportunities to participate in research, in career immersion experiences, education and outreach, and peer mentoring.
Welcoming New Faculty:
Dr. Ali Al-Sinayyid & Dr. Jasmine Collins

We welcome Dr. Ali Al-Sinayyid to the Department of Mathematics and Computer Science. Dr. Al-Sinayyid holds a Ph.D. in computer science from Southern Illinois of Carbondale, specialized in high-performance computer networks, a Master’s degree in computer science, and a Bachelor’s degree in Software Engineering. He also has extensive experience in the industrial IT field and in teaching both undergrad and graduate students.

Dr. Al-Sinayyid employs a variety of teaching strategies to improve the learning process of students, believing in the wisdom that said, “Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I remember. Involve me and I learn.”

We welcome Dr. Jasmine Collins to the Department of Chemistry. Dr. Collins, Ph.D., was the first born to Michael and Patricia Collins, in Fairfax, Virginia, followed by younger brother, Brandon, and is currently engaged to her fiancé, Maurice.

Dr. Collins obtained her Bachelor of Science in Chemistry from Tougaloo College, followed by her Masters and Doctorate of Science degrees in Chemistry from Jackson State University, and has experience in teaching, as a peer educator, and mentor.

Dr. Collins looks forward to giving her time and talents to the yellow jacket nation and surrounding community.
In addition to publishing 9 research papers in 2020, Dr. Umesh Reddy is also one of the 25 scientists on the Cucurbit Coordinated Agricultural Project (CucCAP) team in the nation to receive funding from the USDA for the development of genomic tools for cucurbit species.

The $7.5 million in funding will support the development and expansion of genomic and bioinformatic platforms, GBS analysis of PI collections, resequencing of core populations, and access to cucurbit genomics tools and databases.

The data obtained by the CucCAP team will be publically available on the Cucurbit Genomics Database.

In addition to teaching chemistry, Dr. Sundar Naga has used a unique approach to help his students understand the subject more thoroughly. Many students were so impacted by Dr. Naga’s approach that they urged him to publish a textbook to help others understand chemistry as he had helped them. Eventually, he conceded and decided to write a book expounding his approach to teaching chemistry.

The book, *Understanding Chemistry by Using Scientific Method as a Unifying Thread*, was finally published in August, after about eight years of development. Within its chapters, Dr. Naga defines the scientific method and establishes the process of using it as a unifying thread to make connections that reinforce the understanding process.

His hope is to help chemistry faculty develop the understanding and appreciation of chemistry within their own students, as well as to help students, who may not be taught using this approach, to develop their own understanding.

Dr. Naga also intends to write and publish two textbooks, one for general chemistry and another for physical chemistry.
President's Tour

On Thursday, November 12, Dr. Pride made a visit to Hamblin Hall. Her intention was to get a sense of both the activities and facilities within our college, as well as to engage in conversation with both our students and faculty.

After touring our facilities, Dr. Pride spent nearly an hour answering questions from faculty and staff. She thoughtfully addressed every concern raised, and took note of every suggestion made.

Overall, her visit went very well. She was very impressed with the facilities and student research activities within our college, and appreciative of the time she shared with us.

IBM Partnership:

The Department of Mathematics and Computer Science, under the leadership of Dr. Michael Anderson, has been collaborating with IBM through the IBM Skills Academy, one of the top three partnerships recognized by the company.

By helping faculty to provide students with additional skills, this training and certification program is designed to bridge the skills gap between universities and the industry, giving our students an advantage in the job market.

IBM also waived the $150 course fee for HBCU students, so our students can access in-demand skills and state-of-the-art technology, free of cost.

This collaboration aligns with WVSU’s mission to meet the higher education and economic development needs of the state and region through innovative teaching and applied research. We are very excited because this will equip our faculty and students with cutting edge technology.

Dr. Sonya Armstrong, Dr. Sridhar Malkaram, and Dr. Heng Wu completed the professional training with IBM in Data Science, Cloud Computing, and Quantum Computing and will be delivering the knowledge to over 200 WVSU students this academic year.

Mrs. Valinda Kennedy, manager of IBM Global University programs and WVSU alum, (pictured above) has been very passionate about this collaboration. Her commitment to build a partnership between her alma mater and current employer played a critical role in this success story.
Marleny is from Torreón, México. She received a biochemical engineering degree from the Autonomous University of Coahuila, obtained her master’s in biotechnology at WVSU, and is currently working to obtain her PhD at the Max Planck Institute for Developmental Biology in Tübingen, Germany.

During her time at state, Marleny worked in the lab of Dr. Umesh Reddy and Dr. Padma Nimmakayala, and was introduced to a wide variety of cutting-edge techniques that augmented her interest in research. Her current research interests revolve around genomics and data analysis.

She is thankful for her advisors and WVSU for facilitating many great opportunities that helped her achieve all her accomplishments and for the memories made with friends, students, and faculty at State.

Oddai E. Gharib
May, 2020

Originally from Jordan, Oddai came to the U.S. and enrolled in the ESL program at WWSU in the summer of 2016. His plans to transfer to a bigger university changed due to the high quality education, top-notch faculty, and friendly community he found at State.

During his four years here, Oddai served as President for the NSM Student Council and the S.P.A.C.E Club, as Vice-President for the ACS Student Chapter, as a Student Senator in the SGA, and was involved in other activities, such as building a payload through NASA and promoting STEM through community outreach activities.

With his BS in Chemistry complete, Oddai plans to attend medical school to achieve his goal of becoming a cardiothoracic surgeon and serve his new community.

Armenta Williams
December, 2018

A first generation student from Alderson, WV, Armenta was determined to achieve her educational goals. She obtained an AS in general studies at New River Community & Technical College in 2015, and obtained a BS in computer Science, with minors in both mathematics and Spanish, at State in 2018.

Armenta is thankful for the Brickstreet scholarship and the work-study program, which helped her pay for college and gain hands-on experience, as well as for the relationships and social network she was able to build at State.
To Our Graduates
We are always very proud of our graduates, and the graduates of 2020 are no exception!

Despite the difficulties faced, these students demonstrated a sincere dedication to their futures, their goals, and their studies, rising above the circumstances to achieve success.

December, 2019
Amneh Farid Alkatrib
David A. Anderson
Nicholas David Cartright
Natalie Rose Farley
Leslie Karina Garcia Lopez
Sarah Rose Greenberg
Moderage Nérain Janae Gunawardena
Tawna S. Heath
Chantz Allen Hopson
Fatima Irfan
Dylan Dileepa Jayasuriya
Andrielle Larissa Kemajou Tchamba
Rhys McCauley Lelich
Arjun Ojha Kshetry
Jakeshia Lynette Peterson
Heather Lynn Rzewuski
Claire Nicole Shankolzzer
Kyle Michael Smart
Jeffrey Alan Thompson

May, 2020
Christian L. Cook
John R. DeHart
Mariana Delgado
Emily Fowler
Ziad C. Ghareeb
Oddai E. Gharib
Brittany D. Graham
Hannah E. Mazon
Christopher B. McElraney
John Chukwunonso Ojeogwu
Joshua P. Rickiet
Bhagarathi Shahi
Shyann A. Stewart
Christian B. Swain
Komala R. Thondapi
Shaka M. Wilkerson

August, 2020
Menuka Bhandari
Bikash K. Deo
Marleny Garcia-Lozano
Sandhya Gautam
Yadira Pena-Garcia

From Our Grads
"I had some wonderful 3 years at WVSU. It has opened up so many opportunities for me in the future."
~Armenta Williams

"At State, you get to be more than a ‘number’ to professors; the help and support I received during my college years allowed me to thrive and develop countless skills while charting my path upwards. WVSU not only allowed me to adapt to a new culture and learn a new language; it made me discover the abilities I had inside myself."

"State is a hidden treasure and a great value university."
~Oddai E. Gharib

"I had many memorable moments at WVSU where I grew as an emerging researcher as well as an individual."
~Marleny Garcia-Lozano