FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Jeffrey S. Johnson Appointed New Director of ECU Voyages of Discovery Lecture Series

GREENVILLE, N.C. (June 4, 2015) — The East Carolina University Thomas Harriot College of Arts and Sciences has announced the appointment of a new director of the Voyages of Discovery Lecture Series. Dr. Jeffrey S. Johnson, professor and former chair of the Department of English, will lead the acclaimed series, taking over for Dr. John Tucker, who guided the series since its inception in 2007.

“I am honored to have been selected by Dean William Downs as the new director for Voyages, not least of which because of my knowledge of, and enthusiasm for, Thomas Harriot,” said Johnson. “The College of Arts and Sciences and the lecture series are, of course, named after Harriot, whose spirit of inquiry, exploration and discovery are the hallmarks of advanced learning in the natural sciences, mathematics, social sciences and humanities. As a scholar of the historical period in which Harriot lived, I have had the privilege of working with Harriot’s manuscript papers in the British Library. Based on that archival research, I published a paper on Harriot and Donne even before coming to ECU.”

“Further, I want to commend Dean Downs for creating a Voyages of Discovery Lecture Series Committee made up of the Harriot College Distinguished Professors, along with liaisons from the Harriot College Advancement Council. It is a genuine pleasure to work with such an accomplished group of scholars and community partners. Voyages will be better served by drawing upon the collective expertise of these committee members,” said Johnson.

As the incoming director, Johnson sees the series as an established success, but he has goals for strengthening and sustaining its future.

“Building on the successes during the first eight years of Voyages, I want to concentrate on broadening the base of interest and support for the series, both on campus and in the surrounding community. To that end, I will reach out to individuals, offices and departments across campus to locate areas of common intellectual interest and to identify ways in which we can work together,” said Johnson. “Especially in times of fiscal challenge, collaboration is the smart approach for promoting meaningful interdisciplinary discussion and for managing our resources wisely.”

In addition, Johnson said he would invest time in reaching out to the community, both to understand better their hopes for the series and to establish partnerships in the region that will secure the future of Voyages into perpetuity.

“The Voyages lecture series affords us an opportunity for spotlighting the mission of Harriot College and the significant ways in which we assist ECU and serve the region by educating citizens as we create new knowledge,”
said Johnson. “The latest ECU Strategic Plan articulates a three-fold focus: maximize student success, serve the public and lead regional transformation. The speakers we bring to campus for Voyages will complement Harriot College’s initiatives for addressing these strategic directives that include, but are not limited to, creating a School of the Coast, developing global awareness and competencies, designing interdisciplinary programs that combine the Arts and Sciences with the Health Sciences and promoting leadership, all of which underscore the need for a strong liberal arts-based education.”

“I want to acknowledge Alan White – former Dean of Harriot College – who had the vision to establish the Voyages of Discovery Lecture Series. I also want to thank John Tucker, under whose directorship the series flourished,” said Johnson. “Together, Dean White and professor Tucker have made the series the premier intellectual event in eastern North Carolina, enriching the lives of the ECU community and of those across the region.”

The Voyages lecture series has something for everyone, and Johnson said this next academic year would offer exciting programs.

“Whether you are encountering a person or topic for the first time, or exploring a familiar subject more deeply, the Voyages lectures are events that satisfy our wonder and curiosity,” said Johnson.

Johnson began working at ECU as chair of the college’s Department of English in 2010, a position he held through 2014. As a scholar of British Renaissance literature, Johnson’s research focuses primarily on the writings of John Donne (1572-1631). Beginning in October 2014, he became the general editor of “The Variorum Edition of the Poetry of John Donne,” a collaborative project involving approximately 40 international scholars.

“Thanks to Gary Stringer, who was the founder and general editor of the project, and who was brought to ECU as the Whichard Distinguished Professor in the Humanities, the Donne Variorum project is now housed at ECU,” said Johnson. “The project has received considerable funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities, including the current 3-year grant for which I am the principle investigator.”

Using his previous knowledge and research, Johnson will provide direction to the Voyages of Discovery lecture series, now entering its ninth season.

For additional information, or to share your ideas and questions, contact Johnson at 252-328-6378, or via email at johnsonj@ecu.edu. More information on the Voyages of Discovery Lecture Series and Harriot College may be found online at http://www.ecu.edu/voyages or http://www.ecu.edu/cas.

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