

Politics Aside

Political Science and Public Affairs

Spring 2007

Congratulations to Jay Denton (MPA '05, BS '78), winner of "Name the Newsletter" contest.

Greetings from Cullowhee

Message from the Department Head, Niall Michelsen (michelsen@email.wcu.edu)

After all these years of waiting, you are receiving not just one departmental newsletter but two this year. Our department has been busy ever since the fall semester began, with us moving into our permanent home in Stillwell Building just before the first week of classes. We began by leading the campus in its observation of Constitution Day. Our events included a debate between College Democrats and College Republicans over the proper balance between civil liberties and national security. Visiting Professor Oleg Kodolov led a discussion of the Constitution and the Public Policy Institute conducted a campus wide essay contest (won by Courtney Swartwout, one of our majors) on the 26th Amendment that gave 18 year olds the right to vote.

Many of the other out-of-classroom activities were centered on the November elections. These included leading WCU's participation in a national survey of voter registration methods on college campuses. In this role we registered 233 new voters. In October, the fall semester debate between the College Democrats and College Republicans was hosted by the SAGLA organization and drew a sizeable and energetic crowd to the University Center Theater. The election itself generated a panel discussion interpreting the results, led by Dr. Kodolov, involving several departmental faculty. The next week was filled with the visit to our campus of two former members of Congress through the Congress to Campus program. For two days Liz Patterson (D-SC) and Jay Dickey (R-AR) met with students in a variety of settings, and made a public presentation on The 2006 Elections: What's Next?

At the beginning of November Visiting Professor David Liu took a stellar contingent of students to participate in the Charleston (SC) Model United Nations Conference. They performed amazingly well and earned four individual awards (Maegan Cleckley—two; Courtney Swartwout; and Michael Morris) and one team award. Our November also marked the annual Public Policy Institute Summit. This year's topic was timely and important: A Summit on Resolving the Energy Crisis. This event drew hundreds of

guests to a day-long discussion of the local, regional, and global dimensions of this pressing problem. The event had a keynote speech by Lt. Governor Beverly Perdue.

The spring semester was equally busy with a number of initiatives. SAGLA once again hosted a partisan debate in the University Center Theater. Prof. Liu and his Model UN students hosted a conference that brought regional high school students to our campus. The PPI once again hosted its annual American Youth Congress in Asheville that brought together middle and high school students from the region to debate legislation at the local, state, and federal levels. Four students accompanied faculty to Fayetteville for the North Carolina Political Science Association Conference. Chris Douglas presented his research at the conference and won the Association's Best Undergraduate Paper Award for his paper on US Immigration Policy. For the last four out of five years political science majors presented their research at the National Conference on Undergraduate Research. This year four majors attended the event in California.

Meanwhile, in the classroom we are teaching some of the finest (except for you dear reader) students to come along in quite some time. It is a pleasure to watch students develop as scholars and as citizens. Two highlights of every spring are the College of Arts and Sciences Student Awards Ceremony and our (third) annual departmental banquet. It is very gratifying to be able to recognize our students for their achievements and to demonstrate our pride in them.

The banquet and many of the events our students are able to attend are made possible by the generosity of one of our alumni. If you would like to help support and expand these efforts, the insert to this newsletter offers you the opportunity to help us. In case my words have not been sufficient we have invited this year's award winners to write a short note in their own behalf.

2006-07 STUDENT AWARD WINNERS

Outstanding Freshman - Heather Padgett. "I just love politics and figuring out how the government works and what makes it tick. I hope to become a lawyer."

Outstanding Sophomore - Katheryn Ballard. "Studying political science here at Western Carolina University has challenged me to broaden my horizon of beliefs, to critically think and analyze while conducting research, and has enriched my overall knowledge in a wide variety of skills."

Outstanding Political Science Major - Scott Mann. It was an honor to receive the Outstanding Graduate award, especially because of the impact the study of Political Science has had on me. The intellectual rigors Political Science require have forced me to become more inquisitive and analytical in my approach to academics, my kayak racing, and life in general. Political Science and the great faculty at WCU have endowed me with a broadly applicable skillset which I find useful in all of my endeavors."

Harold Rogers Memorial Award - Max Long.

"Studying political science at WCU has been a very enjoyable and intellectually rewarding experience. Overall, I most appreciate the small classes, the quality of the professors and the challenging nature of the political science courses. The department has also been very supportive of my academic and career goals. For example, they have assisted in funding educational trips to Washington, DC and New York City and have enabled me to receive internship credit for an experience working on a political campaign in New York."

Chan Carpenter Pre-Law Scholarship - Courtney

Trumpler, "Studying political science has been helpful to me in moving towards my career goals. It allows me to learn about a variety of different topics and narrow down what interests me the most, in my case it is International Relations. I would have not been able to succeed without the help I have received from the faculty in the political science department, they are willing to work with me on any problems I encounter with my work and are readily available. I have received priceless advice from my professors about future endeavors I would like to take and I will cherish that advice for time to come."

Charles Stevens International Relations Scholarship -

Lisa Cameron, "I am interested in international relations, the continuing effects of globalization/de-colonization upon the state, the future roles of non-governmental organizations, and the problems (and possible solutions) associated with developing countries."

ON TO GRADUATE AND LAW SCHOOL

2006-07 graduates **Ben Hicks, Jeanie Sims,** and **Patrick Kelly** begin law school in the fall. **Courtney Swartwout, Megan Forrest,** and **Clyde Ray** will pursue masters and

doctoral degrees in Political Science. **Ashley Parris** and **Tosh Welch** will enter our MPA program.

NEWS FROM ALUMS

Doug Bailey (BS '93) was on campus in April. He gave the keynote address at the banquet, spoke in Dr. Livingston's class, and talked with groups of students about political science and the job market. **Mary-Margaret Smith** (BS '03) has left the Department of Interior to accept a job as Campaign Manager for a candidate in Fairfax County, VA, who is running for County Prosecutor.

Please share your news with us!

FACULTY ACTIVITIES

Dr. Gordon Mercer has recently returned from a visit to the Philippines in his role as President of the Pi Gamma Mu international honor society. He continues to lead the way in bringing the community to the campus in the PPI summits, and the campus to the community in the American Youth Congress.

Dr. Don Livingston was recognized for his stellar teaching by his selection as one the three Finalists for the 2006-2007 Board of Governors' Teaching Award and he won the Paul A. Reid Service Award.

Dr. Gibbs Knotts continues to serve as Associate Dean of the Graduate School while teaching in the department and continuing his research. He and Dr. Chris Cooper are completing their edited text on North Carolina Politics.

Dr. Chris Cooper continues his strong work directing our MPA Program and maintains a vigorous and productive research agenda with a steady stream of publications.

Dr. Claudia Bryant continues her ascent in the North Carolina Political Science Association. At this year's annual meeting she was elected President of the Association.

Dr. Niall Michelsen stays busy trying to keep up with all the projects and activities the students and faculty are generating. He will be attending the American Democracy Project Annual Meeting in Philadelphia in June.



Meet Todd Collins who will join our department in the fall in a tenure track position. We are very excited to welcome him to our department as our public law professor and pre-law advisor. He has a JD from UNC-Chapel Hill, and a Ph.D. in Political Science from the University of Georgia. Todd comes here already feeling connected to WCU--his father is an alumnus.

MESSAGE FROM MPA DIRECTOR,

Chris Cooper (ccooper@email.wcu.edu)

This year has been an exciting one in the MPA program. Our graduates have continued to prosper and we have a growing number of alumni in important public service positions throughout the state and region. The feature on WCU graduates in the Western alumni magazine two issues ago highlighted some of these alumni. If you did not read this article, please consult the news section of our department web site for a link.

We are working hard to diversify the course offerings in the MPA program to meet current demands. For instance, we are offering a grant-writing class for the first time this summer and an environmental policy class this fall. We have hired a new visiting professor, Sean Hildebrand, to teach in the MPA program.

Department faculty and students once again attended the NC City/County Manager's Association meeting where Jason Coggins received the Whicker scholarship for excellent students who wish to pursue a career in public service. The students who attended met alumni, networked with employers, and gained more information about internships. If you plan to attend this meeting next year, please look for us at the Alumni breakfast.

Our long-standing relationship with the City of Asheville continues. We are fortunate that Jeff Richardson, Assistant City Manager, continues to take time out of his busy schedule to teach our personnel class. Thanks to our partnership with the City, we were able to award a scholarship to Matt Autry, a City of Asheville police officer, and an excellent student.

Our faculty has been very active in public affairs again this year. Gordon Mercer continued his work with the Public Policy Institute, establishing Western as the focal point for policy debates in the region. Chris Cooper (along with a number of graduate students) continues to help local governments conduct surveys and analyze data. Gibbs Knotts worked with students to develop and implement the first survey of businesses in Sylva. Our faculty also continues to publish articles in respected public administration journals, including *Public Administration Review*, the premier journal of public administration. These are only a small sampling of the ways the MPA program is working to improve the practice of governance in western North Carolina.

If you're one of our MPA graduates, please drop me an email to let me know who you are and what you're doing. I'd love to hear from you. If you're in a position to work with one of our interns, please let me know that as well. Finally, we believe that the best advertising for our program is word of mouth, so if you know any quality

people who are considering a career in public service, please ask them to consider our program.

GIVING OPPORTUNITIES

- **C. Don Livingston Scholarship:** This scholarship is not yet fully endowed. We are \$5,000 away from being able to award this scholarship to a graduate student.
- **Chan Carpenter Scholarship:** An endowed scholarship awarded to pre-law political science students.
- **Charles Stevens Scholarship:** An endowed scholarship awarded to a political science student interested in international relations.
- **Political Science/Public Affairs Development Fund:** We use the money from this fund to support initiatives we cannot afford with our departmental state budget funds. *Our primary goal is to enhance the educational experiences of our students and prepare them for life after WCU. Further enrichment of our faculty through their participation in academic research, conferences, and workshops has direct benefits to their students.* Listed below are some areas we would like to improve upon (with your support) and some we have already implemented but would like to be able to expand upon (again, with your support these will be possible).
 - ✧ **Chan Carpenter Library.** Did you know this existed? It's a designated room in Stillwell filled with books and journals and used as a seminar/meeting/study room. This room desperately needs furnishing! Contributions will be used to purchase a seminar table and chairs (estimated cost \$3,630) and sturdy book cases (estimated cost \$3,700).
 - ✧ **Student Enrichment.** Contributions will be applied to sponsor student attendance and participation in academic conferences (e.g., NC Political Science Association annual meeting; Southern Political Science Association annual meeting), and to academic competitions (e.g., Model UN; North Carolina Student Legislature), and to travel to visit political locations (e.g., Carter Presidential Library; Washington, DC; Raleigh, NC) and to visit regional law schools. (This also involves faculty traveling with students.)
 - ✧ **Faculty Development.** Contributions will support faculty attendance and participation in academic conferences, professional meetings, and workshops and to conduct research.
 - ✧ **Departmental Modernization.** Contributions will assist in replacing worn, 1960's desks and chairs with working, functional furniture that will better enable us to provide quality service to students and create a positive working environment that would further enhance retention of faculty and attract new faculty

If you have questions about a scholarship, making a gift, or want to start your own scholarship, contact Brett Woods, Director of Annual and Special Gifts, email bwoods@wcu.edu.



Spring banquet in the West Wing of Dodson Dining Hall. Left to right: Student Josh Dees; background, student Patrick Kelly; alumnus Doug Bailey; professor Gibbs Knotts.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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We hope you will visit us. Please let us know your plans.

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OUR CONTACT WITH YOU

We are interested in establishing an Alumni ListServ that will allow us to keep you informed of significant departmental activities via email. Please fill out the information form below and indicate your interest in being included on our Alumni ListServ (mail to the department).

____ Yes, I would like to be on the Alumni ListServ. Here is my email address:

Please make the following corrections to my mailing address:

NAME - PLEASE PRINT