A Note from the Dean

Congratulations to all of you on a great Fall 2013 semester! The faculty did extraordinary work in educating over 14,000 students in the diverse disciplines of the Liberal Arts Division. During the Fall—my first semester at NOVA—I was privileged to sit in on about two dozen class sessions during the semester, and to peek online at some ELI sections as well. You are using learning technology effectively and keeping students engaged with dynamic and well-organized lectures, as well as with stimulating class activities. As you know, our students come to us from the entire spectrum of backgrounds with widely differing levels of preparation for college work. I applaud your ongoing efforts to keep all of them engaged and learning. The challenges often are formidable. I am here to help you get the resources and assistance you need to do your job well.

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In January President Obama told workers at a GE factory in Wisconsin that Americans are better off pursuing a skilled trade than an Art History degree. He did immediately apologize and affirmed that he loved his art history class in college in a handwritten note to a Texas professor, but we art historians won’t be quick to forget!

Despite the smirks about the irrelevance of art history, the U.S. Department of State does not seem to agree. For the last three years, I have been trekking to the National Foreign Affairs Training Center in Arlington early in the morning twice every semester to deliver art history lectures to budding diplomats. My talks are part of a required cultural enrichment class called Western Europe Advanced Area Studies Seminary. The students will be going off to embassies in Portugal, Spain, France, Italy and the Benelux countries. They also get exposure to the literature, economics and history of these areas of Europe.

This was to be just one 3 hour class, but things went so well the first time that it was expanded to two 3 hour sessions repeating every semester. The course supervisor has given me free rein in setting up the areas to be covered. As the countries the students will be posted were all part of the Roman Empire, it seemed logical to start with the Romans, but I make changes each time. After a recent trip to Portugal, I added a wonderful (and little known) prehistoric stone circle at Évora to the beginning of the PowerPoint. The first class gets through the Early Renaissance. In the second class, the goal is to make it to the art movements at the beginning of the 20th century finishing with a quick look at Cubism and Surrealism. This is certainly only an overview and requires very fast talking. It’s almost like covering all of Art 101 and 102, our art history survey, in only 6 easy hours with coffee breaks! I often get questions from people who want to expand their art history knowledge at NOVA before they depart for Europe. The goal is to give the students enough knowledge that they will be encouraged to visit the churches, museums and archeological sites where they’ll be posted.

The only hard parts of this job are fighting the traffic to get to innermost Arlington, getting cleared through the complex’s security for the 9 AM starting time, and dealing with an unfamiliar clicker. The rest is easy and there are no exams to grade!

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**The Cure for the Common History Book:**
*Lawrence in Arabia* · Wes Fleming

Like many people my age, when anybody mentions T.E. Lawrence, Peter O’Toole wrapped in traditional Arab robes is the picture that comes to mind. Both Lawrence and O’Toole are legendary in their own right, but the picture of Lawrence painted by the 1962 film *Lawrence of Arabia* is, despite its penetration of our society, the Hollywood version that skims over some of the darker aspect of Lawrence’s life as an empire builder.

With the United States mired in a long war in Afghanistan and still dealing with the war in Iraq, it’s no wonder than World War I has slipped from our collective consciousness.

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**Lawrence in Arabia: War, Deceit, Imperial Folly and the Making of the Modern Middle East,** by Scott Anderson.
Bet you didn’t know that our very own Communication Studies Instructor, **Gordon M. Curry** is a budding vocalist. In his spare time, Gordon writes song lyrics and collaborates with other local musicians.

“Singing and writing have always been a hobby of mine since I was young. I’ve sung at weddings. I take voice lessons to stay active, contribute to my church’s music department, and go to open mic events when I can,” he says. In August 2012, D. Jakolby Washington & JudahLYFE, a gospel act Gordon sings with, was featured on BET’s Bobby Jones Gospel hour.

On Saturday March 15, Gordon was featured in a showcase where he sang as one of the lead vocalists on “Seasons of Love” from the Broadway musical Rent. He also performed an original song called “Let’s Take A Walk.” Gordon will also perform during the intermission of NOVA Idol 2014.

“I auditioned for NOVA Employees Got Talent and I made it as a one of the finalists, so during the intermission of NOVA Idol I got to perform for the crowd.” He performed the Donny Hathaway classic “Someday We’ll All Be Free” at NOVA Idol on Friday March 21 in Schlesinger Center on the Alexandria campus.

**Jennifer Sayasithsena** presented a workshop to the Lifetime Learning Institute on March 7th, entitled *The Evolution of Ideologies in the U.S.*

**Julie Schauer** has two art blogs, Artventures and Artscapes. Her art blog, Artventures ([http://artvent-artventures.blogspot](http://artvent-artventures.blogspot)) has had over 100,000 page views of about 70 entries since January 2010. Her first blog was about NVCC/Alexandria art professor, Rebecca Kamen, and her works that involve the intersection of art and science. Kamen recently retired, as her work is gaining notoriety in the art and science circles. Usually, Julie blogs about current art exhibitions in the Washington area. Her most popular blogs have been about Edgar Degas and an exhibition and the Phillips Collection, and the artistic relationship of painters Berthe Morisot and Edouard Manet.

Congratulations to **Melissa Chabot & Kevin Wright** who are expecting a baby boy in May, 2014. We’re so happy for them!
Ruma N. Salhi, Assistant Professor of History, writes about her experience at the symposium and Study Day at the National Gallery of Art:

Ways of Seeing in Byzantium was a symposium bringing together noted scholars to explore themes of the exhibition "Heaven and Earth: Art of Byzantium from Greek Collections" at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, on February 28, 2014.

I was very fortunate to be a participant in the study day following this symposium, as well as to have a private tour of the exhibition. At the conference, we discussed various ways to interpret methods of seeing and visualizing art historical materials, the use of performative icons, and decorating the body in Byzantium. We discussed how one of the main rooms in the exhibit was in an octagonal room and was designed to replicate being inside of a Byzantine church.

One of the interesting topics we discussed was the placement of artifacts in museums, and how often it is a culture of consumerism that drives the flow of traffic and design, as is evidenced by these parallel images of a display of Byzantine jewelry at the NGA and a display from a modern jewelry store.

It was an informative and fascinating collaborative experience, and wonderful to interact with my colleagues from around the world here in DC.

Andrée (Dre) Betancourt’s chapter “All About My Televisual Mothers: Talking Back to Carmela Soprano and Ruth Fisher,” was published last spring by Lexington Books in the edited collection Television and the Self: Knowledge, Identity and Media Representation.

Last semester, in collaboration with the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) Mindfulness in Teaching Faculty Learning Community, she proposed and helped organize a presentation by Dr. Elise Labbé, author of Psychology Moment by Moment for NOVA faculty, staff, students, and the public.

Dre is serving as the Eastern Communication Association Interpretation and Performance Studies Interest Group chairperson and program planner; and will also participate as a respondent and a roundtable member at the convention in Providence, Rhode Island this April. In addition, she will present a paper titled “Betty (Draper) Francis and Snapping Motherhood” during a Media Communication panel.
In my continuing effort to make connections with people involved in the STEM to STEAM movement, I took a road trip up to the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) for a STEM to STEAM Symposium January 31 to February 2 (http://designscience.risd.edu/). What a great experience! I have become very accustomed to the “S” people (Science) in STEM venturing out into STEAM, but this gathering was primarily “M” people (Math) who are already engaged in STEAM and have a very good understanding of how it all fits together. And there were many more Arts people than I usually see at these events, which made the collaboration feel more real than it usually does. My favorite workshop was called “Crocheting Hyperbolic Planes” and for those among us who are math averse, a hyperbolic plane is a surface that curves outward rather than inward like a sphere (see website and workshop photos). Sara Kuhn, the workshop leader, is one of the many new friends I gained, and she taught most of us how to crochet. I say “most” because there was a group of lefties (including me) who struggled a bit with the crocheting technique, but I have been working on it since I returned home. RISD is considered the originator of the STEM to STEAM movement, so I enjoyed having the opportunity to see what they do. RISD is located in the same neighborhood as Brown University, and both schools have active student-run STEAM clubs that participated in the Symposium planning. Many RISD and Brown students presented their work during the “Share and Tell” event on Sunday. It was inspiring to see and experience all the possibilities!

~ Beverly Pittman
85 students from the Manassas and Annandale campuses boarded two buses at 5:45 am, Friday, November 22 bound for the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. Art and Art History faculty Vivien Chen, Karima Radwan and Ricky Sears arranged the day’s events for students in fall 2013 studio art and art history classes from both campuses: students toured the Met with Vivien and Karima while a group of students traveled with Ricky to Chelsea to visit contemporary art galleries, the former elevated rail system-turned-elevated park the High Line, and finish at the Met.

Despite a bus breaking down just before the Lincoln Tunnel that delayed our arrival and required a trip to the Cloisters Museum to be canceled, all students arrived to New York City safely. For those who traveled with Ricky, a NYC denizen from 2003-2009, they were taken through Central Park to ride the subway to Ricky’s old stomping ground, Greenwich Village, where he lived in a 5th floor walk-up on West 8th Street while in graduate school, and then through the West Village, the Meatpacking District where lunch was enjoyed at the Chelsea Market, and on to Chelsea.

The buses and student travel forms were organized through the Student Life office on the Annandale Campus with the support of Tom DiCato. But the success of the trip is due in large part to Jessica Gardner, Coordinator of Student Engagement, who balanced the paperwork and logistics of this trip throughout the fall. Planning for the day began in September with the guidance of art history professor Roz Hoagland who had taken the trip for years before.

A full day with sore legs, fatigued eyes, and travel weary bodies, the trip was still invigorating. At midnight faculty and students all returned safely to Annandale. Everyone, equally, was thoroughly exhausted!

~Ricky Sears
Having grown up in a small town, I’m very familiar with the attitude that everyone should already know everything about the place. If you didn’t know where a certain store was located, or who lived in the big house over on Market Street, or why parking on only the south side of certain streets was permitted, these were sure signs you were a stranger to our town. Visitors always found a warm welcome, though.

Over the years, I’ve noticed this attitude creeping into several “small towns” within our college. With the innumerable abbreviations and acronyms we’ve created to identify our various operations, policies, initiatives, departments, etc., we have provided easy communication for those who live in each “town,” but confusion for those who don’t.

How many of these can you identify? ELI, NVRK, ADC, GPS, APPDO. Your success or lack thereof probably has a lot to with where you “live” at NOVA. Nearly everyone knows what ELI is, whether or not you’re involved with it, because ELI (Extended Learning Institute) is a very large “town” here. However, if you drive down the road to George Mason and ask about their ELI, they’ll direct you to the English Language Institute.

“NVRK” is the acronym for our policy of deleting students who don’t attend classes in the first several days: it stands for “NeVeR attended—Keep tuition.” Not exactly intuitive, is it?

“ADC” is known only by us old-timers, but for us it’s so familiar that we often still use it when referring to the Assistant Deans. They were formerly known as Assistant Division Chairs.

“GPS,” as in “GPS for Success,” is in my opinion the most obvious of these examples. We all know what a GPS is, and we all know whose “success” we’re supposed to be promoting. One doesn’t need to “live” here to have an idea of what a GPS for Success might be.

“APPDO,” however, is just as unintuitive as “GPS” is intuitive. Granted, it’s a brand new acronym, but all of us who “live” in Full-Time Faculty Town have become very familiar with it in the past several months. I must confess that even though I have done my APPDO’s and discussed them with the Dean, I still had to look up the full name in preparing this article: it’s “Annual Performance and Professional Development Objectives.” Most of us just refer to them as “those things we have to do that used to be called goals.”

These examples just scratch the surface, of course, because NOVA is a huge community consisting of many more “towns” than I’ve mentioned. All of us, no matter how connected we might be, are “strangers” to many of these towns. Hopefully we will always find a warm welcome when we visit them.

PS—Wouldn’t P.T. Barnum have had fun with the term “APPDO”? I can picture a big empty tent with a sign over it saying “This way to the APPDO—only $10!”
Communicating online, to meet the oral presentation needs of NOVA students, faculty, & staff.

At the Oral Communication Center we provide a safe environment where speakers get feedback about their interpersonal, verbal and group communication behaviors. Our center is a judgment-free space in which our primary goal is to enable student success through improved speaking and presentation skills across all disciplines. You can use YouTube to upload your video for review by a communication consultant. For detailed instructions, visit [http://www.nvcc.edu/annandale/lrc/occ/eocc.html](http://www.nvcc.edu/annandale/lrc/occ/eocc.html)

Two day policy - Those seeking to utilize our consultation services for an upcoming presentation need to arrange for their online appointment to take place not closer than two days before their final presentation date.

The Faculty Staff Resource Center provides one-on-one consultation, phone and email question and response, as well as workshops. Specific support is available for NOVA’s learning management system (Blackboard), Smartboard interactive whiteboards, Symposiums and other computer software. Special desktop publishing projects and assistance with development of classroom instructional materials for presentations and online courses is also available. The center has seven workstations, outfitted with scanners, printers, memory card readers and CD/DVD burners which are available for faculty and staff to use at any time during office hours.

The center also houses a recording studio outfitted with sound absorbing panels, professional quality microphone, touchscreen and lecture capture software. The campus Green Screen virtual set is also housed in the center and may be used to create multimedia presentations for use in your classroom.
Last December, I spent four days in Paris for my annual “year-end renewal and birthday-present to myself.” Having a birthday five days after Christmas is much better in adulthood than it was during childhood.

I haven’t always gone to Paris for this “Calgon” adventure: previous years have included visits to Hershey Spa in Pennsylvania for chocolate scrubs and chocolate massages (yes, that Hershey!), but this time it was Paris – again. I love Paris; many people do. But as an African American, I love Paris in a special way because the “City of Light” opened its arms and welcomed African Americans as full human beings at a time when the United States’ arms were tightly closed to the descendants of people who had been brought here forcefully and unwillingly. And while my love for Paris is peppered with the full knowledge that African colonization existed alongside African American acceptance, I still go there because my life would be very different without Paris’ influence.

I go to Paris because an important part of American history – my history - is there. To wit, among the earliest documented African Americans in Paris is James Hemings, who was Thomas Jefferson’s cook and the older brother of Sally Hemings. Both James and Sally Hemings went with Jefferson to Paris in the late 1700s when Jefferson became Minister of France. While there, James Hemings trained to be a French chef; upon return to the States he continued to serve as Jefferson’s cook and eventually negotiated his freedom. Of course, the Hemings’ stay in Paris was not of their own volition, but other African Americans who went later had a freer choice. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Paris became either a temporary or permanent home to many well-known African American artists and intellectuals as well as armed forces personnel and others who managed to find their way there.

It is the place where many were able to develop their creative abilities and establish themselves as worldwide citizens. Whether they stayed in Paris as expatriates, became Parisian citizens, or chose to return to American shores, their names became symbols of pride and connectedness for other African Americans who were offered a “cultural anchor” in an uncertain port. My Paris visits connect me to that reality, and permit me to “walk” and “talk” (in French, of course!) with those who came before me; so, once again, in December 2013, I went to Paris.

On prior trips to Paris I have always visited the standard tourist attractions: the Louvre, the Eiffel Tower, Notre Dame, and more; and I have walked along Rive Gauche and ruminated about the famous African Americans who might have walked there. For this trip, however, I planned something extra special: a “Paris Noir” (Black Paris) walking tour. I arrived in Paris on a Monday and checked into my favorite quaint little hotel right down the street from the Musee d’Orsay in the 7th Arrondissement. On Tuesday, I met Kevi, my tour guide, at the “Place Josephine Baker” and our tour began. Kevi (who refers to himself as “Kevin without the ‘n’”) is originally from Martinique, and he included much information about the French-Caribbean connection in addition to the French-African American tour I had booked. French is Kevi’s first language and he learned English so he could conduct tours for Americans and other English speakers.

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Only after we were midway through the tour did I admit, “Je parle un peu francais” (“I speak a little French”) to which Kevi delightedly asked, “Ah, nous continuons en francais?” (“Shall we continue in French?”). We both laughed as I emphatically shouted “Non!” I have only been speaking French for a few years, and I did not want to chance missing out on anything in this important tour. We visited many places including Richard Wright’s former residence; a café that James Baldwin frequented; and Lycee Louis Le Grand, the prestigious school for gifted students that both Leopold Senghor and Aime Cesaire attended. While we walked we discussed, among other things, L’Negritude (the French Caribbean response to the Harlem Renaissance), and an often overlooked significance of Manet’s painting “Olympia” which was completed in 1863 and is now in Musee D’Orsay. It was truly a walking history lesson for both of us! When I said goodbye to Kevi at the end of the tour, I walked back to the hotel, exhausted in a very good way. I slept very well that night.

Walking in the footsteps of creative African Americans has always been an important part of my personal journey. When I attended undergraduate school at Lincoln University - the oldest Historically Black College/University (HBCU) in the country - I delighted in walking the same campus grounds that Langston Hughes walked long before I was born. And when I completed my courses at The University of the Arts, I smiled with the knowledge that Meta Warrick Fuller was also an alumna, albeit 115 years earlier. Both of them, and many others lived in Paris for a part of their lives, so it was inevitable that I would eventually make my way there - and go repeatedly.

In many ways France ironically gave the United States – especially African Americans - a far greater gift than the Statue of Liberty. For that reason, Paris will always be special for me. So, if you see me on campus and I appear to be “somewhere else,” I am probably “walking the spirit” along Rive Gauche and discussing art and the nearby art galleries with Meta Warrick Fuller, Lois Mailou Jones, Augusta Savage and Henry Ossawa Tanner. Or I am having tea at a small Parisian café and discussing writing with Langston Hughes, Richard Wright, and James Baldwin. Or I am sitting by “Le Penseur” (“The Thinker”) in the Rodin Museum garden in serious contemplation with sociologist W.E.B. DuBois, who worked tirelessly in Paris and the United States to pull all of the various strands of African American culture together. Wherever the spirit has taken me, it is a peaceful place because, while I am seemingly somewhere far away, I am actually very close to home. It is an incredible journey, indeed.

~Beverly Pittman
Bear at the door, luckily is not a real bear, just a 400 lb solid oak wood carving, made by professor Giulio Porta, LA Division at Annandale. It was made in 2013 and it stands at the front door of his residence in Annandale VA.

Winter 2014-The gift that keeps on giving! Amber Koeckritz shares the view from her home in upstate New York, which has received a whopping 13 FEET of snow this winter.

A scene from the old city of Mostar in Bosnia Herzegovina. Amy Gilley has just returned from Mostar, where she taught classes as part of her Fulbright Scholarship.
In Pictures

Nancy Minogue’s color photograph “Smith Island Boat” was accepted for the current issue of The Northern Virginia Review. She has had articles and photographs published in seven issues of TNVR and she served as Board Chair for Issue No. 9.

Melissa Chabot & Kevin Wright are lucky enough to get a picture with the Mona Lisa during their trip to Paris during winter break.

Nan Peck and her husband Paul escaped Virginia’s winter weather and headed to Arizona and California for spring break. They attended spring training baseball games and took two days to watch tennis at the Indian Wells Tennis Tournament.
Got items?
Do you have something you’d like to see printed in the LA Times? This newsletter is printed once a semester and the fall edition will be available in October 2014. Please send any articles, accomplishments, photos, upcoming events, and general blurbs about how talented you are to Jennifer Rainey (jrainey@nvcc.edu) for inclusion. Thanks to all of you who contributed to this edition – we appreciate you!

Last Fall I also visited the annual Ghost Train event at Burke Lake Park, produced by Nancy Chamberlain and the RPK students. It was a great success, attended by thousands of excited kids and impressed parents. Our faculty and staff were featured in an impressive Faculty Art Show in the Ernst Center. The NOVA Annandale Symphony gave a sold-out concert at the Ernst Center in November, and the Lyceum sponsored some provocative speakers. Also in the arts, we secured funding for new pottery wheels in the ceramics studio and piano consoles in the keyboard studio. Some of our resources and facilities remain inadequate or outdated, but we are making steady progress in achieving the type of learning environment everyone deserves at the college level.

More exciting things are bound to happen this Spring, with the annual Festival of the Arts arriving soon and our celebration of outstanding students coming late in the semester. Please keep me informed about all of the great work you are doing in and out of the classroom, and I look forward to all of us having a great finish to this academic year!

Burt Peretti
Dean, Liberal Arts

Additionally, the Arabian theater has never really been foremost in Western minds, which tend to focus on the horrors of trench warfare in France. Scott Anderson’s 2013 book Lawrence in Arabia goes a long way towards rebooting the importance of this theater of combat – and diplomacy – and helps the modern reader understand why the Middle East is the way it is now.

Meticulously researched, Anderson’s book lays bare the mythology of T.E. Lawrence, quite literally leaving no stone unturned. Anderson delves into Lawrence’s personal correspondence and a wealth of other primary documentation to expose the man behind the legends. Anderson’s experience as a war correspondent is obvious in his detailed descriptions of combat, but his ability to decipher the diplomatic machinations of France, England, Germany and Turkey as they endeavor to carve up the Middle East among themselves is what really shines through in this book.

Anderson has a gift for characterization, which is not exactly the most common aspect of a military biography. The men involved in Lawrence’s life are examined in depth, whether they be spies, diplomats, generals or camel-riding soldiers. Anderson also delves deeply into the lives of people who affect the course of the war in the Middle Eastern theater, men and women Lawrence never met or, perhaps, even heard about.

While Lawrence in Arabia is clearly aimed at those who enjoy reading biographies of military figures, the real purpose of the book is to explain – or at least contextualize – the current world order as it applies to Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Israel and the other Middle Eastern nations. The fallout from the end of World War I and the resulting England- and France-controlled partition of the former Ottoman Empire is criminally overlooked in modern times as a significant source of tension in the modern world.

T.E. Lawrence is perhaps the world’s last great romantic war hero, and Anderson takes care to curate the legend while at the same time exposing the myths in a veritable page-turner of a book. He turns his investigative efforts equally on everyone involved, including governments and the oil companies struggling to stake their claims on Arabian land.

The narrative portion of Lawrence in Arabia extends to 505 pages; extensive end notes show the breadth of Anderson’s investigation into the life of T.E. Lawrence as a nation builder. While many of the concepts Anderson examines are complex, he is able to break them down into their component parts, making them, if not understandable, at least accessible, for scholars of all levels. The story does include some graphic depictions of violence and an examination of a short period of captivity during which Lawrence was brutally raped, so it may not be entirely appropriate for younger readers.

Lauren Greenfield
Assistant Professor, Liberal Arts

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