

APRIL 23, 2025

Welcome



Dear Symposium Attendee,

Welcome to Randolph College's 17th annual *Symposium of Artists and Scholars*. We look forward to this event highlighting the wide spectrum of liberal arts outcomes and experiences nurtured here at Randolph College.

The presentations and posters featured during this symposium represent the diverse disciplines we offer and exemplify the learning that takes place every day. Thanks to the dedication of our nationally ranked faculty members, students have opportunities to develop skills through mentorships with faculty as well as partnering with their professors for important research projects.

Randolph College prepares students to engage the world critically and creatively, live and work honorably, and experience life abundantly. Since the College's founding in 1891 as Randolph-Macon Woman's College, this institution has remained dedicated to providing an excellent liberal arts education focused on one student at a time. One hundred and thirty-four years later, our students continue to inspire their classmates and faculty to stretch boundaries, spread compassion, and become significant contributors to their communities.

I thank the members of the Student Scholarship Committee who collaborated on organizing this symposium and the faculty-nominated students who agreed to share their projects. We appreciate the dedicated faculty members who consistently venture outside of the classroom to foster and nurture individual scholars and artists. This collegiality is key in making the symposium the outstanding program that it is today.

I am sure you will enjoy this year's Symposium of Artists and Scholars.

Sue Ott Rowlands

Vita abundantior,

Sue Ott Rowlands

President

SCHEDULE

9:00-9:30 a.m.: Light breakfast and coffee (Quillian Conference room, Student Center)

9:30-10:30 a.m.: Welcome and keynote address (Nichols Theatre, Student Center)

- Welcome and introduction—Dr. Crystal Howell, Director of the Center for Student Research
- Keynote address—Dr. Christopher Hamner, George Mason University, "Critical Thinking Will May Save Us All"

10:45 a.m. to Noon: Poster presentations and exhibits (Hampson Commons)

12:00-1:15 p.m.: Buffet lunch (Alice Ashley Jack Lounge, Smith Hall; RSVP required)

1:30-2:30 p.m.: Session I-Oral Presentations

NICHOLS THEATRE (Moderator: Brad Spendlove, PhD)

1:30 p.m. Elizabeth Bailey '25, Demystifying the Enigmatic: A Close Look at a Selection of Self-Portraits by Gwen John

1:45 p.m. Julia Crider '25, The Optimization of Photovoltaic Systems in Lynchburg, VA

2:00 p.m. Reese Cooper '25, Growing Pains and Moral Gains: The Interconnections of Decision Making

2:15 p.m. Tristan Gregory '25, John Brown and African American Memory

KLEIN BOARDROOM (Moderator: Dusty Abernathy, MFA)

1:30 p.m. Bethany Martz '25, Beyond the Field

1:45 p.m. Estelle Le Floch Fernandez '26, Higher Power and Loving Your Partner

2:00 p.m. Kamaria Clark '25, Below the Surface and Beyond the Silence: How the "Strong Black Woman" Schema and Stereotype Affect Black Women

2:15 p.m. Ethan Caldwell '25, Determining the Presence, Abundance, and Distribution of Potentially Pathogen-carrying Ticks in Lynchburg, VA, with an Emphasis on Confirming *Ixodes scapularis* Identification

2:30 p.m.: Break & afternoon snack

2:45-4:00 p.m.: Session II-Oral Presentations

NICHOLS THEATRE (Moderator: Abigail Moore, PhD)

2:45 p.m. Taniya Jackson '26, Ebony, Embers, and Evergreens: A Triptych

3:00 p.m. Derek Whorley '25, Haruspicy

3:15 p.m. Matthew Parker '26, To Dream of Death's Door

3:30 p.m. Sonia Langhorne '25, Ghosting Trauma

3:45 p.m. Dylan E. Paul '26, Drones

POSTERS & EXHIBITS

Alexander Archinal '27 & Jarad Walker '27, Examining Variation in Photosynthetic Pigments in Salt Marsh Grass and Seagrass

Maeghan Colby-Correa '27, West Indian Manatee: A Plastic Film Waste Collage to Raise Awareness of Global Plastic Pollution

Reese Cooper '25, Not So Fast: The Influence of Auditory Rhythms on the Speed of Perceptual Decision Making

Renee Enzor '25, Beyond the Red Brick Wall: A Semester Spent Abroad in Budapest

Olivia Lorenzo '27, Leatherback Turtle: A Plastic Film Waste Collage to Raise Awareness of Global Plastic Pollution

Kaytlin Moir '26 & James Royall '27, Puffin Plastic Project: A Plastic Film Waste Collage to Raise Awareness of Global Plastic Pollution

Shauna Shepard '25, Testing Mathematica Code to Calculate Coupling Coefficients in Nonlinear Rotating Neutron Stars

Alaina Snider '26 & Gregory Wietrzykowski '26, The Bumpy Ramp Problem

Natalyn Stanley '25, Quantum Mechanical Calculation and Spectroscopic Analysis of Antioxidants Found in Wine

Stephanie Swithers '25, Woven in Isolation

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2025

PRESENTATIONS

Alexander Archinal '27 & Jarad Walker '27, poster

Examining Variation in Photosynthetic Pigments in Salt Marsh Grass and Seagrass

Faculty Mentor: Sarah Sojka, Environmental Studies & Science; Marine Science

Grassy coastal ecosystems, including salt marshes and seagrass beds, are highly productive, critical for coastal food webs, and threatened by human activities. This presentation highlights both within-plant and within-meadow variability in the photosynthetic pigments found in the blades of these grasses. These pigments are both essential for plant survival, as they allow the plant to capture energy from the sun, and are useful as indicators of the health of the plants. Understanding how these plants allocate these pigments provides insight into how they may respond to future stressors, particularly continued sea level rise.

Elizabeth Bailey '25, oral presentation

Demystifying the Enigmatic: A Close Look at a Selection of Self-Portraits by Gwen John

Faculty Mentor: Andrea Campbell, Art History; Museum & Heritage Studies

Gwen John lived a radically independent and creative life; however, her artwork doesn't make this the focal point. Why? Using careful study of John's work, biographical information, and John's own writings, I will provide an interpretation of a selection of John's self portraits. I look at Gwen John's *Autoportrait à la Lettre* (1907–09) and *Self-Portrait* (1902) in conversation with artistic references and counterparts in order to add to the conversation around John's radical identity in conjunction with her relatively traditional art in order to better understand both art and artist.

Ethan Caldwell '25 & Gracie Oliver '25, oral presentation
Determining the Presence, Abundance, and Distribution of Potentially
Pathogen-carrying Ticks in Lynchburg, VA, with an Emphasis on
Confirming *Ixodes scapularis* Identification
Faculty Mentor: Erin Heller, Biology

Ticks are ectoparasites that pose significant health threats to humans and non-human animals. Different species of ticks are capable of transmitting a large variety of diseases, such as Lyme disease. As urbanization continues to disrupt relationships between ticks and their non-human hosts and as more people populate urban areas,

the potential for ticks parasitizing humans is increasing. This project aims to officiate what tick species are present and abundant in urban areas throughout Lynchburg, VA, and to confirm the morphometric identification of *Ixodes scapularis*, a species capable of harboring *Borrelia burgdorferi*, the causative agent of Lyme disease. We employed tick dragging techniques to collect ticks at 5 publicly accessible areas and morphometrically identified the ticks. We used polymerase chain reaction techniques to confirm the morphometric identification of *Ixodes scapularis* ticks. Six species of ticks were collected, predominantly in forested and edge habits, all of which may harbor different diseases.

Kamaria Clark '25, oral presentation

Below the Surface and Beyond the Silence: How the "Strong Black Woman" Schema and Stereotype Affect Black Women Faculty Mentor: Danielle Currier, Sociology

In this presentation, I will discuss findings from my senior research project, in which I conducted interviews with twelve Black women over age eighteen, in the state of Virginia on the topic of how the "strong Black woman" stereotype affects them. I will explain the complex realities that Black women face because of the combination of both individual and structural racism and sexism and describe the ways these women cope with and manage their realities. I will share my perspective on the "strong Black woman" stereotype and address how the Black women I interviewed manage the lived effects of this stereotype. Finally, I will deliver a call to action to support Black women on both micro and macro levels.

Maeghan Colby-Correa '27, poster

West Indian Manatee: A Plastic Film Waste Collage to Raise Awareness of Global Plastic Pollution

Faculty Mentor: Karin Warren, Environmental Studies & Science

This poster is an original work created as a project in the "Marine Plastic Pollution" class. This collage features the West Indian manatee, which has been documented to be impacted by ingestion of and entanglement in plastic waste in our oceans. The collage was created from plastic film waste collected by the MSCI 2210 class —and was contributed by the Randolph community—and hand-stitched on muslin canvas. This piece highlights the West Indian manatee, how plastic waste affects it, and strategies to address global plastic waste.

Reese Cooper '25, oral presentation

Growing Pains and Moral Gains: The Interconnections of Decision Making

Faculty Mentor: E. Blair Gross, Psychology

The current study aims to investigate how both mood and age affect moral decision making. Utilitarian moral reasoning, an outcome-based approach that favors utility for the overall group, has been linked to neutral and positive moods and tends to be favored by adults. Deontological moral reasoning, a rule-based approach, has been linked to negative moods and children. Adolescents' moral reasoning preference is unknown as research results are inconsistent. A sample of adolescents (n=32) and young adults (n=45) were recruited to complete eight total moral dilemmas. Participants completed half before the mood manipulation was randomly assigned, and the other half after watching an emotionally driven video clip (either babies laughing or the death scene from Marley & Me.) It was predicted that adolescents and the negative mood condition would favor deontologicalism; however, results indicate that age and mood had no effect on moral reasoning.

Reese Cooper '25, poster

Not So Fast: The Influence of Auditory Rhythms on the Speed of Perceptual Decision Making

Faculty Mentor: Timothy Patrick, Psychology

Fast auditory rhythms have been shown to alter the subjective experience of time, where intervals of time are perceived to last longer. Research has also demonstrated that perceptual decisions are made more quickly when preceded by a series of clicks. In the present study, participants were asked to complete a mental rotation task in which they had to determine if two 3-D shapes were congruent or incongruent. All shapes were rotated 0, 50, 100, or 150 degrees. Additionally, each trial was presented with either no background noise, or a 120 bpm or 240 bpm clicking rhythm during the task. The results revealed a main effect of the degree of rotation as well as a main effect of the sound type on response times. Participants made significantly faster judgments in the presence of faster rhythms. The results strongly suggest that exposure to faster rhythms promotes faster perceptual processing and decision making.

Julia Crider '25, oral presentation

The Optimization of Photovoltaic Systems in Lynchburg, VA Faculty Mentor: Peter Sheldon, Physics & Engineering

With rising energy costs and an increasing focus on sustainability, solar photovoltaic (PV) systems offer a promising solution for residential energy needs. This research investigates the optimal size and configuration of a solar PV system for a typical home in Lynchburg,

Virginia. By analyzing local climate data, average household energy consumption, and system efficiency, I determined that an 8 kW monocrystalline solar system would best meet annual energy demands. This study also evaluates the financial feasibility of this system, estimating a payback period of approximately 13.94 years and significant long-term savings. Additionally, I examine the environmental benefits of reduced carbon emissions and the challenges that limit widespread solar adoption, including installation costs and roof suitability. This presentation will offer practical recommendations for homeowners and contribute to the broader conversation on sustainable energy solutions.

Renee Enzor '25, poster

Beyond the Red Brick Wall: A Semester Spent Abroad in Budapest Faculty Mentor: Kaija Mortensen, Comparative Philosophy

This visual installation showcases my experiences during the semester I spent studying abroad in Budapest, Hungary, as well as several additional travel destinations. I originally chose Budapest because I didn't know much about the city or Hungarian culture in general. I wanted to immerse myself in a culture very different from my own, and my semester abroad definitely achieved that. I am an Integrative Studies major with concentrations in Psychology, Media & Culture, and Social Justice Activism. I expanded my knowledge on my three concentrations while also getting the amazing opportunity to be admitted into Corvinus University's film program. It was there that I fell in love with film production and photography. My hope is to express the beauty of Hungarian culture and encourage others to travel beyond popular European destinations.

Tristan Gregory '25, oral presentation

John Brown and African American Memory
Faculty Mentors: Connor Kenaston, History & Gerry Sherayko, History

Abolitionist John Brown remains one of the most controversial figures in U.S. history, viewed by different communities as either a terrorist or a holy martyr. His October 1859 raid on the armory and arsenal at Harpers Ferry, Virginia, is widely regarded as a significant stepping stone on the long road to the American Civil War. This paper argues that African Americans have been at the forefront of preserving and commemorating his legacy. While prominent non-Black figures like Henry David Thoreau and William Lloyd Garrison played crucial roles in elevating Brown's memory, particularly in the immediate aftermath of his execution, African Americans have been uniquely unwavering in their dedication to honoring him. Through art, music, and literature, Brown has been fully enshrined in Black historical consciousness.

Modern supporters, whether aware of it or not, are echoing the stance that African Americans have championed for over a century and a half.

Taniya Jackson '26, reading of original work

Ebony, Embers, and Evergreens: A Triptych Faculty Mentor: Danielle Currier, Sociology

This poetic triptych chronicles the strenuous journey of a young Black woman navigating a social landscape marked by profound trials, including the shattering experience of a destructive romantic relationship. The poems explore the complex interplay of trauma and resilience as she embarks on a path toward healing. The first piece establishes the historical context of her struggles, highlighting systemic and personal adversities. The second delves into the emotional wreckage left by the failed relationship, employing stark imagery to convey the depth of her heartbreak. The concluding poem focuses on her nascent journey towards self-reclamation, emphasizing the internal work required to rebuild a sense of self and find solace. It examines the process of reclaiming agency, fostering self-compassion, and cultivating inner strength, ultimately underscoring the enduring power of the human spirit to surpass adversity.

Sonia Langhorne '25, performance

Ghosting Trauma

Faculty Mentor: Kaija Mortensen, Comparative Philosophy

I present a one-woman play exploring how trauma is passed down through generations, not just emotionally but even in our DNA. Blending research on epigenetics with personal experience, this performance examines the lasting impact of grief. At its core is the loss of my son's father. Using AI to recreate his voice, I allow his "ghost" to share his story beyond the grave. This presence helps me process our tragedy and seek closure for myself and my son. This play is more than just my story—it's about how trauma lingers in families, the importance of mental health, and finding healing in unexpected ways. Through personal storytelling and technology, *Ghosting Trauma* sparks conversation, fosters healing, and reminds us that we are never alone in our struggles.

Estelle Le Floch Fernandez '26, oral presentation

Higher Power and Loving Your Partner Faculty Mentor: Danielle Currier, Sociology

Religion plays a grounding role in the lives of many worldwide and is considered a "core" social institution by sociologists. Given that the institution of religion plays a significant role in both societal structures and personal lives, there is a correlation between people's romantic choices and their religious affiliations and beliefs. This is an example of how a major social institution affects identity, personal relationships, and intimate interactions. When one is religiously affiliated, those views play a role in all other aspects of one's life, most noteworthy with one's partnering. In this paper, I use interview data to analyze how and

to what extent religious affiliation plays a role in the partnering and potential or realized success of a romantic relationship. I found that a strong common religious affiliation and common rituals and practices positively affect intimate romantic relationships.

Olivia Lorenzo '27, poster

Leatherback Turtle: A Plastic Film Waste Collage to Raise Awareness of Global Plastic Pollution

Faculty Mentor: Karin Warren, Environmental Studies & Science

This poster is an original work created as a project in the "Marine Plastic Pollution" class. This collage features a Leatherback Turtle, which is impacted by ingestion of and entanglement in plastic waste in our oceans. The collage was created from plastic film waste collected by the MSCI 2210 class (and contributed by the Randolph community) and hand-stitched on muslin canvas. This piece highlights the featured organism, how plastic waste affects it, and strategies to address global plastic waste.

Bethany Martz '25, oral presentation

Beyond the Field

Faculty Mentor: Danielle Currier, Sociology

Mental health is a crucial but often overlooked aspect of an athlete's well-being, affecting their performance and personal life. Issues like anxiety, depression, and stress are common among athletes, yet they frequently lack support or feel dismissed when addressing these challenges. Many student-athletes report struggling with mental health, particularly during the season, but feel uncomfortable discussing it with coaches due to fear of being dismissed or seen as weak. Additionally, they feel they have little time to seek mental health support or worry about being a burden. This research explores how athletes cope with mental health challenges and the impact of these strategies on their lives. It emphasizes the need for better support systems to help athletes manage mental health effectively, ultimately improving their well-being and performance both on and off the field. By addressing mental health openly, athletes could achieve greater success in their careers and personal lives.

Kaytlin Moir '26 & James Royall '27, poster

Puffin Plastic Project: A Plastic Film Waste Collage to Raise Awareness of Global Plastic Pollution

Faculty Mentor: Karin Warren, Environmental Studies & Science

This poster is an original work created as a project in the "Marine Plastic Pollution" class. This collage features *Fratercula arctica*, also known as Atlantic puffins, which are impacted by ingestion of and entanglement in plastic waste in our oceans. The collage was created from plastic film waste collected by the MSCI 2210 class (and contributed by the Randolph community) and hand-stitched on muslin canvas. This piece highlights the featured organism, how plastic waste affects it, and strategies to address global plastic waste.

Matthew Parker '26, reading of original work

To Dream of Death's Door Faculty Mentor: Gary Dop, English

There are many who regard dreams as simple flights of fancy. Others use their dreams as artistic inspirations, recreating tales and stories in the real world. Whether depicting them on canvas or with pen and paper, they express their nighttime tales. Still, some artists get their inspiration from the darkest corners of their minds and the most terrifying segments of their nightmares. These artists have inspired me to take my own terrors and turn them into stories that explore topics I have encountered my whole life: existential dread, monsters and mythology, the primacy of humanity, the danger of knowledge, and others I shudder to write down. The poem I am sharing began with a dream that I had and which I associate with my fear and dread of death.

Dylan E. Paul '26, performance

Drones

Faculty Mentor: Gary Dop, English

This performance is on exploration of humanity from the perspective of a fan of humanity and an objective scientist. Through the characters' observations of humans, I sought to illustrate what we might look like objectively to creatures who share none of our perspectives on how "the world" should be and at the same time give my completely subjective view on how I feel the world should be. This exploration took unexpected turns as I allowed the characters to be who they were instead of who I wanted them to be. In this way, my own beliefs even clashed with my characters, and I found my desire for humanity to be saved was stronger than I knew.

Shauna Shepard '25, poster

Testing Mathematica Code to Calculate Coupling Coefficients in Nonlinear Rotating Neutron Stars Faculty Mentor: Katrin Schenk, Physics

Rigorous testing is needed to verify the accuracy of a system of Mathematica files developed by Schenk et al. (2001) to allow for calculation of coupling coefficients of *r*-modes in rotating neutron stars. The foundational work done by Schenk et al. developed the formalism required to calculate these coupling coefficients, but due to the nonlinear, complex nature of oscillations, extending these calculations to higher orders quickly becomes impractical to complete by hand. The code was completed and tested using theoretical data, but many tests of real data are needed to confirm the validity for calculations. Arras et al. (n.d.) collected data and performed hand calculations for the symbolic coupling coefficients of a real star to serve as a benchmark for the Mathematica code. Testing using constant density star data showed the code is able to accurately calculate spin covariant derivatives, vector field divergence, and first and second order covariant derivatives for scalars.

Alaina Snider '26 & Gregory Wietrzykowski '26, poster

The Bumpy Ramp Problem

Faculty Mentor: Peter Sheldon, Physics & Engineering

Describing motion of a vehicle in one-dimension (1D) is a common situation used to teach motion in general physics. It requires the understanding of the kinematic variables and differential relationships between displacement, velocity, acceleration, and time. In teaching general physics, there are not too many variations on 1D motion problems, and one also finds that it can be surprisingly easy to complicate a problem to the point where it is no longer tractable. On the 2016 Advanced Placement (AP) Physics 1 Exam, a variation to the 1D motion question was asked about a vehicle going down an inclined plane with regular bumps. This engendered many comments because it turns out the question may not easily be answered with the physics learned by a first-year student. Over 7 weeks, we investigated this problem with computational and physical models to determine the motion of a car on a bumpy ramp.

Natalyn Stanley '25, poster

Quantum Mechanical Calculation and Spectroscopic Analysis of Antioxidants Found in Wine

Faculty Mentor: Andrew Walden, Chemistry

Antioxidants are crucial to our health because these molecules scavenge free radicals within our cells. Free radicals can cause damage to a cell's DNA, RNA, and lipids, which can lead to diseases like Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, strokes, as well as irregular heartbeats. In this project, various antioxidant compounds were built, and quantum mechanical calculations were performed using Spartan computational software. In the laboratory, the UV vis spectra and the IR spectra for gallic acid and catechin were obtained. This allowed a comparison between our experimental data and the computational data from Spartan to enhance our understanding of the antioxidant compounds. Quantum mechanical calculations provided the molecules' dipole moment, electrostatic potential map, various types of spectra, the orbitals, and the energy levels. This research allowed for a more complete understanding of the antioxidants studied, and by comparing the two methods the accuracy of the computational method was verified.

Stephanie Swithers '25, exhibit of performance

Woven in Isolation

Faculty Mentor: Claire Hancock, Dance

This piece explores the theme of individuality within a community. Reviewed as "strangely compelling" by its premier audience due to the piece's dynamic relationships and use of abstracted everyday movements, the piece plays with opposition through different forms of connection, displayed in both physical and emotional ways. Premiering on March 8, 2025, for the American College Dance Association Mid-Atlantic Conference hosted by the University of Maryland, it was also performed at the 2025 Randolph College Spring Dance Concert. The piece was choreographed by Stephanie Swithers and features dancers from Randolph College: Ava Baker'28, Reese Cooper'25, Mitchell Ngwenya '25, Stephanie Swithers '25, and Ayani Vincent '27. Beginning in silence, the performance builds into a rhythmic and barren soundscape, later juxtaposing soft, lyrical song featuring piano accompanied by Amazonian tribal chanting. While open-ended, the piece suggests narrative that may leave audience members questioning the coexisting relationship amongst its performers.

Derek Whorley '25, reading of original work

Haruspicy

Faculty Mentor: Gary Dop, English

I first presented my short story "Haruspicy" at the 2025 Sigma Tau Delta Convention. My trip was supported by Randolph College's RISE Grant. At the convention, I was able to meet with many fellow writers and academics and have lively discussions on the many panels. I was so grateful to share my work with fellow writers and artists in such a space. During the writing of this story, I carried a lot of animosity toward retail work and the job market, something many young people can relate to. I've captured this sort of desperation of agency through the protagonist, Amelia, who takes violent action against her circumstances. This is not a pardon of violence but rather a possible result of our vicious economic system.

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

CHRISTOPHER H. HAMNER

Associate Professor, History, George Mason University

Dr. Hamner's teaching interests include war and American society, the individual experience of combat, and the effects of technological change on the experience of warfare. He has served as Lead Historian for two Teaching American History programs in Virginia and Maryland, working with public school teachers to develop more effective ways to incorporate primary sources into the history classroom. From 2014 to 2019, he served as lead historian for the American Battle Monuments Commission's Understanding Sacrifice program, which helped teachers create a unique set of resources to enrich their students' appreciation of the ways the Second World War affected individuals and families.

Hamner's first book, *Enduring Battle: American Soldiers in Three Wars,* 1776-1945, was published by the University Press of Kansas in 2011 as part of its Modern War series. The book examines the changing



experience of ground combat from the War for Independence to the Civil War to the Second World War, focusing on ways that individual soldiers' motivations to withstand the trauma of combat evolved as technological advances recast the battlefield. He is currently at work on two projects. The first, tentatively titled *The Weight of War: American Soldiers in Post-Industrial Combat from Vietnam to Iraq*, picks up some of the themes of soldiers' experiences on the ground, examining the changing nature of battle from the Vietnam War and the 1991 Gulf War to the twenty-first century wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, focusing on the ways that the experience of combat changed on the increasingly asymmetrical, irregular battlefield. A second project, *The Shoals of Defeat: Abraham Lincoln, Union Strategy, and the 1864 Overland Campaign*, explores the connections between politics, popular will, and strategy during the two brutal months of fighting that characterized the Union's Virginia campaign in May and June of 1864.

The Symposium of Artists and Scholars is arranged by the Center for Student Research.

Special thanks

Dr. Christopher Hamner, George Mason University

Dr. Crystal Howell, Director, Center for Student Research

Luisa Carrera, Administrative Coordinator, Center for Student Research

Student Scholarship Committee

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Brenda Edson & Leigh Ann Bush of the Office of College Relations

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Please enter seminar rooms between presentations, and silence cell phones.

Thank you for attending!

