
Spring 2023 Welcome

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BENNINGTON COLLEGE

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Bennington Community,

Welcome all!

After an unusually warm Field Work Term here at Bennington, we hope that there are at least a few more invigorating and cozy bouts of winter weather headed our way before we welcome the magic of spring in Vermont.

First, I would like to offer an enthusiastic welcome to eight new students, two new faculty, eight new visiting faculty, one new technical instructor, and one new MFA graduate fellow joining us this term. And welcome back to our returning students and faculty. We are ready for the excitement, creativity, and brave intellectual exploration you bring to our beautiful campus.

In January, we experienced an extraordinary loss. Literature faculty member Paul LaFarge passed away. Paul was a generous and attentive teacher and a thoughtful and engaged colleague. He was a powerful source of ideas that invigorated the literary environment at Bennington, and he will be deeply missed. Everyone is invited to [a memorial and tribute to Paul](#) at 7 pm on Wednesday, February 22.

Along with our personal losses, we have collectively witnessed many deeply troubling events across the country and around the world during the winter recess and Field Work Term. Mass shootings in California, the violent assault and death of Tyre Nichols, and most recently, a mass shooting at Michigan State University have left many of us feeling vulnerable, mournful, and uncertain.

On a global campus, as ours is, the continuation of the war in Ukraine and the horrific earthquake in Turkey and Syria are more than headlines. They affect our students and their families. Please accept my personal grief for each of these events along with a reminder to [seek help](#) when you are feeling overwhelmed.

As we lean on one another for support, we also make impressive progress toward a brighter world. Our Field Work Term provides stunning examples of your efforts. Students pursued exciting opportunities, including independent entrepreneurial pursuits, an internship at Arnold Arboretum of Harvard University, work with the University of Utah Astrophysics Department, a collaboration with the New York City Council, and many others. One student worked to build support for animal welfare policies in Karachi, Pakistan, while another built skateparks, while bolstering children's literacy, in Uganda. Excellent work.

While students have been hard at work in the world and faculty have been pursuing their own intellectual inquiries, staff members have been making progress on important initiatives.

Strategic planning is a point of focus. The Steering Committee has developed draft objectives that support each of the six goals and the College's new mission. Together, the draft goals and objectives will be used as the basis to frame community engagement sessions through the first half of the spring semester. We are excited to engage our internal community on Thursday, March 9. Look for an email invite in your inbox for more on these important conversations.

We continue to make important strides in our shared governance work at the College. Our Student Council, Staff Council, and Faculty Executive Committee continue to be partners as we work together to strengthen Bennington. Representatives to the Board of Trustees include Angel Kwasniak (Staff), Sue Rees (Faculty), and Cadence Rose '24 (Student). Thank you to everyone who serves on and contributes to these governing bodies.

The Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion is now offering six-hour anti-racism training to Bennington College departments. The first was Student Life, and they hope to continue to conduct the training throughout the college this Spring. Contact [Xiomara J. Giordano](#) for more information.

In alumni news, the 24 Hour Plays, a virtual benefit for the Nicky Martin Memorial Scholarship for Performing Arts and the Spencer Cox '90 Field Work Term Fellowship for Student Activists at Bennington College, took place on Thursday, February 16. Actors, writers, directors, and producers—including many alumni and friends—gathered to produce a fun and entertaining show. The event is made all the more impressive, because all of the steps, from the initial concept to the final performance, happened within just 24 hours. Well done to all!

And there are plenty of inspiring and thought provoking events to come. Please visit [the calendar at bennington.edu](#) to explore. I am particularly excited about the opening of the [Emilio Rojas Exhibition "Tracing a Wound Through My Body"](#) at Usdan Gallery; the [Women in Data Science Datathon](#); and [Meredith Monk with Katie Geissinger and Allison Sniffin in Concert](#) on March 14. And don't miss your opportunity to audition for a new faculty written and directed show [Unibeauty and Her Wicked Daughters](#).

As always, our [event series](#)—including but not limited to the [Carriage Barn Concerts](#), [Literature Evenings](#), and [Science Workshop](#)—do not disappoint. I highly recommend attending and absorbing as much as you can from these special programs.

This term, you will direct your interests and curiosity, collaborate with other students and faculty, ask deep questions, and take action to make our world more beautiful, democratic, sustainable, and just. Thank you for your inspiring and hopeful work. I look forward to seeing you on campus!

Warmly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Laura Walker". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letter "L" being particularly large and stylized.

Laura Walker
President