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**To:** [ProvostNotes](#)  
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Good morning!

Here we are with Commencement just a little over two weeks away (or a Fortnight for all you tortured poets out there ). The end of Spring 2024 is shaping up to be busy, but so full of GOOD. Here are a few items to mention:

**Student Art Exhibition:** Our student-artists are kicking off the **Spring 2024 Exhibition** of their works with a reception on May 3 from 3:30-5 p.m. in the Jared Family Atrium on the Springfield campus. I've been admiring the works lining the hallway outside the Academic Affairs office. They are nothing short of stunning.

**Research Poster Presentations:** Then, for something to stimulate the other side of the brain, mark your calendars for the **SUPER Poster Session** on May 3 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. in the PMC. SUPER stands for "Student Undergraduate Presentations of Exemplary Research" and boy, are they ever. Join our student researchers to learn about topics such as antibiotic resistance, green alternatives in sulfa drug synthesis, environmental monitoring, and making elderberries mainstream. Refreshments served.

**Spring Concert:** Join us on May 14 at 7 p.m. at the Spangler Concert Hall at Drury for **Pure Imagination, the OTC Choirs Spring Concert**. Our choirs always put on a wonderful performance!

**Artificial Intelligence Survey:** It's not too late for OTC employees and students to complete the [Generative Artificial Intelligence survey](#) conducted by the OTC AI Advisory Group. The survey closes tomorrow, April 30.

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A couple of months ago, I received a document from Dr. Gary Buzbee, a highly regarded local dentist who established the well-known [Buzbee Dental](#) some 40 years ago. Now (mostly) retired from dentistry, Dr. Buzbee has become an important part of OTC who truly embodies lifelong learning ([here's a 2020 blog post about him](#)). The document he sent entitled, "Three-Quarters of a Century of Perspectives," briefly tells the story of his 75-year journey (Gary celebrated his 75<sup>th</sup> birthday earlier this month). He writes about the "milestones" that shaped his life – education, dentistry, marriage, military service, children, and grandchildren. Gary writes that as he "was preparing to ease on down the road into retirement from dentistry, a couple of remarkable opportunities presented themselves, both of which involved Ozarks Technical Community College." Gary writes about taking his first [VIP class](#) – Creative Writing – in Spring 2019. About the same time, Gary joined OTC as a clinical instructor in Dental Hygiene, while exploring his interest in Plant Science courses. Before he knew it, in August

2023, Gary had completed an associate degree in Agriculture: Plant Science. I remember seeing Gary at Commencement last year, smiling ear-to-ear as he approached the front of the arena to receive his degree from Dr. Higdon. Later, when he got an offer to teach in our Agriculture program as an adjunct, he jumped at the chance. In “Perspectives,” Gary writes about his approach to teaching:

*I didn't want to simply be “the teacher” in the entry level Agricultural Course, I wanted to be more. In the agriculture classes I took, there was always more than the “book” work, or the lab work, or the greenhouse work. Whether it was doing a presentation, soil testing or repotting geraniums, we looked at it through the eyes of agriculture, or quite simply with an agricultural perspective. The point was always made to establish how important and intertwined agriculture is with our society and our country and the world. We experimented, tried techniques new to us and learned how much more there is to agriculture than dropping a seed in the soil or feeding livestock. I did not want to deliver lectures; I want to be a guide, leading students on a journey through the rich tapestry of agricultural history and innovation. I want to guide them from the first farmers in 5,000 BC to modern drone technology and several points in between. I want to foster a spirit of inquiry and exploration, encouraging students to challenge conventional wisdom and engage in informed, enlightened discussions, with or without resolution. I want to hear what they have to say. I want to learn from my students as much as they learn from me, creating an environment where dialogue flourishes and perspectives are valued. In every class, I'm reminded of the power of perspective - how it shapes our understanding of the world around us and informs our actions and decisions. Together, we explore new horizons, broadening our minds and enriching our lives in the process. It's a journey I'm grateful to be on, and I look forward to the perspectives yet to come. I do not think I am asking too much of myself or the students. I grow and become encouraged by them every class. We talk. We listen. We talk some more.*

It's easy to see that Gary tends to his students with the delicate hand of a gardener. He confesses that he suffers from a “glass half full” perspective – but what a treasure for himself and others. Gary’s story is a testament that OTC can be a gift to anyone, whether the highly educated retired dentist or the high school dropout with little direction – and everyone in between.

Have a great week!

**Tracy M. McGrady, Ed.D**

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