



September 25, 2017

To: The Faculty and Staff

From: Barry Pearson, Provost

Dear Colleagues:

A husband dies. A good friend of the wife says, “Martha, we should write an obit for Jerry.” Martha thinks about it for a minute and says, “Take this down: Jerry died. His boat is for sale. Call 999-080-2210. Serious inquiries only.”

Now, I tell this story as an entrée into none other than a discussion of our next strategic plan. Martha’s story reminds me that, at crucial moments like death (or strategic planning), you cannot predict how people will react. It’s not necessarily the case, for instance, that Martha is unfeeling about the death of her spouse, but she does have this boat to unload. Perhaps, viewed through another lens, Jerry’s boat was really important to him—his prized possession. And to be clear, Martha does say she wants “serious inquiries only.”

Similarly, each of us can react to a college-wide planning process in ways that create unreasonable expectations. Our reactions vary. Some will say, “Nothing will change ... we’ve seen this before.” Or, the opposite expectation, “This plan will solve all that ails us.” I would encourage us to maintain a balanced set of expectations: we need to do the practical things that enable our day-to-day success, while also being unafraid to define our aspirations.

As is the case for Martha, there’s history. It informs her priorities at all times. For Martha, in the case of Jerry’s death, her history may be what motivates her to sell the boat. It’s her practical and yet real concern. For some, within a strategic planning process, the equivalent might be renovating bathrooms, fixing roofs or roads. Such concerns may grow out of a historical or personal experience that says “that’s something we can actually get done.” It may also simply be a way to close off the threat of disappointment.

For others, a planning process might not be anchored by any one overriding concern and, therefore, could spread out among a web of interlocking concerns. And so, it (the plan) becomes an attempt to do everything at once. The danger, though, is that a plan can become overextended—an immeasurable and improbable list of “to dos.” I think it’s important to be realistic about what we can achieve so that we feel we’ve accomplished something strategically important.

At our first campus forum on October 4, we will begin a campus conversation that will continue throughout the year. I can only tell you what I hope happens. I hope we can have a conversation about our future. A conversation that recognizes that there are things we must necessarily do to enable any plan. Here’s my own short list of enablers: create greater professional satisfaction on the part of faculty and staff; maintain our facilities; create processes that unspool the bureaucratic red tape; continue to hire people that make Purchase College an inclusive and diverse place; and, finally, find ways to celebrate and sustain ourselves into the future.

Beyond the enablers, I think the effort to refine our distinctiveness is the most exciting challenge of all. It excites me because, while we are distinct, we will need to sharpen that distinction with greater purpose. I look forward to our conversation in ways that are open and recognize the history, while also enabling us to move forward. But as importantly, we will need to find our truest reasons for existing. Because once the boat is sold, or the potholes fixed, or the bathrooms renovated, there's still the larger question: How should we matter?

---

## Reminder: Upcoming Award and Leave Application Deadlines

- [Junior Faculty Development Leaves](#): **October 2** (to your chair or director)
- [Sabbatical Leaves](#): **October 2** (to your chair or director)
- [Chancellor's Awards for Excellence](#): **October 18** is the deadline for peer review of [Adjunct Teaching](#) nominations. For all other categories, the deadline is **December 1**; the call for nominations will be issued by the respective peer review committee.
- [Faculty Support Awards](#): **November 1** (to your chair or director)
- [Part-Time Teaching Support Awards](#): **November 15** (to your chair or director)

For more information, including the leave application form and application deadlines in spring 2018, please visit the [Faculty Awards](#) section on the Office of the Provost website. Information on awards and leaves offered through the New York State/United University Professions Joint Labor-Management Committees (JLMC) is available at [nysuup.lmc.ny.gov](http://nysuup.lmc.ny.gov).

## Today! Durst Distinguished Lecture Series: Michael Chabon

**4:30–6 p.m., Natural Sciences 1001**

[Michael Chabon](#), the 2017–18 Roy and Shirley Durst Distinguished Chair in Literature, is the bestselling and Pulitzer Prize–winning author of *The Mysteries of Pittsburgh*, *A Model World*, *Wonder Boys*, *Werewolves in their Youth*, *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier & Clay*, *Summerland*, *The Final Solution*, *The Yiddish Policemen's Union*, *Maps & Legends*, *Gentlemen of the Road*, *Telegraph Avenue*, *Moonglow*, and the picture book *The Astonishing Secret of Awesome Man*. He lives in Berkeley, California, with his wife, the novelist Ayelet Waldman, and their children.

## This Wednesday: Neuberger Museum Fall 2017 Opening Reception

**4:30–7:30 p.m.**

Come join your colleagues, students, and friends from the community to celebrate the opening of the **Neuberger's fall 2017 season**. Three special fall exhibitions featuring acclaimed global artists will be on view:

[Romare Bearden: Abstraction](#) (through Dec. 22)

[Janet Biggs: A Step on the Sun](#) (through Dec. 22)

[A Studio in the Gallery: The Playful Universe of Ignacio Iturria](#) (through Feb. 25)

## 2017–18 at the PAC: Celebrating 40 Years

The Performing Arts Center is turning 40 this year, and Interim Director Seth Soloway has planned the anniversary season with a curatorial eye toward honoring its history and prominently featuring the latest cutting-edge projects from artists who have been critical to its 40 years of success.

[The season](#) begins **October 6** with the world premiere of [SITI Company's Hanjo](#), a hauntingly beautiful bilingual production (in English and Japanese) that examines issues of gender, identity, and the roles people play within each other's lives. October will also feature performances by PAC favorites Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, Branford Marsalis, Westchester Philharmonic, and the Purchase Rep's production of *The Crucible*. The PAC closes out the month with a visit from Purchase dance alum **Kyle Abraham** and his company

[Abraham.In.Motion](#), presenting the critically acclaimed *Dearest Home* in the round in the black box theatre on October 20 and 21.

As always, discounted tickets are available for faculty and staff, and a student rush sale is offered for most shows. Also, the annual **one-day student-ticket sale**, when they can purchase \$5 tickets to their top picks in advance, will be held this Wednesday, September 27, from noon to 6 p.m. at the PAC Box Office.

For more information about the PAC and to view the full season schedule, visit [www.artscenter.org](http://www.artscenter.org).

### **Natural and Social Sciences Lecture Series: October 17**

On Tuesday, October 17, at 7 p.m. in Natural Sciences 1001, [Timothy LaRocca](#), PhD ('03 Biology), will present a lecture, **Hyperglycemia Potentiates a Cell Death Shift that Exacerbates Neonatal Stroke Injury**. LaRocca is currently an assistant professor in the Department of Basic and Clinical Sciences at Albany College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences.

### **All Upcoming Events**

Be sure to check the redesigned [campus calendar](#) for upcoming events. You can search it using a range of filters, save and share the events, and add them to your Outlook, Google, Yahoo, or iCal calendars. For events at the Performing Arts Center, you can also check the [PAC calendar](#) and then order your tickets online. (Online ticket sales close 24 hours before each event. To check on the availability of day-of-show tickets, call the box office at 914 251-6200.)