



## Newsletter

**Dear students, alumni and friends,**

Once again it is my pleasure to write to you—our University Studies community of faculty, staff, students, alumni, and friends—with these program highlights. Our University Studies faculty, academic advisors, and students continue to have a national impact in the areas of teaching, research, service, and community engagement. Moreover, we anticipate we'll graduate another record number of students across our degree programs and certificates. Overall, we will graduate over 100 students this May. Many University Studies graduates are finding careers in 21st century fields. For example, Mr. Levi De Leon, featured in this edition of the newsletter, graduated in 2015 with a B.A. in University Studies with concentrations in Economics, Integrative Studies, and Wind Energy. Levi made a name for himself while working at Enterprise after graduation. In no time at all, Tesla, a company specializing in integrating energy solutions with the automotive industry, recruited Levi to its Dallas location where he is an essential member of their leadership team.

Our University Studies faculty continue to establish their reputations as national scholars with refereed publications, national service, and strong student engagement. Dr. Andrea McCourt co-authored a book chapter entitled, "Creating Faculty Development Opportunities for Adjuncts", which supports her role as Assistant Director in hiring and training instructors in the Human Resources Development program. Dr. Gail Bentley further established her national reputation as an expert in family development with her latest co-authored "Perspectives from Fathers: Recognizing Strengths and Contributions Beyond Breadwinning."

Our faculty are also utilizing their professional experience and scholarship to prepare students and corporations to transform organizational culture. For example, Dr. Rachna Heizer created a program entitled "Fostering Inclusion of People with Disabilities in Schools and Our Workplaces". She integrates a course she developed (HRDV 2303 Diversity and Cultural Competency in the Workplace) with her research on Neurodiversity in schools and workplaces as part of their diversity initiatives. She will be presenting on this topic at the Fairfax County Special Education Conference on April 21st. Her work

resulted in an appointment to the Board of the ARC of Northern Virginia, which is the local chapter of a national organization that promotes and protects the human rights of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and actively supports their full inclusion and participation in the community throughout their lives. Tracy Owens, a faculty member for HRDV, was recently interviewed as an accounting expert on the topic of "The upcoming lease accounting changes, with a focus on key tasks to accomplish, the perspective to keep in mind and the pitfalls to avoid before, during and after the compliance deadline."

In addition to providing exemplary student services to more than 700 undergraduates, our professional staff members are contributing through professional activities, scholarly presentations and curriculum development. Amy Peterman, Lead Academic Advisor for Academic Services and Operations, presented "Graduation: It's Handled" 2018 at State Academic Advising Conference in Houston, Texas. Furthering their commitment to improving student success at Texas Tech University, Student Services, Laci McDermott and Amy Peterman, led by Sarah Schwintz, partnered with Programs for Academic Development and Retention (PADR) this past year to write content for a new course called "Academic Integration." Students in this course will learn to integrate knowledge and skills presented in previous PADR courses with tailored academic strategies to cultivate lifelong habits of success.

Through their research, teaching, and community engagement, the students, staff, and faculty of University Studies are developing innovative curriculum, applying theory to research and teaching to address real-world challenges and making careers in innovative industries. We are building on a foundation of interdisciplinary knowledge and skills, making connections between diverse sources of knowledge and real-world experiences, and having a transformative impact on peoples' lives. On behalf of our University Studies faculty, staff, and students, I thank you for your support of University Studies.

*Sincerely,*

***Patrick C. Hughes, Ph.D.***

***Associate Vice Provost, University Programs and Student Success***

***Professor, Department of Communication Studies***