Interview with Dr. Cheryl Smith, Director of The School of Nursing and Chair of the Graduate Council

Tell us a little bit about yourself and the positions you hold on campus?

I currently serve as the Director of School of Nursing. I am finishing up my second year in this position. Before that I was over the graduate program for nursing students. Then I was asked to serve as Associate Director and then Director of The School of Nursing. I also serve as the Chair of the Graduate Council.

I was a part of a team that was instrumental in starting the MSN program that we have in partnership with Georgia Southwestern State University. We also now have a Family Nurse Practitioner program with GSU. I have been in the field of nursing for over 44 years. I always knew that I wanted to teach from early on within my career. I actually graduated from Columbus College in 1971.

I have a real affinity for graduate students because I started my transition as an adult learner. I completed my BSN, MSN, and Doctorate degrees soon after. We try to focus our graduate nursing programs towards the working professional.

Can you tell us a little bit about the Graduate Council and its composition?

I have served the Graduate Council for over three years. I started out as secretary, then chair elect, and now chair. The role of the Graduate Council is to be the voice of the graduate education across campus. We take a leadership role in advancing graduate education here at CSU. This is our first goal. We also uphold the high standards of graduate education by examining graduate faculty nominations and their credentials. You have to hire the best faculty in order to have the best programs.

The Graduate Council also looks at new programs and approves any substantive changes to already established programs. We also look at graduate assistants as well to make sure we are following all the protocols as it relates to HR rules. Lastly, we look at other factors across campus that impact graduate education and students to see how we can bridge that gap as well.

In what ways does the Graduate Council support or improve graduate education?

I would have to say through providing quality programs, quality faculty, and quality student recruitment.

Are there any things the Graduate Council has accomplished over the past year that you are especially proud of?

I am most proud of the improvements we have made as it relates to some of our internal processes. We have made our processes more streamlined. For example, we have moved to a paperless process when individual faculty are applying for graduate faculty status at CSU. This has made it a lot easier to conduct our affairs. Dr. Ellen Roberts worked with UITS to develop this process.

What are some upcoming initiatives as it relates to graduate education that would be pertinent for graduate students to be cognizant of?

We are in the process of bringing more networking and socializing opportunities for our students. The Graduate Research Conference is an upcoming event that students should be cognizant of. This conference is something that we endorse and it continues to grow. We are really proud of its influence and growth within our region.

How would graduate students go about obtaining additional information about the Graduate Council, receive updates on meetings, or ask additional questions?

Students are welcome to contact me at any time. All of our information as it relates to minutes from past meetings or council member’s information is available on our university website. We have been looking into adding a graduate student representative. We really want to make sure that we are providing quality graduate education here at CSU and want to get students involved in some of our processes. So if there are any issues we would like students to come and address the council.

Do you have any last thoughts that you would like to end on today?

I would like to say to students that faculty members are your best friends. We want nothing more than for students to succeed. So keep that line of communication open with the faculty members within your program!
Upcoming Student Events

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<td>Last Day of Class</td>
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<td>Study Day</td>
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<td>Final Exams</td>
<td>May 6-9, 11</td>
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<td>Graduation</td>
<td>May 11, 6:30 p.m.</td>
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Project Hope (Sponsored by Collegiate 100)

May 1, 12:00pm
Downtown Columbus

Join the Collegiate 100 every 1st and 3rd Friday as we feed and clothe the homeless in the city of Columbus GA. Help us serve our community by giving back to the less fortunate. For more information, contact Ms. Johniqua Williams at williams_johniqua@columbusstate.edu or Willie Pinkney at pinkney_willie@columbusstate.edu, or come by the Collegiate 100 office in Davidson 267.

Columbus State Has a New President

Dr. Chris Markwood, provost and vice president for Academic Affairs, Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, Texas has been named as the next president of Columbus State University by the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia. Markwood will assume his new position on June 1, 2015.

Board of Regents Chair Neil Pruitt highlighted Markwood’s leadership and experience, saying “Dr. Markwood’s credentials, experience and leadership skills position him for a strong start at Columbus State. We welcome Dr. Markwood and look forward to him joining the leadership of the University System.”

University System of Georgia Chancellor Hank Huckaby said, “Dr. Markwood brings proven leadership to Columbus State, which will continue the institution’s growth and advancement. We see a bright future for Columbus State. The campus search committee is to be commended for identifying a strong group of candidates.”

“Columbus State University is well positioned to continue its trajectory of excellence and growth. My family and I are thrilled to join such a vibrant campus and community at such an exciting time,” said Markwood.

Markwood has served at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi since 2011 where he has worked with faculty to develop a 21st century, learning-centered environment while increasing enrollment and student success efforts.

His higher education career also includes serving as the inaugural dean of the College of Arts, Media & Design at the University of Central Oklahoma and as the provost and then interim chancellor at the University of Wisconsin-Superior.

Dr. Markwood holds Bachelor of Science degrees in political science and history from Southwest Baptist University in Bolivar, Missouri, a master’s degree in political science and a PhD. in political science, both from the University of Missouri.

Please visit http://our5thpresident.columbusstate.edu/ for more information about Dr. Markwood and CSU’s past presidents.

This newsletter will be distributed the 1st and 3rd Monday of every month. If you would like your announcement listed, please email the Graduate School office by noon on the preceding Wednesday to have the announcement go out in the following Monday’s Newsletter. Email: ivey_brenda1@columbusstate.edu for event submission and include a brief description of the event, date, time and location.
Preparing for Conferences
By Lindsay Oden, MA Student at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Conferences are absolutely essential to networking, intellectual growth, and professional development. They give you an opportunity to meet your heroes in a venue that invites you to interact with them and get your foot in the door for future opportunities. Many prospective grad students may find a luminary in their field with whom they want to do their Ph.D., while job candidates may be looking for a department to land in after graduation. Conferences give you the chance to make a lasting impression that may be the difference on your applications.

Despite the importance of conferences, I’ve witnessed some grad students making mistakes in preparation that have negatively affected their presentations and probably hurt the impressions they made on the audience. With these errors in mind, I’ve tried to put together a list of ways that can prepare you for conference presentations that will establish your credibility, showcase your talents, and ultimately boost your academic profile. After attending several conferences, here are my suggestions, based on observations I’ve made:

- **Practice, practice, practice:** It sounds cliché, but you would be horrified at how many people didn’t seem to have practiced their presentations before speaking to the conference audience. Many of the presenters exceeded their allotted speech time, and therefore missed out on giving their conclusions when they got cut off by the moderator. Some others made small mistakes that could have been easily fixed before the conference. For example, it’s important to read your work out loud, allowing you to practice tough pronunciations. In one case, I observed a student giving a presentation on Eastern European politics and they stumbled over every difficult name. Unfortunately, these small mistakes can undermine your credibility and turn off the audience’s attention. But practicing in front of a mirror, or with an audience like your roommate, your pets, or your houseplants can help you discover problems with language, pronunciations, word choice, and sentence construction.

- **Audio-visual materials must match up with your presentation and you have to actually use them.** Slapping together a PowerPoint of images somewhat related to your topic is not sufficient; your images should have explicit meanings for your talk. Not only that, you should reference them and make them part of the presentation—explain to the audience why you chose them and why they’re relevant. Waldo Martin from UC Berkeley gave an excellent talk at UNLV in February about the Black Panther Party, during which he played two songs in their entirety for the audience. After the songs finished, he turned to the audience and said that for the Black freedom struggle, “the music was not the soundtrack of the movement, it was the movement.” Audio-visual materials should never be examples of your argument—they should be the evidence that makes your presentation compelling.

- **Work on your “elevator speech”:** You may find yourself face-to-face with a scholar you admire, so have your fifteen-second spiel ready to go. It should be brief (about the length of an elevator ride), but it should also get at the core of your research and why you think this person should care about it. Include a sentence about how it relates to the current state of your field, and then explain why your contribution is important. This might be the only chance you have to convince someone to remember your name so when you speak to them again in the future they will already be familiar with your work, your physical presence, and who you are. If you want to take an extra step, make sure you have professional business cards that you can give out.

- **Ask good questions:** Most panels and presentations reserve time for audience questions. If you want to get noticed, prepare some questions before you even arrive at the conference, or at least outline an issue you would like to raise with the presenters. Presenters may say something intriguing, or you may come up with (polite) constructive criticism, so asking an insightful question is almost as valuable as giving a good presentation yourself. Questions draw attention to you, so show off your critical thinking skills and knowledge of the topic in question (but be careful not to dominate the conversation or give a monologue about your own research—make sure you ask a question with an insightful point). Oftentimes, audience members who asked questions were the first people presenters talked to after the session had concluded. These seemingly insignificant interactions actually make the difference in personal interactions, especially if a presenter you liked can now recognize you as someone who engaged with them.

- **Be ready for tough questions:** You are probably familiar with the shortcomings of your work (or you should be). You understand where your blind spots might be, where you may have overlooked or under-covered something, or perhaps how your research could be improved in its next iteration. If you get a hard question, you should already have an answer prepared, whether it’s about how you plan on improving, why you didn’t think something was relevant to your current work, or how you think you did address it in your presentation (or in a larger project you’re working on). Getting stumped can be embarrassing, so having a response ready can effectively deflect criticism. Moreover, a great response can demonstrate your control of the material and make you look even better.

- **Be confident!** This is your research, you’re an expert on it and you probably have more detailed knowledge than anyone else in the room. Own your presentation, make it something you’re proud of, and then deliver it with a sense of enthusiasm. No one wants to listen to someone who’s nervous or boring talk for fifteen minutes. Audiences want confidence; they want to be shown why your research is interesting. You already think your research is interesting, or you would not have pursued it. Conferences allow you to broadcast why your research is significant and noteworthy, which may help you get into tougher programs, find jobs, and find fellowships.

Most of all, **have faith in yourself.** Conferences are not just about listening to interesting presentations and exploring your field of study, they’re opportunities to market yourself. The best way to make a great impression is to be prepared, not only in terms of your presentation, but also about how you comport yourself around your peers or people you would like to be your peers. Illustrate for them how you are an emerging scholar and someone they should be aware of.

Article was retrieved from Inside Higher Ed. at the following link:

https://www.insidehighered.com/blogs/gradhacker/preparing-conferences