



## The Virginia Foundation for Independent Colleges

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### **The Virginia Foundation for Independent Colleges Recognizes Six Outstanding Faculty with Harris Family Faculty Awards**

Richmond, VA – The Virginia Foundation for Independent Colleges recognized the accomplishments of six faculty members from the VFIC consortium of schools for their dedication to higher education and student success on November 5 at the annual **VFIC Harris Family Faculty Awards and Luncheon** at the Virginia Museum of History & Culture in Richmond, VA. During this event the Libby and Hiter Harris Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching (2), the Harris Rising Star Award (2), and the Harris Award for Excellence in Instructional Technology (2) were presented. **Dr. William C. Dudley**, President of Washington and Lee University, was the guest speaker. Dr. Dudley gave remarks about the benefits of a liberal arts education.

The Harris awards were generously created through endowments by the H. Hiter Harris III family. The Harris family endowed these awards to highlight the special features of VFIC colleges and universities by recognizing faculty members “whose professional history reflects a strong, clear and abiding commitment to excellence in classroom teaching within the undergraduate liberal arts and sciences.” Recipients of each of these awards also receive a stipend to support their scholarly research and professional development activities.

**Bartolo Natoli, Ph.D.**, Professor of Classics, Randolph-Macon College and **Helena von Rueden, Ph.D.**, Elliott Associate Professor of Fine Arts, Hampden-Sydney College received the **2025 Libby and Hiter Harris Awards for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching**.

**Bartolo Natoli** is a Professor of Classics and Chair of the Classics Department at Randolph-Macon College. He has a B.A. in Latin, Greek, and Secondary Education from the University of Richmond, a M.Ed. in Adult Education and Training from Colorado State University, and a Ph.D. in Classics from the University of Texas at Austin. More recently, he completed an M.Div from Bexley-Seabury Seminary in 2025 and is an ordained minister in the Episcopal Church. Rev. Dr. Natoli has taught on secondary and collegiate levels for nearly 20 years. In 2019, he was named the Lurlene W. Todd Teacher of the Year by the Classical Association of Virginia. In 2025, he received the Thomas Branch Excellence in Teaching award from Randolph-Macon College. The Rev. Dr. Natoli's 2022 book *Ancient Women Writers of Greece and Rome* was awarded the 2023 Bolchazy Pedagogy Book Award by the Classical Association of the Middle West and South (CAMWS). He is currently at work on a student text-commentary on the Cento Vergilianus of Faltonia Betitia Proba.

**Helena von Rueden** is an Elliott Associate Professor of Music at Hampden-Sydney College. She strives to provide her students with meaningful musical interactions through classes and ensemble work. She founded the Private Music Lesson Program at the college, directs the Hampden-Sydney Music Series bringing musical guests to campus, serves as a faculty advisor to the Unity Alliance and Acousticals a cappella club, chairs the Fine Arts Department and Intercultural Affairs Committee, and teaches an array of classes in music appreciation, history, theory, chamber music, piano, conducting and an innovative course called Music as Social Behavior. As a mezzo-

soprano soloist, Dr. von Rueden has performed most recently with the Central Virginia Masterworks Chorale and the Petersburg Symphony. In her academic research, Dr. von Rueden examines accessible group-singing models as tools for wellness and societal health.

**Scott Starr, Ph.D.**, Hansen Assistant Professor of Biology, Hampden-Sydney College and **Eric M. Trinkka, Ph.D.**, Assistant Professor of Religious Studies and Wolfe Chair of Religious Studies, Emory & Henry University, received the **2025 Harris Rising Star Awards**.

**Scott Starr** is a Hansen Assistant Professor of Biology at Hampden-Sydney College. He completed his Bachelor of Science in Environmental Biology from Millersville University of Pennsylvania, Master of Science in Biology from University of Alabama, and a Ph.D. in Biology from Texas Tech University. Starr is an ecologist whose research uses techniques from landscape ecology, community ecology, and entomology to study aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems and how land use and human activities affect these systems. His current research projects focus on dragonfly and damselfly biodiversity and native bee biodiversity of Central Virginia. He collaborated on the VFIC's "Heat Watch" project, resulting in two tree plantings and two tree giveaway events in Farmville, VA. Starr established the H-SC Apiary in 2024, which allows students and local community members hands-on opportunities to learn about beekeeping and conduct research on honey bees. While at H-SC he has mentored 10 students in research and collaborated with faculty at H-SC and other institutions to further his research.

**Eric M. Trinkka** is an Assistant Professor of Religious Studies at Emory & Henry University. Dr. Trinkka is a scholar of the Hebrew Bible, early Judaism, and the ancient Near East whose research explores the intersections of religion, migration, and mobility. He earned his Ph.D. from The Catholic University of America. Dr. Trinkka is internationally recognized as an expert on the formation and interpretation of Jewish and Christian Scriptures in contexts of mobility and migration. His scholarship emphasizes how the movement and displacement of peoples shapes religious texts, identities, and conceptions of divinity. Dr. Trinkka is a member of the Society of Biblical Literature, American Academy of Religion, American Schools of Overseas Research, and the Catholic Biblical Association, and holds leadership roles in numerous academic conferences and international symposia. At Emory & Henry, Dr. Trinkka holds the Wolfe Chair of Religious Studies and serves as the Chair of the Arts and Humanities Division.

**Jacob Euteneuer, Ph.D.**, Elliott Assistant Professor of Rhetoric, Hampden-Sydney College, and **M. Saif Mehkari, Ph. D.**, Professor of Economics, University of Richmond, received the **2025 Harris Awards for Excellence in Instructional Technology**.

**Jacob Euteneuer** is an Associate Professor of Rhetoric at Hampden-Sydney College. He holds a B.A. from the University of Nebraska, an M.A. from Kansas State University, an M.F.A. from the University of Akron, and a Ph.D. from Oklahoma State University. His research focuses on the intersection between play and writing. His work in writing studies emphasizes the potential for a playful approach to writing as a means for producing more engaging, logically consistent, and stylistically sophisticated writing in academic settings, while his work in play and game studies analyzes how games become rhetorical and produce effective arguments through a combination of algorithmic generation and multimodal composition.

**M. Saif Mehkari** is a Professor of Economics at the University of Richmond. He also serves as the founding Co-Director of Endeavor RSB, the Robins School of Business's premiere living and learning program, and as the Co-Coordinator of the Mathematical Economics program. He earned his Ph.D. and M.A. in Economics from The Ohio State University and his B.A. (with majors in Economics, Computer Science, and Mathematics) from Ohio Wesleyan University. He specializes in macroeconomics with current research focus on understanding the effects of fiscal policy on economic aggregates such as consumption, employment, and educational expenditure. He has published research in top journals including Review of Economic Studies, Journal of Economic Theory, the

European Economics Review, and Review of Economic Dynamics. He currently teaches courses across the Economics curriculum including principles level courses, courses on data analysis and computing, and a course on mathematical economics.

### **About the Virginia Foundation for Independent Colleges**

Established in 1952, the Virginia Foundation for Independent Colleges (VFIC) aims to advance the distinctive values and strengths of the seventeen colleges across Virginia that make up our consortium. We accomplish this mission by generating financial support for our schools – more than \$184 million since our inception. Our goal is to connect academically qualified students with excellent education. Our independent colleges and universities provide a quality education for students who thrive in highly personalized environments. The VFIC provides access to these schools through financial assistance for deserving students, many of whom are first-generation college students.

The Virginia Foundation for Independent Colleges supports the programs and students of the following seventeen leading independent colleges in the Commonwealth: Bridgewater College, Emory & Henry University, Hampden-Sydney College, Hampton University, Hollins University, Mary Baldwin University, Marymount University, Randolph College, Randolph-Macon College, Roanoke College, Shenandoah University, Sweet Briar College, University of Lynchburg, University of Richmond, Virginia Union University, Virginia Wesleyan University, and Washington and Lee University. For additional information on the VFIC, visit [www.vfic.org](http://www.vfic.org).

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