

9/19/25 Highlights

Dear Colleagues,

Earlier this week, we lost an important member of our academic community. [Ben Delp](#) was housed in REDI, but he had a long history in our division and was an important partner. Ben will be greatly missed.

The year's first Board of Visitors Academic Excellence Committee meeting was yesterday afternoon, and we could have filled another 90 minutes updating them on the amazing results coming from our division. Committee members heard from three faculty/student research pairs, and several members are still talking about how impressive the students presenting were. Four deans were also part of a roundtable discussion about what research, scholarship and creative activity (RSCA) look like across their colleges. We'll continue to feature different aspects of RSCA through this year's board meetings.

Now, on to this week's highlights.

- Artificial intelligence continues to be a priority for Academic Affairs, and faculty in multiple disciplines are already active in this research space. Professor of Communications Dr. Tim Ball and a colleague created a collection of themed materials to help educators develop students' AI literacy. This resource is available through the [UVA teaching hub](#).
- On the other side of campus, assistant professors of Integrated Science and Technology Dr. [Raafat Zaini](#) and [Dr. Rod MacDonald](#) co-authored a white paper with other educators, researchers and practitioners as part of the [AI in System Dynamics Education Task Force](#) in the [System Dynamics Society](#). Another resource for educators, this paper provides guidance in adapting teaching practices to an AI-enabled world by offering best practices for classroom use, example exercises for various learning levels, and balancing opportunities with risks. The authors are disseminating the paper widely while developing it further as educators use its content and provide feedback.
- Faculty/student collaborations continue to feature in the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry. Assistant professor [Dr. Hui Chen](#) mentored two undergraduates who won the Certificate of Merit award in the environmental division of the [American Chemical Society's](#) Fall 2025 national meeting for "Aggregation of ultrashort- and short-chain Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances via Donna dialysis."
- Congratulations to Dr. [Stephanie West](#), professor in Sport and Recreation Management, for her recent election to the American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration as a Fellow. In addition to her 20+ years of teaching and academic service, she has contributed over 100 articles and presentations in national and international journals and conferences. Previously, she was also elected as a [Fellow in the Academy of Leisure Sciences](#).

What highlights do you have to share? Please send them – for you or your colleagues – to provost@jmu.edu. And keep an eye out for more teaching, scholarship, awards and other accomplishments.

Sincerely,

Bob