

**“The Mission of Christopher Newport University is to provide educational and cultural opportunities that benefit CNU students, the residents of the Commonwealth of Virginia, and the nation” (Vision 2010)**

### **ABSTRACT**

In keeping with the first line of Christopher Newport University’s Mission Statement, I would like to propose a Distinguished Lecture Series (DLS) that would invite (inter)nationally recognized public figures to CNU annually for the purpose of making a presentation (with Q & A) on a topic within the speaker’s area of expertise and of obvious relevance to the CNU and Hampton Roads communities. The purpose of the DLS would be to demonstrate both to our students and community the sincerity and depth of CNU’s commitment to community service and education by (1) creating a public forum for the presentation and discussion of a topic that is of obvious and immediate concern to the greater community and (2) inviting a speaker who has benefited society by virtue of accomplishments in the public arena. Above all, CNU’s DLS topics should have broad appeal and speakers should be knowledgeable, articulate, and engaging.

### **SPEAKERS & TOPICS**

In contemporary society, all too often it is the person who shouts the loudest, provides the best sound-byte, and/or employs the most vulgar and incendiary rhetoric that garners the most attention: the speakers in CNU’s DLS, by contrast – though they may at times spark controversy and debate – will do so by virtue of the quality and relevance of their ideas, not the harshness of their rhetoric. Therefore, speakers should be selected on the basis of their credentials, expertise, quality of accomplishments, and willingness to participate in a public forum. For a list of possible speakers and topics, CNU could employ the services of, for example, The Washington Speakers Bureau, an organization that represents dozens of prominent individuals (many of whom work out of the Northern Virginia/Washington D.C. area) and arranges precisely this kind of event; their speakers include: Christiane Amanpour, Dave Barry, Tom Brokaw, Jimmy Carter, Bob Dole, Sam Donaldson, Newt Gingrich, Rudy Giuliani, Sean Hannity, Colin Powell, Ron Reagan, Tim Russert, George Stephanopoulos, Donald Trump, et al. Of course, this is just one agency representing primarily politicians and members of the media, whereas we could also consider individuals from other areas of society, such as prominent authors, actors/directors, and athletes.

### **STUDENTS FIRST**

I would suggest that a speaker be asked to participate in a seminar-style lecture/discussion with a select group of students and faculty on a topic chosen by the speaker; ideally, the speaker would circulate a list of readings, discussion questions, assignments, etc. ahead of time to maximize student/faculty participation.

### **PROPOSALS**

Because the DLS is for both the CNU and Hampton Roads communities, topics should have broad appeal and speakers should be acknowledged experts in their chosen field. Every department and program at CNU should be allowed to propose a speaker and topic (with supporting information), but no department or program should be allowed to select speakers in two consecutive years. A committee should be formed to consider all proposals and to develop a short list of candidates, which would then pass through an appropriate approval process, culminating with the President of the University.

**SPONSORSHIP**

The CNU DLS will require community support and interaction. Although the Ferguson Center would provide the perfect venue for a presentation and discussion, an attempt should also be made to include local institutions for receptions (or similar activities) depending on speaker and/or topic; institutions could include the Mariner's Museum, Virginia War Museum, Virginia Living Museum, Virginia Air and Space Center, et al. Furthermore, sponsorship would come from corporations, private individuals, and/or the above institutions – in short, any corporation, individual, and/or institution that sees value in entering into a (well-publicized) partnership with CNU to support a lecture series benefiting CNU's students and the community at large. To insure continuity, funding should be sought for a period of at least five years, at which time the series could be re-evaluated and changes could be made. In addition to partnering with CNU for the greater good of the community (and the positive publicity derived thereby), sponsors could be invited to an exclusive reception (or similar event) with the featured speaker.

**ADMISSION**

Ideally, the keynote address would be located in the Ferguson Center's main concert hall and free, but if funds are insufficient we could charge admission (with a discount for students) and have a free simulcast set up in the smaller Ferguson Center theatre (or new Student Union). Other possibilities could include charging a fee and using any profits for student scholarships, community outreach programs, etc.