

2-19-2019

# Merrimack College Record

Merrimack College



MERRIMACK COLLEGE

# RECORD

## Investing in Outstanding Faculty is Investing in Our Future

Colleagues,

Our Agenda for Distinction, the strategic map that has guided Merrimack College on the road to success, calls upon us, among other goals, to “create distinctive academic programs and hire key faculty.”

For the nine years of the plan so far, we have done just that — replacing from retirement and departures or by adding new positions more than 150 faculty over the past nine years, and bucking a trend in higher education toward more adjuncts.



We have invested more than many of our competitors in full-time tenured, tenure-track, term and clinical faculty. In the academic year 2019-2020 we are anticipated to have more than 210 full-time faculty — more full-time faculty than cross application schools Assumption, Endicott, Stonehill, Wheaton, and Saint Anselm, all of which have larger endowments to draw upon.

I know that faculty are the backbone and the future of any academic institution, and students come to Merrimack in increasing numbers for the quality of education and the educators we offer

As the latest testament to our investment in the future of our College and our students, I am pleased to announce nine faculty members have earned tenure. They are an outstanding group of colleagues and I congratulate each on this important achievement. These nine inspiring faculty members have bright academic futures and display a deep commitment to the quality of education that is a beacon of academic life at Merrimack. Our newly tenured faculty members are teachers of our students, scholars in their fields and leaders in our community.

Merrimack’s investment in academics has attracted top-notch people who are dedicated to their pedagogy, their students, their scholarship and their institution. We remain committed to their success and ours, and welcome the newest members to the ranks of tenure.

Best,  
Christopher E. Hopey, Ph.D.  
President

## Agenda for the Future Planning Process Under Way

More than 200 faculty and staff have volunteered to serve on one of eight planning committees as part of Merrimack College's strategic planning process for 2020-2025.

The College has had great success over the past several years, which can be attributed to our wonderful community of faculty and staff and our ten-year strategic plan, the Agenda for Distinction, which began in 2010-2011. We have great momentum and all of us should take pride in our success.

There are three major milestones taking place in the next two years that warrant a new strategic plan: (1) our upcoming 10-year NECHE accreditation visit; (2) the culmination of our very successful strategic plan (2010-2020), the Agenda for Distinction; and (3) the completion of our \$50 million fundraising campaign Together for Good, which will end above its initial \$50 million goal in a few short months.

Anticipating these changes, we began a preliminary planning process in June 2018 that will now engage, over the next few months, many members of our community and a variety of stakeholders across our campus. Our goal is simple — to dream, imagine and plan for our futures together.

The next Merrimack College Strategic Plan (2020-2025), the Agenda for the Future, will build on the Agenda for Distinction and take Merrimack to the next level by helping the College to prioritize our next set of endeavors and help Merrimack reach its aspirations.

This planning process is also about the reality we face as an industry and profession. Over the past decade, the landscape we operate in — the finances, the students, the employers of our graduates, the public perception, the technology disruption, and the regulations we must adhere to have changed considerably - how we must operate, function and perform will change even more radically over the coming decade. We must prepare for that reality.

A significant part of that reality is what we see in the news every day. Several institutions in the Northeast have closed or merged, and it is clear that more will follow. This has caused confusion and pain for those students who can't finish their education, employees who have lost their jobs, and alumni whose degree is perceivably less valuable.

That very real emotion builds as other institutions face similar fates, and state leaders attempt to engage in various efforts to mitigate and minimize the impact of more closures to students, families and communities.

While this does not immediately impact Merrimack, we would be foolish to think our past success makes us immune. Merrimack is a great institution, but we are a highly tuition dependent, medium sized residential college with moderately higher student tuition discount rates that lacks a large endowment to financially protect us from the changes occurring in higher education. Without constant innovation and appreciation for a changing student needs and preferences, we can easily become less relevant and slip backwards.

Growing, diversifying and innovating our undergraduate majors and expanding enrollments to support our cost of attendance is crucial. Providing access, improving student diversity and lowering the net cost of our tuition is key for our future success and the changing demographics of New England. Expanding and growing graduate education so we are less dependent on undergraduate enrollments, going online and creating new ideas for research and philanthropic fundraising will be vital to our long-term financial and reputational future.

Creating the resources to hire more faculty and key staff and improving our academic and student life facilities will be critical in delivering our high touch, high impact residential model of an undergraduate education. Setting clear priorities and focusing our limited resources will be imperative for our long-term reputational and financial success.

The importance of having a plan and challenging ourselves to grow and innovate has never been more important. Merrimack's future is very bright, but we cannot rest on our success - it is vital that we continue to plan for the bright future that we will have.

All materials will be posted to an Agenda for the Future section on MyMack. Please refer to this page in order to review committee charges, committee members, as well as times, dates and locations of meetings.

If you have any questions do not hesitate to contact the **Office of the President**, one of the committee chairs, the **provost** or **Bethany LoMonaco**.

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## Staff Forum Meeting Dates for Spring Semester

In fall 2018, President Hopey announced the creation of the Staff Forum as a way to communicate important information about strategic plans and the future direction of Merrimack College, as well as provide staff the opportunity to ask the president questions about various College activities and share ideas with him.

Faculty and staff supervisors, at the Senior Leadership Team level and above, will not attend, so as to allow a free flow of questions and answers with the president or other senior leaders.

Department and unit heads are urged to make every effort to allow staff to attend the forum, consistent with maintaining operations and student services.

Here are the meetings for the remainder of the spring semester. Meetings are from 3 to 4 p.m. in the Executive Room, second floor of Crowe Hall.

- Tuesday, March 5
- Tuesday, April 2
- Tuesday, May 7

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## Nine Faculty Members Promoted for 2018-2019

Merrimack College has promoted a select group of outstanding faculty members effective Jan. 1, 2019. A reception to honor the newly promoted faculty will be held March 26.

Newly tenured faculty are:

**Cynthia Carlson**, promoted from assistant professor to tenured associate professor in civil engineering. Joined Merrimack in 2015.

Earned her Ph.D. in natural resources and earth systems science from the University of New Hampshire.

**Awards and honors include:** 2008 Senior Fellowship in the

Environmental Leadership Program, 2003 New Hampshire Young Engineer of the Year, from the N.H. Joint Engineering Board, 2001 EPA Individual Merit Award, from EPA Region 1.

**Favorite time of the academic year:** I think the second half of the spring semester. The weather is starting to improve, we can get outside with classes to look at some of the things we have been studying. I do a lot of field trips at that time of the year, and I'm planning summer research which is fun, too.

**Favorite campus event:** They are all fun.

**Favorite spot on campus:** Mendel Pond. I love its many phases throughout the year, and its many residents in the summer — interesting bugs, fish, and birds.

**Unique campus feature:** Mendel Pond again. I love that little pond.



**Michael Corcoran**, promoted from assistant professor to tenured associate professor in public health and nutrition. Joined Merrimack College in 2013.



Earned his Ph.D. in cellular and molecular nutrition from Tufts University.

**Awards and honors:** Recipient of the National Research Service Award for Nutrition and Cardiovascular Disease and been the recipient of many grants.

**Favorite time of the academic year:** May, because it is the time of year the learning gains students have made are most apparent.

**Favorite campus event:** Graduate Student Banquet for all health science master's students.

**Favorite spot on campus:** The exercise physiology lab because it's enjoyable to work with students as they apply what they just learned in a practical setting.

**Unique campus feature:** The warm, supportive and collaborative environment.

**Anne Flaherty**, from untenured associate professor to tenured associate professor and chair of the Department of Political Science, and associate director of the Master of Public Affairs Program. Joined Merrimack College in 2015.

Earned her Ph.D. in political science from Duke University.

**Favorite time of the academic year:** Convocation and graduation. I enjoy the rituals of opening and closing and reflecting on our experience as a college.

**Favorite campus event:** Absolutely it's graduation and the accompanying ceremonies.

**Favorite spot on campus:** I do enjoy the Sanctuary by the fire in a cozy chair. I usually end up seeing someone I know there, whether student, staff, or faculty, so it feels very comfortable and communal.

**Unique campus feature:** I always love the pond by Mendel and do my best to walk across the bridge — that feels like a lovely, living piece of history.



**Laura Hsu**, promoted from assistant professor to tenured associate professor of human development and human services. Joined Merrimack College in 2012. Earned her Ed.D. from Harvard Graduate School of Education.



**Awards and honors:** Inducted into Omicron Delta Kappa, has delivered the annual Last Lecture.

**Favorite time of the academic year:** Fall, because everyone comes to campus renewed and ready to start the academic year afresh. The weather is still nice, and within a few weeks the leaves will turn and the campus will be its most beautiful.

**Favorite campus event:** Commencement, because I'm excited to see students that I have had since freshman year accomplish a major milestone in their personal and professional lives. And summer is around the corner, so a lot to look forward to.

**Favorite spot on campus:** My office. I find comfort being there working productively and among my colleagues with whom I enjoy working.

**Unique campus feature:** Austin Hall, which used to be a dwelling for Augustinians. There are still vestiges of that time, and I also love hearing the music and seeing the beautiful interior of the chapel as I'm walking to and from my office.

**Zachary Kissel**, promoted from assistant professor to tenured associate professor in computer science. Joined Merrimack College in 2011 as an adjunct, 2012 full time. Earned his Ph.D. from UMass Lowell.

**Favorite time of the academic year:** I like the fall for the trees on campus and spring for the opportunity to have class outside.

**Favorite spot on campus:** Patio in front of the Sanctuary. It is a nice place to sit and do a little work and enjoy the nice weather.

**Unique campus feature:** Friendly colleagues and students.



**Lisa Perks**, promoted from untenured associate professor to tenured associate professor in communication and media. Joined Merrimack College in 2015

Earned her Ph.D. from the University of Texas at Austin.



**Awards and honors:** Presented on two top paper panels at the National Communication Association Convention, received 2018-2019 Faculty Development Grant

**Favorite time of the academic year:** I love the springtime. It's hard for everyone to get work done when the weather is nice but it's a very vibrant time of year. Campus feels very lively.

**Favorite campus event:** Relay for Live. I enjoy running with the faculty "Road Warriors" team each year and bringing my kids to the event in the evening.

**Favorite spot on campus:** I enjoy the labyrinth because it is surrounded by some of the earliest spring flowers.

**Unique campus feature:** I'm lucky to have a southwest-facing office window in Cushing. We get beautiful sunsets from here.

**Alison Russell**, promoted from assistant professor to tenured associate professor in political science. Joined Merrimack College in 2014

Earned her Ph.D. from The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University.

**Awards and honors:** Recipient of the 2018 Sidney D. Drell Award from the Intelligence and National Security Alliance; author of two books, including "Cyber Blockades" and "Strategic A2/AD in Cyberspace."

**Favorite time of the academic year:** Spring is my favorite time because there is so much enthusiasm and energy on campus at

that time of year.

**Favorite campus event:** Commencement is my favorite event because the whole community celebrates the achievements of the students and looks forward with great happiness to their future successes.

**Favorite spot on campus:** The Sanctuary. Comfortable chairs, cozy fireplace, good drinks . . . what's not to like?

**Unique campus feature:** The historic bridge over the reflecting pool. I talk about it a lot in class as an example of constructivism, a theory of international relations that describes how society giving meaning and value to material objects and experiences. The value of the bridge is more than the cost of its physical materials because we, as a community, value its history and beauty.



**Andrew Tollison**, promoted from assistant professor to tenured associate professor of communication in communication and media. Joined Merrimack College in 2012



Earned his Ph.D. in communication studies with an emphasis in health communication from the University of Texas at Austin.

**Awards and honors:** 2018 Anthony J. Sakowich Center for Undergraduate Research and Creative Activities (SCURA) grant recipient with co-investigator Lisa Perks for the project "Coping Through the Cancer Diagnosis Process," 2017 Top Paper Award from the Southern States Communication Association Annual Conference Interpersonal Communication Division.

**Favorite time of the academic year:** I genuinely love the opening of the academic year. It is fun to welcome the new students to campus, and the anticipation that comes with each new academic year is exciting. Plus, each academic year is unique so it is never the same thing.

**Favorite campus event:** It can be bittersweet, but graduation is one of my favorite campus events to attend. It is great to be able to celebrate with students and their families, as we have developed relationships with our students over their four years on campus. And knowing they are stepping off campus ready for their next steps is rewarding.

**Favorite spot on campus:** The Sanctuary Coffeehouse, especially during the winter months when the fireplace is going. It is a warm, inviting, and relaxing space. Plus, it offers caffeine, which plays a significant role in my diet.

**Unique campus feature:** Not a lot of people know about it but I enjoy the community garden off Rock Ridge Road. When the weather is nice, it is relaxing to take a quick walk over to the garden from Cushing Hall. I feel the garden is a unique feature to our campus.

**Nancy Wynn**, promoted from untenured associate professor to tenured associate professor in visual and performing arts. Joined Merrimack College in 2015.

Earned her M.F.A. from the University of Hartford's Hartford Art School.

**Awards and honors:** The upcoming Design Incubation Colloquia at Merrimack College, the FATE Conference coming up, numerous academic publications, and exhibits at the Clare Gallery in Hartford, Conn.

**Favorite time of the academic year:** I have two. The beginning of the academic year and the end of the academic year. The



beginning is the time of the year that is filled with new energy, questions, and promise. My students, in the graphic design program, share all sorts of stories of their summer experiences. We also talk about what they want to accomplish in the next year. They are simultaneously excited and anxious. I enjoy working “it all out” with them. I enjoy the end of the academic year, too. There is the student exhibition in the McCoy Gallery. This exhibition showcases student work of all levels, though senior work is highlighted. I love watching the senior students’ talk about their work and confidence. They worked very hard to get there. They share it with their family and friends. Lots of smiles and laughs.

**Favorite campus event:** Again, I have two. Admitted Student Day and graduation. It is that coming and going experience thing again.

**Favorite spot on campus:** The Mac Lab and Studio Room in the VPA department. It might be selfish, but I love seeing students work on their projects creatively and with their peers. The energy is great.

**Unique campus feature:** There are many beautiful landscape features, but the feature I am thinking about is more abstract. It is the freedom to work with other professors on new ideas for courses, interdisciplinary projects, programs, events. The freedom to try new ideas out — to go for it — feeling supported at all levels. Academia can be a difficult landscape to navigate. This campus, with its support and collegiality is refreshing. It energizes me to think of new ideas all the time.

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## Background Check Policy

Employees and hiring managers should familiarize themselves with the human resources policy on criminal background checks, which apply to all new employees and volunteers as well as those changing positions at the College. The policy, posted at the Human Resources site on MyMack, requires a background check for all newly hired full- or part-time employees as well as volunteers, following the offer of employment.

Staff who live on campus, as well as those with significant access to financial assets of the College, will be subject to an enhanced background check as well as regular checks during the course of their employment. Those who operate machinery or vehicles will be subject to a check of their safe driving records.

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## Coming up

Feb. 20 — Noon, Lunch and Winter Book Discussion: iGen, Dr. Jean M. Twenge, Room B-2, Sullivan Hall

Feb. 21-23 — 7:30 p.m., “Silent Sky,” directed by Kathleen Sills, Rogers Center for the Arts

Feb. 26 — 4 p.m., Faculty readers Emma Duffy-Comparone and Joe Vogel, Writers House





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