25 Years of Excellence

Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activity in the College of Arts and Sciences

1993-2018
Song of Ourselves
A Celebration of Twenty-Five Years of the
College of Arts and Sciences at the University at Albany

by Leonard A. Slade, Jr.

for Dean Elga Wulfert

We celebrate ourselves and sing ourselves,
And what we shall remember,
For every president leading the institution.

We rejoice and praise the faculty and staff.
We reminisce and help savor the taste of our bread and wine,
All of our food and drink for thought.
Our research, every creative work of our souls
inspired by leadership of our dean,
We now twenty-five years old in excellent health continue,
Determined to work for the future.

Arts and Sciences in marriage,
Evaluating scholarship for what it is but never forgetting,
We assay good and bad, we maintain high academic standards,
Share knowledge with our students,
Minds fertile with energy and passion for teaching
and learning palpable.
We believe in ourselves, other schools and colleges
compete keenly with us,
And we fear not their own goals and objectives.
Celebrate with us and we with them our departmental
rankings, appreciate the depth of our research, creativity, and service.
Not words, nor music, nor praise we want, nor rest
on our laurels,
Only fulfillment we crave, the quality of our work immortalized
Forever we address the timeless hunger of the human spirit.

October 2018
Albany, New York
A Message from
Dr. Havidán Rodríguez
President, University at Albany (2017 – present)

On the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the University at Albany’s College of Arts and Sciences, it is an honor to celebrate the critical contributions CAS has made, and continues to make, to this great institution of higher education.

UAlbany is proud of CAS’s strong undergraduate and graduate programs in the natural and social sciences as well as the arts and humanities. Its excellent faculty at all levels — from a dedicated cadre of adjunct faculty and beginning assistant professors to distinguished professors — are fully committed to educating our students to become engaged scholars, professionals and global citizens.

CAS’s strong academic departments in core disciplines are also critical to our ability to deliver a rigorous foundation for the creation of knowledge and research, lifelong learning, and preparation for a wide variety of careers.

As we move into the future, I look forward to working with our College’s faculty and staff as they continue to play a pivotal role in reaching UAlbany’s vision, which is to be the nation’s leading diverse public research university — providing leaders, knowledge, and innovations to create a better world.

Go Great Danes!

A Message from
Dr. H. Patrick Swygert
President, University at Albany (1990–1995)

Let me join all my colleagues, near and far, in acknowledging the 25th anniversary of the establishment of the College of Arts and Sciences of the University at Albany. Reflecting upon its 25 years of sustained excellence in teaching, research and service, I am honored to have played some part in CAS’s founding.

In 1993 we, the faculty and academic leadership, moved to combine three Colleges: Arts and Humanities, Social and Behavioral Sciences, and Sciences and Mathematics. We were spurred to do so, not because of the press of financial challenges — although at the time the State University System was under great fiscal stress — but because we believed that the combined college could be even greater than its constituent parts.

Indeed, history has proven this belief to have been well founded. And let us acknowledge as well that the successful transition from three to one could not have succeeded without the leadership of Deans Francine Frank, John Wulf and Richard Hall and their faculties. They deserve our thanks and deep appreciation.

Go Great Danes!

A Message from
Dr. Edelgard Wulfert
Professor of Psychology and Collins Fellow \ Dean, College of Arts and Sciences (2007 – present)

Twenty-five years ago, in June of 1993, the University at Albany — under the leadership of President H. Patrick Swygert — created the College of Arts and Sciences by consolidating three separate colleges: Arts and Humanities, Social and Behavioral Sciences, and Sciences and Mathematics. Karen Hitchcock, who served as provost and vice president for Academic Affairs (and later became UAlbany’s 16th president), stated that the unified college “affirms the centrality of those core disciplines and provides new opportunities for the programs of the previously separate colleges to reinforce one another and revitalize the undergraduate experience.”

Much has happened in the College of Arts and Sciences during these past 25 years to bring about the fundamental and cross-disciplinary work that Hitchcock identified. We have developed new academic programs to satisfy the evolving needs of students; some areas of study were consolidated in new departments; and some specialized programs were reduced in scope or discontinued due to shifting student interest and financial constraints.

Throughout these developments, our faculty has taken great pride in pursuing the College of Arts and Sciences’ mission: to educate the whole person by seeking to provide students with a solid foundation in the arts, humanities, natural and social sciences in addition to specific disciplinary knowledge. Much of this happens through the General Education program, most of which is taught in the College. In addition to providing each student with a well-rounded liberal education founded in critical thinking, creative problem solving and competent oral and written communication, our College offers numerous areas of specialization at both the undergraduate and graduate level. It is home to almost two-thirds of the University’s majors and educates over half of the University’s doctoral students. In essence, the College of Arts and Sciences is the University’s intellectual heart and soul. At the undergraduate level, our faculty seeks to prepare students not only for jobs but lifelong learning and success as global citizens; and at the graduate level, they strive to transform students into future scholars and scientific leaders.

A great deal has changed in these past 25 years, not only in the College of Arts and Sciences itself, but also in society. Many voices have begun to question the value of a traditional liberal education. Students are turning away from majors in liberal arts disciplines, especially the arts and humanities, and there is little indication that this trend will reverse. This does not mean that a liberal education is no longer relevant. In fact, I believe that now more than ever, in this increasingly complex world, students need a strong footing in the liberal arts. But it may mean that it is time to rethink how we teach the liberal arts and science courses which provide the foundation and skills that are so critical for long-term success.

Some institutions have begun to redefine the traditional liberal arts curriculum by breaking down disciplinary boundaries. For example, in a new liberal arts school all students take a common set of interconnected multidisciplinary courses with broad themes ranging from history to philosophy to political and social thought, with an emphasis on quantitative and scientific reasoning. The idea here is that exposing students to various modes of critical inquiry from a cross-disciplinary and cross-cultural perspective allows them to develop essential skills that transcend all majors.

I believe there are lessons to be learned from this and other initiatives that can be applied to a public research university such as ours.

Other institutions are making curricular changes based on the unprecedented possibilities that arose in the early 1990s with the advent of the Internet. Through technological advances education is no longer only accessible to traditional students. Individuals across the nation, including professionals seeking continuing education and students living in remote areas, are enrolled in online courses. We in the College of Arts and Sciences have also branched out into the world of online teaching and learning. At present, at least half of our departments offer blended or online courses or work on developing fully online programs.

The digital revolution is similarly affecting the way faculty conduct research. Cloud-based software is “shrinking the world.” It allows researchers to collect vast amounts of data from participants without being limited by paper cost or geography. The Internet enables scientists to collaborate, share data at a distance, and work together on manuscripts across borders and disciplines.

Twenty-five years ago, hardly anybody would have predicted developments that now are commonplace.

It is at once exciting and difficult to anticipate what the future may hold. I believe higher education will change fundamentally over the next 25 years with the advent of novel technologies, new insights into student learning, and growing interdisciplinary approaches to education and research. Although we cannot predict the future, I am confident that our faculty is well prepared for the profound changes in teaching, learning, research, scholarship and creative activities that lie ahead. To remain relevant, change is unavoidable, and the College of Arts and Sciences is poised to become an enthusiastic leader in the reimagining of higher education.
From a very early age I knew that I wanted to be a scientist. My undergraduate major was in physics – a fantastic major and a great experience for me! When it came to graduate school I was looking to apply my physics and math knowledge and was excited to choose atmospheric sciences as my area of study. I remain passionate about the study of weather and climate, including climate change. We can work toward improving weather forecasts but we also need to promote climate, including climate change. We can work toward improving weather forecasts but we also need to promote collaborations with social scientists and emergency managers to improve decision-making, with hydrologists to improve flood prediction, and with chemists to improve air quality prediction. Weather also has a big impact on the private sector; DAES and UNAlbany’s Atmospheric Sciences Research Center (ASRC) together lead a state-supported NYSTAR Center of Excellence in Atmospheric and Environmental Prediction and Innovation, which has the mission of reducing economic losses for companies in such business sectors as energy, transport, agriculture, retail and finance. On longer timescales, anthropogenic climate change is one of the biggest and most challenging problems that society faces in the 21st century. Increased greenhouse gases pumped into the atmosphere since the Industrial Revolution have warmed the atmosphere by about 1°C. As the Earth’s population continues to grow and we continue to pollute the atmosphere with more greenhouse gases, we expect the warming to continue and the associated impacts to be exacerbated. Society needs to prepare now for these impacts and this requires essential interdisciplinary research. We need to promote research concerned with climate impacts on such things as food, water, health, ecosystems and urban planning. We need to inform and understand how policy can be changed to improve adaptation strategies as well as continue to promote mitigation through reducing greenhouse gas emissions and increasing use of renewable energy. Above all, we need to educate the public about the challenges and what can and should be done short-term and long-term.

The interdisciplinary research needed to address the problems highlighted above is both a challenge and an opportunity for CAS and the University. Meeting this challenge will require innovative thinking and new collaborations among different departments (including sciences, arts and humanities) and units across the University. It will require us to seek new funding opportunities and train a new type of student — one ready to tackle and embrace these important interdisciplinary problems. It is an exciting opportunity to change the world we live in for the benefit of society.

The Department of Atmospheric and Environmental Sciences (DAES) tackles a wide variety of research problems. We study global issues (e.g. climate variability and change, global oceans) as well as issues that have a more regional emphasis including involving the tropics (e.g. monsoons, El Niño, hurricanes), midlatitudes (e.g. cyclones, fronts, snowstorms) and even polar regions (e.g. polar vortex, sea-ice variations). Research is based on a combination of approaches: theoretical, analysis of observations, numerical modeling and field work. Indeed I was recently involved with an exciting NASA field campaign that flew unmanned aircraft in and around Atlantic hurricanes. We flew Global Hawks on missions that sometimes lasted nearly a day! As I have progressed in my career, I have become more and more motivated by the societal impacts of weather and climate, including climate change. We can work toward improving weather forecasts but we also need to promote collaborations. For example, for decades I have studied the weather and climate of West Africa, and this has led to interactions and collaborations with West African colleagues as well as exciting fieldwork in the region. Such international collaborations are not only essential in order to carry out such work but also offer invaluable international experiences for students, postdocs and faculty alike.

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Working in the Arts and Sciences: A View from the Natural Sciences

Chair and Professor, Department of Atmospheric and Environmental Sciences (CAS)
Co-Director, New York State Mesonet Project
Co-Director, NYSTAR Center of Excellence on Weather and Climate
www.wnycastny.org

Christopher D. Thorncroft, Ph.D.
n enormous range of intentions and creative preoccupations motivate artists. What all share is a drive to make new things that reflect and comment on our contemporary world. Artists are dynamically linked to current developments in technology, science and politics in ways that connect humanity in a time of sweeping change.

Working with scientists and engineers, artists have created new materials and processes that have poetic expressivity — paintings that move and change in response to sunlight and the passage of time, interactive installations that react to the brainwaves of viewers, and room-sized sculptures that replicate the human digestive system. Neuroscience provides a rich source of inspiration to artists and has led some to construct works that investigate the nature of pattern and the mind, and to create artworks that show the beauty of data culled from brain imaging. With Social Practice, an art medium that focuses on engagement through human interaction and social discourse, art exists at the intersection of art and political activism. In sharing such a broad spectrum of subjects and fields, artists naturally link endeavors of many other academic areas in the College of Arts and Sciences. The College is an invaluable setting that provides intellectual and creative stimulation this proximity fosters.

My own creative work has been deeply influenced by the science of climate change and developments in environmental conservation. The invented creatures that inhabit my paintings and sculptures are intermingled hybrids of plants and animals, imbued with a sense of human agency. Like horticulture that has run amok or grafting on steroids, plants are outsized or malformed, with sprays of recognizable cultivars infested with completely fictitious species. These works are meant to express our culture’s paradoxic wish to believe in science as the new alchemy. At once whimsical and monstrous, my work reflects the permeability between the synthetic and the organic, a boundary once thought to be immutable. It is a mirroring of life’s changeability in a widening world.

In searching for fresh and relevant ways to artistically express both the beauty and the imperiled state of nature, the ecological movement known as Rewilding captured my imagination. Controversial as it is intriguing, this environmental theory — part ecological movement, part Jurassic Park — is a plan to restore animals and mega-fauna that disappeared 13,000 years ago from Pleistocene North America. Proponents assert that wilderness that is lost cannot be reclaimed, only “new nature” can be created. I am fascinated by what this concept of new nature suggests and how it ignites my imagination in considering new artistic creatures to conjure.
I love the intellectual discipline of anthropology because it achieves a uniquely comprehensive understanding of the human situation. Anthropology is always described as a holistic discipline, and while that term is thrown around a good deal, anthropology’s holism is fundamental, as a holistic discipline, and while that term is thrown of the human situation. Anthropology is always described. (Psychology) appointed Interim Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences.

For my study of pollutant exposure and child development, the research team included Professor Joan Newman, a colleague from the School of Education (to evaluate psychological and behavioral outcomes), and laboratory scientists, including David Carpenter and Tony DeCaprio from the School of Public Health (to quantify the pollutant burdens of the people we studied).

Quantifying the pollutant burden is essential but not sufficient. The measurement has to be understood in a lifespan context to estimate its impact. Social science methods were needed to identify the pathways of exposure on specific attitudes, customs and behaviors. This required measuring breast-feeding, fish consumption during pregnancy, residential location vis-à-vis hot-spots of airborne pollutants, etc. The health outcomes of interest to the community were diverse, and so numerous control variables had to be included. These included deep, diet, activity patterns, and the material well-being of the household (i.e., socioeconomic status). Because the economy in this community is not salary-based, we devised other measures to assess this important variable.

Understanding the effect of all this work on the community (we performed three separate, though related, research projects) meant understanding the influence of some 500 years of attempted cultural and biological extermination through sterilization and boarding schools, the proud, independent cultural tradition, and the role of specific behaviors considered part of Mohawk culture that might be sources of exposure, such as fishing and consuming local fish. As social scientists we also recognized our position as outsider scientists and urban “downstaters” when proposing projects and providing information to the community. After 20 years of partnership research, and despite not being an ethnologist conducting participant observation, my work is now more informed by the goal of preserving and protecting the culture and the people it was in 1994. Without the holistic background and openness to ways of seeing and analyzing beyond those in my specialty, the work could not have been done so well and the community not so well informed.
As a social and cultural historian of early America whose research examines the human dimensions of environmental change, I am interested in the ways that people in the distant past shaped the natural world and how nature shaped them in return. As someone drawn to spaces that were neither “natural” nor “civilized,” where ecologies and economies became deeply entangled, I have focused my research on rivers, coasts, and oceans. Drawing on marine ecology, hydrology, and atmospheric science alongside literature, visual art and folklore, my work as a historian, therefore, is deeply interdisciplinary. I cultivated this integrative approach to my scholarship by simply asking questions that piqued my curiosity. But as an undergraduate biology major, I found myself, much to the frustration of my professors, asking questions that seemed woefully off-topic. Why, for instance, were textbook diagrams of the most enduring narratives of colonial settlement and expansion. Our current understanding of the sciences and humanities as independent bodies of knowledge is a very recent development. Since most of our global environmental problems are human problems, perhaps we will find solutions by repossessing the common ground between them. The College of Arts and Sciences provides a place in which those connections can occur. ●

But I have remained committed to this interdisciplinary work, not least because melding the sciences and the humanities pays scholarly dividends. Anecdotal evidence from the historical record can help us expand the temporal scales of scientific studies. Narrative modes of scholarship can produce insights that do not fit neatly into quantitative, replicable analyses. Conversely, a more careful look at ecological assemblages, energy flows and the ways they are brought to bear in mapping and modeling tools can challenge some of the systems being described, but also who illustrated them and why. Also, those queries fell flat within the confines of a narrowly defined academic discipline. But I continued to ask interdisciplinary questions while later working as a magazine editor and journalist and while completing an MFA in nonfiction creative writing. I pursued a doctoral degree in environmental history specifically because it allowed me to synthesize the history, poetry and science of the sea more completely.

Indeed, while I waded through the scientific journal literature of single watershed during the colonial period could take years. Archival research needed to show hydrologic change in a single watershed during the colonial period could take years. Indeed, while I waded through the scientific journal literature and my colleagues eyed the bound books that anchored the historical profession, we labored (successfully) to reconcile the differences in our disciplines. Historians and hydrologists could consult datasets for hundreds of modern watersheds within minutes, the historical archival research needed to show hydrologic change in a single watershed during the colonial period could take years. But I found that this interdisciplinary approach to environmental scholarship came with challenges. While writing my doctoral dissertation, I spent a summer at MIT working with a team of scientists who were recreating the hydrology of colonial North America. The work was challenging but exhilarating. I learned how hydrologists used computer models and how geographers mapped hydrologic systems and their change over time. I provided the historical context in which these changes occurred, including patterns of settlement, land-use, governance and water engineering. But this type of interdisciplinary work required patience and an acceptance of very different methodologies. If hydrologists could consult datasets for hundreds of modern watersheds within minutes, the historical archival research needed to show hydrologic change in a single watershed during the colonial period could take years. Indeed, while I waded through the scientific journal literature and my colleagues eyed the bound books that anchored the historical profession, we labored (successfully) to reconcile the differences in our disciplines.
So, why is public engagement important? Public engagement encourages the UAlbany community to come together with the broader community to provide applied learning opportunities, including research, to address real-world challenges. This application of knowledge makes academia relevant to the real world, removing the concept of “the ivory tower.” I have been drawn toward public engagement and with the larger community is that publicly engaged scholarship is critical to the success of academia and to the success of the world. I share helpful ideas and connect people having similar goals and related areas of teaching and research, since problems are best solved using a variety of perspectives from different disciplines. Moreover, even when the connections are not so evident, it is essential for colleagues to work together with community members to address societal concerns. I also share resources when they are available or joined in collaboration with others in the process of progress.

Among the many public engagement projects I have led or joined in collaboration with others in the process of celebrating CAS’s 25th year, I am also delighted to reconnect with Girls Inc., through the Eureka! Program at UAlbany. Girls Inc. Eureka! is a free five-year program that encourages girls to be “strong, smart, and bold” through summer immersion in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) opportunities, along with personal development and mentorship, sports, and career exploration. Having previously volunteered with this organization, I aim to make an even greater impact, given my commitment to collaborates or starting a new initiative! Contact me at dprivott@albany.edu if you are interested in Mr. William Cummings, President, the University at Albany, who is the CEO of Albany County and the Corning Hospital.

A message that I continue to share with CAS colleagues and partners from different disciplines. Moreover, even when the connections are not so evident, it is essential for colleagues to work together with community members to address societal concerns. I also share resources when they are available or joined in collaboration with others in the process of progress.

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SEPTEMBER: Dr. Andrew Berglund hired to direct the RNA Institute.

CAS Centers of Excellence

CENTER FOR ACHIEVEMENT, RETENTION, AND STUDENT SUCCESS
CENTER FOR AUTISM AND RELATED DISABILITIES
CENTER FOR BIOCHEMISTRY AND BIOPHYSICS
CENTER FOR ECONOMIC RESEARCH
CENTER FOR ELIMINATION OF MINORITY HEALTH DISPARITIES
CENTER FOR HUMANITIES, ARTS AND TECHNOLOGY
CENTER FOR LANGUAGE AND INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATION
CENTER FOR LATINO, LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN STUDIES
CENTER FOR NEUROSCIENCE RESEARCH
CENTER FOR X-RAY OPTICS
CONFUCIUS INSTITUTE
ECONOMICS RESEARCH AND TRAINING INSTITUTE
INSTITUTE FOR HISTORY AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT
INSTITUTE FOR MESOAMERICAN STUDIES
INSTITUTE FOR RESEARCH ON WOMEN
INSTITUTE OF BIOMOLECULAR STEREOLOGY
LEWIS MUMFORD CENTER
PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES CENTER
RNA INSTITUTE

CAS Academic Departments

AFRICANA STUDIES
Chair: Oscar Williams

ANTHROPOLOGY
Chair: Walter Little

ART & ART HISTORY
Chair: Sarah Cohen

ATMOSPHERIC & ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES
Chair: Christopher Thorncroft

BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES
Chair: Richard Cunningham

CHEMISTRY
Chair: Li Niu

COMMUNICATION
Chair: Annis Golden

EAST ASIAN STUDIES
Chair: Fan Pen Chen

ECONOMICS
Chair: Adrian Masters

ENGLISH
Chair: Charles Shepherdson

GEOGRAPHY & PLANNING
Chair: Andrei Lapenas

HISTORY
Chair: Nadeszda Kizenko

LANGUAGES, LITERATURES & CULTURES
Chair: Cynthia Fox

LATIN AMERICAN, CARIBBEAN & U.S. LATINO STUDIES
Chair: Alejandra Brodman (Fall)
Pedro Cabán (Spring)

MATHEMATICS & STATISTICS
Chair: Michael Stessin

MUSIC & THEATRE
Chair: Nancy Newman

PHILOSOPHY
Chair: P.D. Magnus

PHYSICS
Chair: Keith Earle

PSYCHOLOGY
Chair: Leslie Halpern

SOCIOLOGY
Chair: Glenn Deane

WOMEN’S, GENDER & SEXUALITY STUDIES
Chair: Janell Hobson
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Venue</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 20</td>
<td>7:30 pm</td>
<td>Ellen Sinopoli Dance Company</td>
<td>Main Theater, Performing Arts Center</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>The Capital Region’s premier dance company performs works made in collaboration with current and emeritus CAS faculty. Tickets are $10-$20; contact the PAC Box Office.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sept. 28</td>
<td>7:30 pm</td>
<td>New York State Writers Institute Inaugural Book Festival</td>
<td>Campus Center Ballroom</td>
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<td>Begins with the presentation of the NY State Author and State Poet Awards and a public reception.</td>
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<td>Sept. 29</td>
<td>10:00 am-4:00 pm</td>
<td>New York State Writers Institute Inaugural Book Festival</td>
<td>Campus Center</td>
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<td>A day-long, family-friendly event featuring award-winning authors and hands-on activities.</td>
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<td>Oct. 5</td>
<td>3:00 pm</td>
<td>Songs &amp; Sounds to Celebrate Silver</td>
<td>Recital Hall, Performing Arts Center</td>
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<td>The Department of Music &amp; Theatre, along with guests, pays tribute to CAS with a music/spoken word program.</td>
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<td>Oct. 11 -</td>
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<td>FLOW: Alumni Artists from Mohawk Hudson Region Exhibition 2009-2017</td>
<td>University Art Museum</td>
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<td>A panel discussion with CAS faculty and architect, author, writer and educator David Gersten.</td>
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<td>Oct. 16</td>
<td>7:00 pm</td>
<td>David Gersten, “Developing New Ways of Knowing: Education, Art, Space, and Place” Presentation/Q&amp;A</td>
<td>Recital Hall, PAC</td>
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<td>Gersten is a professor in the Chanin School of Architecture of The Cooper Union and founding director of <em>Arts Letters &amp; Numbers</em>, an arts and education organization.</td>
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<td>Oct. 19</td>
<td>5:00 - 8:00 pm</td>
<td>Artists’ Reception, FLOW: Alumni Artists from Mohawk Hudson Region Exhibition 2009-2017</td>
<td>University Art Museum</td>
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<td>A panel discussion with CAS faculty and Melanie Wallace, Senior Series Producer of PBS’s NOVA.</td>
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<td>Oct. 22</td>
<td>7:00 pm</td>
<td>Melanie Wallace: “History, Science, and Truth in the 21st Century” Presentation with film clips/Q&amp;A</td>
<td>Recital Hall, Performing Arts Center</td>
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<td>Wallace is the Senior Series Producer for NOVA, the most-watched prime time science series on American television.</td>
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<td>Oct. 25</td>
<td>5:30 pm</td>
<td>CAS 25th Anniversary Dinner</td>
<td>Treviso by Mallozzi's</td>
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<td>A celebratory dinner open to faculty and staff of the College of Arts and Sciences and their invited guests. Featured speaker: Journalism Professor Thomas A. Bass, discussing recent travels to the Fukushima and Chernobyl exclusion zones.</td>
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