

UMassAmherst

College of Humanities & Fine Arts



HFA Dean's Newsletter | May 2026

Dear HFA Community,

As we reach the final day of classes, I find myself reflecting on all that this semester has brought, the accomplishments, the conversations, the creative and scholarly work that has made our community so vibrant. This issue offers a glimpse of that work, and an opportunity to celebrate some of the many achievements of this academic year.

I am also pleased to share that HFA had a remarkable showing during this year's UMassGives. Thanks to generous challenge support and an extraordinary collective response, **our community raised more than \$140,000** — a significant increase over last year — reflecting 825 individual gifts. This was a good reminder that philanthropy is not just about large gifts, but shared commitment and collective action.

As we look ahead to Commencement weekend, I want to extend my warmest congratulations to our graduating students and to the faculty and staff who have supported them throughout their time here. It is a privilege to celebrate this milestone together.

Be well,

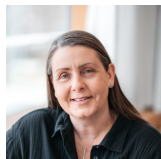
Maria del Guadalupe (Lupe) Davidson
Dean, College of Humanities and Fine Arts

AWARDS & HONORS



HFA Awards Ceremony 2026

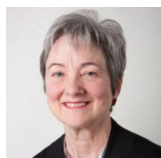
We are pleased to share a look back at the College's inaugural [Awards Ceremony](#). View the full [photo album](#) for a closer look at the celebration.



Laura Furlan Named 2026 ACLS Fellow

Associate Professor and Director of American Studies Laura Furlan has been named the 2026 Carl and Betty Pforzheimer Fellow in English and American Literature by the American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS).

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Alice C. Harris Elected to the American Academy of Arts & Sciences

Professor Emerita of Linguistics Alice C. Harris has been elected to the American Academy of Arts & Sciences as part of the organization's 2026 class of new members.

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Office of the Provost

Five HFA Staff Members Receive 2026 Provost's Staff Excellence Award

Five staff members from across the College were named recipients of the 2026 Provost's Staff Excellence Award: Marc Cameron (Languages, Literatures & Cultures), Pamela Haskins (Art), Kristin Jensen (Theater), Tricia Loveland (W.E.B. Du Bois Department of Afro-American Studies), and Colleen Wetzel (College of Humanities and Fine Arts).

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Joseph Black Named 2026 Provost Professor

Professor of English Joseph Black has been named a 2026 Provost Professor by the Office of the Provost. Black's speciality is early modern British literature, with research interests that fall under the broad rubric of book history.

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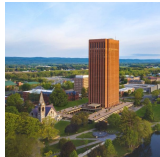
Elizabeth Jacob and Yiyi Luo Named 2026–27 Lilly Fellows for Teaching Excellence

Two HFA faculty members have been selected as 2026–27 Lilly Fellows for Teaching Excellence by the Center for Teaching and Learning: Elizabeth Jacob of the Department of History and Yiyi Luo of the Department of Languages, Literatures and Cultures.

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Shona Macdonald Named 2026–27 Samuel F. Conti Faculty Fellow

Professor Shona Macdonald has been named a 2026–27 Samuel F. Conti Faculty Fellow by the Office of Research and Engagement. During her fellowship, Macdonald's work will be centered on the study of six under-represented Massachusetts woman artists from the 18th and 19th centuries.

[Read More](#)

Jeffery Kasper and Laura Briggs Receive Faculty Distinguished Teaching Awards

Two HFA faculty members have been named recipients of the 2025–26 Faculty Distinguished Teaching Award by the Center for Teaching and Learning: Jeffery Kasper of the Department of Art and Laura Briggs of the Department of Women, Gender, Sexualities.

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Richard Chu Receives 2026 ADVANCE Faculty Peer Mentoring Award

Professor of History Richard Chu has been honored with the 2026 ADVANCE Faculty Peer Mentoring Award recognizing his more than two decades of advocacy and community-building among international faculty at UMass Amherst.

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IN MEMORIAM

Robert Bagg

We are saddened to share the passing of Robert Bagg, professor emeritus of English, who died April 9 at his home in Worthington at the age of 90. Bagg was a member of the English department from 1965 to 1996, serving as department chair and graduate director. A celebration of his life will be held in the summer.



[Read About Bagg](#)

NEW Tiny Spaces, Big Ideas



Plain Plaster Tells the Story of Ancient Master Craftspeople

Professor Hogue explains what plaster fragments tell us about craftspeople who helped build the Bronze Age Palace of Nestor in Greece 3,000 years ago. Enjoyed this episode? Keep an eye out for two more installments on May 11 and May 15.

[Watch the Series](#)



Logan Penney Named UMass Rising Researcher

BFA student Logan Penney (Ceramics, Class of 2026) has been selected as a UMass Rising Researcher. Penney's work integrates sustainable farming and ecological resilience into arts-based research, with exhibitions at the Herter Art Gallery and the Asparagus Valley Pottery Trail.

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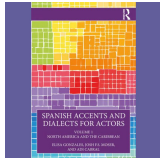
UMass Japanese Program Makes Its Debut at Japan Festival Boston

Faculty and students from the Japanese Program in the Department of Languages, Literatures and Cultures participated for the first time in Japan Festival Boston 2026.

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UMass Students Shine at Harvard's Spoken Russian Olympiada

Six students from the Russian, Eurasian, and Polish Studies (REPS) program represented UMass Amherst at Harvard University's Annual Spoken Russian Language Olympiada in April, earning top honors across multiple categories.

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Elisa Gonzales Publishes New Book on Spanish Accents and Dialects

Published by Routledge, "Spanish Accents and Dialects for Actors" offers an accessible approach to diving into the cultural context, oral posture, pronunciation, and other key characteristics of these complex and layered accents and dialects.

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Alum David Korins '99 Receives Tony Nomination for Best Scenic Design

David Korins '99 has received a 2026 Tony Award nomination for Best Scenic Design of a Play for his work on Dog Day Afternoon, as part of the 79th Annual Tony Awards nominations announced on May 5.

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Ela Gezen Presents Invited Lecture for Germany's TAM Museum

Professor of German Ela Gezen recently presented an invited virtual lecture for the TAM Museum, a Berlin-based nonprofit dedicated to collecting and showcasing transcultural narratives of German-Turkish heritage.

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EVENTS

For a full calendar of HFA Events, [visit our website](#).



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