



# Connections

Spring 2024

COLLEGE OF LETTERS AND SCIENCE

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## On the forefront with research, grad program in cannabis science

A new Cannabis Science graduate certificate set to launch for the fall 2024 semester is now accepting applicants. Expert faculty in the Departments of Biology and Chemistry and Biochemistry who are immersed in cannabis-based research will teach the fully online program. The University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point has long been on the forefront of cutting-edge programs that provide students with the needs of an ever-changing job market.

Program faculty, including associate professor Brian Barringer, Department of Biology chair, and associate professors Ann Impullitti and Shannon Riha, are part of a larger research collaboration that was recently awarded a \$175,000 grant to study the effects of cannabis in removing synthetic, toxic materials from soils. Due to its diversity of chemical compounds and its strong natural fibers, cannabis is now linked to a host of industrial and medical applications.

UW-Stevens Point is the first institution within the Universities of Wisconsin to offer the opportunity to become a leader in this fast-paced industry. The legal cannabis industry is a \$25 billion dollar market and projected to grow to \$45 billion by 2025. For five years in a row, employment in the industry increased by greater than 27 percent with more than 280 new jobs created every day in 2022, according to Leafly Jobs Report.



“One of the most distinguishing things about our program is that we have multiple faculty members at UWSP whose research programs focus on cannabis, and we collectively represent a wide variety of disciplines within the STEM field,” said Barringer.

[The program](#) provides participants with fundamental knowledge in the science of cannabis. Course topics include an introduction to cannabis science, the biology, ecology and horticulture of cannabis and cannabis phytochemistry. Students must have

completed both a college-level introduction to biology and introduction to chemistry course to be qualified for the program.

Faculty of the program emphasize that the certificate is open to students of all majors and degrees who have an interest in the industry. The program is the second addition to come out of UW-Stevens Point’s Growth Initiative, an aspect of the university’s strategic plan that has faculty working to create programming that meets the needs of today’s professionals and the global economy.

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### Inside

- Katz Faculty and University awards
- Message from Dean Joshua Hagen
- Research Symposium Highlights



**Department of Biology chair, Brian Barringer, far left, associate biology professor Ann Impullitti, and their students engaged in ongoing research discuss plant care in the Trainer Natural Resources Building green house.**

### Regents Board Awards Department Chair

UWSP Department of English Chair, Professor Rebecca Stephens has been honored with the Universities of Wisconsin Board of Regents Teaching Excellence Award. The teaching award is the highest Board recognition for members of the Universities of Wisconsin faculty.



A faculty member since 1998, Stephens works to ensure she is teaching students the most recent scholarship of teaching and learning to apply in their future classrooms and modeling the most effective and innovative teaching methods. Dr. Stephens teaches a Technologies for English Education class, now part of the senior English Methods course block and soon to serve History and World Language teaching majors in the School of Humanities and Global Studies. Stephens led the effort to transform “Women’s Studies” into “Women’s and Gender Studies” (WGS) and participated in workshops and conversations concerning key themes and pedagogical strategies for WGS courses. [View bio](#)

# DISCOVER YOUR PURPOSE

## Research on Display in COLS Undergraduate Symposium

Twenty-five years and going strong! Invited guests and community members attended the signature event for the College of Letters and Science, our Annual [Undergraduate Research Symposium](#) held in the Chemistry Biology Building.

The program began with a keynote presentation by Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry associate professor Joe Mondloch, who described the emerging science application aimed at absorbing harmful poly- or perfluoroalkyl substances known as PFAS, chemicals which are known to threaten public health in drinking water. Then, over 170 students presented faculty-mentored research in oral and poster presentations in the humanities, social sciences, mathematics, and biology.

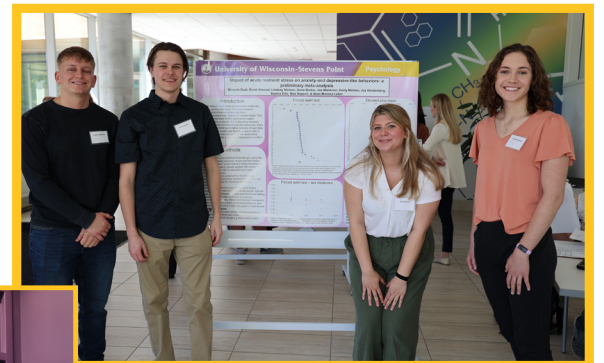
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Students from all four schools presented on 120 oral and poster research works at the 25th Annual Undergraduate Research Symposium held in the Chemistry Biology Building on May 3, 2024.



## Dean's Message

**Dear Friends of UW-Stevens Point's College of Letters and Science,**

As we close out another academic year, I am again truly impressed by the accomplishments of students, faculty, and staff from across the college. This newsletter provides a small snapshot of those achievements across teaching, research, and service to our communities and state. The year has held some challenges, including the pleasant surprise of a larger than anticipated incoming freshmen class last fall, but we can take pride in how the college pulled together to meet those challenges.

You have my deepest thanks and appreciation for your hard work and contributions. I look forward to seeing you in the fall, but until then, have a great summer!

Have a great summer!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joshua Hagen".

Joshua Hagen

# Retirements

Spring 2024

Connie Anderson - Administrative Specialist, School of Mathematics, Computing, Physics and Astronomy  
Robert Badger - Professor, Department of Chemistry  
Kevin Czerwinski - Professor, Department of Chemistry  
Gar Francis - Professor, Department of History  
Dejan Kuzmanovic - Professor, Department of English  
Gretchen Renfert - Lecturer, Department of Mathematical Sciences

Summer 2024

Kendall Holmes - Animal Care Technician, NADF

## 2024 AWARDS



Dean Joshua Hagen presents the Katz Distinguished Faculty Award to professor Jeff Leigh, history, at the May 9, 2024 COLS Spring College Meeting.

### Distinguished Faculty and University Awards

The UWSP University Awards recognized nine COLS faculty members for their contributions at the April 30, 2024 ceremony in the Dreyfus University Center. Awardees are:

#### University Excellence in Teaching

- Associate professor Lindsay Dresang (Biology)
- Associate professor Heather Molenda-Figueira (Psychology)
- Lecturer Ryan O'Leary (Religious Studies)
- Associate professor Neil Prendergast (History)

#### University Scholar

- Associate professor Maggie Bohm-Jordan (Sociology)
- Associate professor Joe Mondloch (Chemistry)

#### University Service

- Associate Professor Valerie Barske (History and International Studies)
- Professor Paul Whitaker (Biology)

#### University Excellence in Teaching, Scholarship, and Service

- Professor Jennifer Collins (Political Science)

### Congratulations to our newest [Katz Faculty Award](#) recipient!

Jeffrey Leigh embodies university ideals of teaching, scholarship, and service. While teaching five years at UW-Stevens Point and over 19 years at the former UW-Marathon County, Dr. Leigh has taught a remarkable range of courses including: World History, Western Civilization, Twentieth Century European History, Modern Middle-Eastern History, Recent Chinese History, Modern Revolutions, Terrorism, Russia and the Soviet Union, and The World Wars.

Leigh's scholarly work includes numerous articles and book reviews, including his book titled *Austrian Imperial Censorship and the Bohemian Periodical Press, 1867-71*, which was recently translated into German. He earned his B.A. in History and B.F.A. in Russian with Honors from the University of Missouri-Columbia, and his M.A. and Ph.D. in History from Indiana University-Bloomington.

Professor Leigh has received the UWSP-Wausau John Runkle Community Service Award (2022), UWSP-Wausau Foundation Barrington-Musolf Faculty Scholarship Award (2020), a Fulbright grant (2010-2011), UW-Marathon County Faculty Member of the Year Award (2003), and a U.S. Department of Education Teaching American History Grant.

In addition to this work in the classroom, he has also served as the UW Colleges History Department chair and vice chair. On the Wausau campus, he chaired numerous major committees, and at UWSP he has served in many ways, including as a peer judge for the Fulbright U.S. Scholars' Program. He has also served our community by providing dozens of public lectures and programs.



College of Letters and Science  
University of Wisconsin - Stevens Point

## Fulbright Teaching Assistant Reflects on his Pointer Experience



Mingyo Rau enjoys telling stories about his culture and watching his world languages students improving from week to week. He facilitates the remote learning Chinese course at UW-Stevens Point.

As a Fulbright language instructor from Taiwan, Rau said he has had the freedom to share many aspects of his experiences growing up in the rural area of Zhongli, Taiwan. Rau has always enjoyed Chinese literature and history. He said growing up his parents modeled the love of learning. Rau's father taught math and his mother taught English at the university.

Throughout the academic year at UWSP, Rau hosted workshops on Chinese holiday customs and making traditional foods. He assisted professor Hongying Xu, the UW-La Crosse, Chinese instructor for the Collaborative Learning Program, in making dumplings and spring rolls in the CPS food lab last month. Last fall, Rau led a session for participants to practice with Chinese characters and calligraphy.

Rau said unlike in his own college experience learning English, the UWSP students enrolled in Chinese engage in language practice more frequently since they are scheduled to meet three times weekly.

"It's been so rewarding to see my students improving," Rau said.

He enjoyed having the capacity to develop activities to share with students in the program using his own initiative. Teaching is a passion for Rau. After he finishes the Fulbright teaching program in Stevens Point, Rau said he plans to attend graduate school to study Japanese language in Japan. He hopes to further hone his skills as a language facilitator.

There are once again plans to welcome a Fulbright Program teaching assistant to UWSP for next academic year.



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## Forum Highlights Faculty Research

The College's Faculty Forum, a slate of sessions to showcase a range of faculty research has concluded for the year. Covering diverse topics from social movements to ancient languages, the 2023-2024 lectures were organized by professor Robert Sirabian, English. Professor of religious studies, Shanny Luft, right, invited participants to discuss the changes in how contemporary comedians engage with religion over the past three decades. The final session on May 2, 2024 was titled "Religion and Stand-up Comedy." The Faculty Forum will resume in the fall.



## Sneak Preview! Public Engagement Series to Address Free Speech

Planning is underway for the College's 2024-2025 Engagement Series. The COLS Symposium on Free Speech will bring together students, faculty and community members to interact with each other on topics concerning civil dialogue and free speech both on campus and in the community. Dates, locations, and formats for the events will be shared through our COLS website and social media channels.

## Your Gift Makes a Difference!

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Amanda Gilman, COLS Major Gifts Officer  
amanda.gilman@uwsp.edu | 715-346-2299  
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