



College of Visual and Performing Arts



Greetings Colleagues,

As we enter the last two weeks of the semester, I wanted to let you know how thankful I am to be working along-side of you during this time of crisis. Every day I hear stories of your innovation, creativity, and courage and I know that we will emerge stronger and more versatile when this is over.

In the meanwhile, here are some updates to share with you:

- **Virtual Graduation on May 8th, 2020:** The university is planning a virtual graduation to allow the President to confer degrees. The details of this event are forthcoming.
- Wren Stevens is working with CVPA School Directors to collect information from graduating seniors in an effort to create a celebration video that recognizes our graduates. The video will be shared via the CVPA and School websites.

We want to recognize the dedication and hard work of our graduating seniors. Please discuss ideas with your colleagues ways to do so. For example, seniors in the Acting/Directing area will use a phone,



computer, or any camera available to create a 45 second “send-off” video of a performance, dance, poem, or speech.

Jacob Brent has volunteered to pull it all together and will share it at the end of the semester.

University Updates:

Please continue to refer to updates from President Alger and the Provost for continuing/forthcoming information regarding university issues, including those related to the budget. I encourage you to reach out with questions, concerns, and suggestions to your School Directors and the Dean’s Office. Additionally, there is a faculty discussion board on the Faculty Senate Canvas page. I will look for CVPA questions and concerns in that space, as well.

I want to thank you for continuing to send us your good news. It is inspiring to hear of the awards you and your students are winning and to see the amazing innovation you implement in your virtual classrooms to keep the arts alive. Please keep sending Wren Stevens (stevenwr@jmu.edu) your updates, innovations, and wins.

This week I offer my congratulations to:

- **Duke Hall Gallery Director Beth Hinderliter** was chosen for the Networked Curator Fellowship run by the Association of Art Museum Curators.
- **Margaret (Peggy) Wood** was chosen as the recipient of the SADAH 2020 Outstanding Alumni Award. Peggy is the Executive Secretary of the Virginia Art Education Association, a position that she has held for the past 17 years. In this role, Peggy is known not only by art educators across Virginia, but also, through the National Art Education Association, teachers all over the United States. She is the voice, contact, and feet on the ground for the VAEA.
- **Chris Cohen, MFA**, won the Graduate School’s Outstanding Thesis Award for his exhibit, “White Noise.” Congratulations to Chris and his advisor **Cole Welter!**
- **Dr. Janet Hostetter** won the Graduate School’s Outstanding Dissertation Award for her dissertation, “Tone Production, Musicianship Training, Repertoire Development, Performance Practice: A Pedagogical Overview of Selected International Children’s Choirs.” Congratulations to Janet and her advisor **Jo-Anne van der Vat-Chromy!**

Additionally, I wanted to share with you a few stories of teaching inspiration. It has been such a difficult semester and for each of you to not only transfer your courses to an on-line teaching environment, but to do so in such an empathetic and kind way is truly amazing. A warm shout out to:



Cynthia Thompson created a GroupMe account for all dance majors to keep in touch and to “keep lifting each other up.” Cynthia challenged herself to create a dance to a song selected by the dance majors (on top of her 3-class teaching load) as a way of sharing the creative spirit when under stress. The dance majors loved the video!



Sarah Brooks invited **Madison Whitesell**, Conservation Technician for The Walters Art Museum and JMU Alum (2017) to virtually visit her ART 394: Museum Careers class through Zoom. It was a great chance for our students to network with one of our successful alums!



Beth Chandler who teaches applied flute lessons to majors noted how much she missed playing pieces together with her students as a part of their lessons. Beth started recording the duet part to some of the etudes her students are working on for them to play along with at home. As she wrote, "Although nothing comes close to being able to play music TOGETHER, in real time, especially standing next to each other, when you can communicate visually (as well as musically), this is a solution to help feel connectedness."

Thank you again for being an inspiration to me, both through your work as well as your everyday acts of resilience.

Lastly, I wanted to let you know that three important leaders in the arts are retiring this June: **Dr. Roger Tomhave** and **Dr. Cole Welter** from the School of Art, Design, and Art History and **Dr. George Sparks**, Dean of the College of Visual and Performing Arts. We will miss their guidance but celebrate this new stage in their lives.

As Dr. Sparks remains on medical leave, I am asking you to thank him for his leadership of our college and to share your memories with him. Please consider writing Dr. Sparks a email, personal letter, or card and send them to Wren Stevens (MSC 2107), who will be collecting them.

We are close to the finish line and I am here to support you as you work towards a well-deserved summer break.

Ruben Graciani, Acting Dean
College of Visual and Performing Arts

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