News From The Chair

The New Chair’s ‘Welcome’

Welcome to the 2008-2009 edition of The Polity, the annual newsletter of the Department of Political Science at Stetson University – your Alma Mater. This is my first contribution to the newsletter as Chair of the department, a position I assumed in August of 2007.

Some of you reading this may not know me, since I was hired back in 1992. That year, Wayne Bailey was still Chair of the department and Gary Maris was Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences. I came to Stetson from Boston, where I had been adjunct teaching in the Social Studies Honors Program of Harvard University, and in the Political Science Department of Northeastern University, while at the same time writing my PhD dissertation for Columbia University. My academic specialities are Latin American politics (especially Brazil), democratic theory and practice, and international political economy.

I was the ‘new kid’ in the department for fifteen years. During that time, Dr. Maris came back into the department in 1998, Dr. Bailey handed over the department Chair position to Dr. Hallum who held it for twelve “too long” years, and just last year we hired a new ‘new kid’, department alumnus (1994), Dr. David Hill. Also last year, Dr. Huskey won Stetson’s most prestigious teaching honor, the McEniry Award for Excellence in Teaching; and Dr. Maris won the newly-established John Hague Teaching Award presented by Stetson’s Phi Beta Kappa chapter. In previous years, Drs. Hallum and Bailey were awarded Hand Community Impact Awards for their respective work in Central American reforestation and with the American Lung Association.

Meanwhile, Stetson University was one of nine institutions of higher education in Florida to secure a placement in the new edition of the well-known Fiske Guide, self-described as being “devoted to the top 10 percent of colleges and universities in the nation.” Special mention as one of Stetson’s particularly “strong” programs: your Department of Political Science, of course!

In the past five years, we have seen our number of majors rise by 50 percent. This year, we are the number one declared major for the incoming freshman class of 2012.

And we just found out that two of our recent graduates, Amanda Bartholomew and Joshua Miller, had their senior research included in the Spring 2008 edition of The Pi Sigma Alpha Undergraduate Journal of Politics, published and distributed nationally by the premier Political Science honors society. This is the first time the department has submitted papers to the journal.

So your Alma Mater is alive and quite well in this, the 125th year of Stetson University (1883-2008).

Some of you may have heard that Stetson’s president for the last twenty-one years, Dr. Doug Lee, will step down at the end of this year. Closer to home, I am sorry to say that Dr. Gary Maris will also be retiring this year after over forty years of service to this university. Those of you with fond memories of Dr. Maris and his impact on your education please feel free to send some of those to me (wnylen@stetson.edu) so that I may include them in a special retirement celebration; or simply send them directly to the man himself (gmaris@stetson.edu). All of you should enjoy Dr. Maris’ essay of remembrances included in this newsletter.

Please keep in touch. We will be updating an alumni page on our department website, and we want to include you. Also, when and if you ever make it back DeLand’s way, please come and visit us here on the third floor of Elizabeth Hall. Call your favorite professors and invite them to lunch! And as you admire the new classrooms and the new décor in the office, remember that a good part of it all was made possible from your contributions as alumni and friends of the department. We thank you for those gifts, and we wish you all the best in your ongoing pursuit of the ideals and dreams that, hopefully, we had some hand in nourishing.

In closing, here’s hoping that all of you are putting your political science skills to work in this momentous election year, analyzing, debating, voting (!), and otherwise participating in this wonderful world of politics.

Sincerely,

Dr. William R. Nylen, Chair
THE LITTLE DEPARTMENT THAT GREW
By Dr. Gary Maris

When I graduated from Stetson in 1962 there was no Political Science Department, only the Department of History and Politics. When I returned in 1965 after receiving my doctorate I discovered a newly created Department of Political Science which consisted of one person – Dr. T. Wayne Bailey – and about 10-12 majors. Forty-three years later the number of majors had grown to over 100, and the number of faculty had grown to six. The Department had become the second largest in the College of Arts and Sciences and one of the largest in the University. Not only does it now contain over 100 political science majors, but the growth years also added an International Studies major which now includes over 30 students. In addition, faculty became closely connected to, and often responsible for, the Russian Studies and Latin American Studies programs, thus increasingly responsible for advising and working with students beyond the traditional political science students.

We now have faculty well-versed in practical politics, the politics of Russia and the former states of the Soviet Union, Latin American politics, environmental politics, statistical analysis techniques, American politics, and other sub-fields in political science. It has become a faculty from which we can constantly learn new ideas and information from each other. It is a faculty that is extensively involved in the affairs of the University whether it is the Faculty Senate, one of the interdisciplinary programs, the present search for a new president for the University, or the new curriculum debates and developments. Thus, it is a faculty from which each of us can draw inspiration and ideas. It is a faculty which has helped fuel the interest in other cultures since four of the six faculty speak and study in a second language and share experiences of travel and study abroad. It is a faculty whose members have garnered university and college-wide awards in teaching, research and community service, hence not losing track of the basic mission of teaching and concern for students and the communities within which we live.

The quality of the departmental majors was substantially good even when just a hand-full. For example, George Edwards and Bill Mischler, who graduated in the 60’s, went on to become internationally recognized scholars. With the increase in numbers, we have had the pleasure of working with students of equally high academic quality as in the past, but now in greater numbers. Recently, for example, we hired one of our former students, David Hill, out of a competitive process involving dozens of top-notch academics. Two of our graduates from last year will have their senior research papers published in a highly respected national journal for political science students and one of our graduates, Greg Nolan, received the nationally highly competitive Truman scholarship (only 50 throughout the entire United States). Each year students go to highly selective law and graduate schools. One of our former students from the early years was Volusia County Manager, Larry Arrington, and last year a more recent graduate, Michael Pleus, became City Manager for Deland. Some have become outstanding politicians like Jack Latvala who was majority leader of the Florida Senate and Joe Negron who was a major figure in the Florida House of Representatives. The best part is that all of these are only the tip of the iceberg of outstanding students who have enriched the academic lives of all of us on a scale that could not have been imagined in the tiny department of 1965. The department has now evolved into one of the core elements in the overall excellence of the University.

A personal note: I have considered myself to be quite fortunate in that I have been able to pursue my love for academic study and teaching with colleagues whom I truly enjoy and students who have constantly renewed my confidence in the generations to come. For my first 20 years, I shared the department with a person who was friend and intellectual companion and stimulus to me – Wayne Bailey. Beginning in the mid-eighties, the collegiality and intellectually stimulating environment was expanded with the arrival of Anne Hallum, Gene Huskey and then Bill Nylen. Our most recent new faculty member, David Hill, already is reminding me of the “fire-in-the-belly” of new faculty and how it enriches even an already rich environment. It makes me almost not want to retire; but, then, old blood needs to make room for new blood from time to time. Aristotle emphasized the importance of friendship in one’s life. My four decades in the Political Science Department have been decades of warm friendships with colleagues and students. The memories of these years will fuel my satisfaction of life for long after I retire.
The 38th Annual Floyd M. Riddick Model United States Senate to be held March 12-14, 2009

This year we will celebrate the 38th Annual Floyd M. Riddick Model United States Senate. The event will have a new addition thanks to former student director William B. Collum ’08 and recipient of the 2008 Amory Underhill Award. His generous donation of a beautiful banner (seen below) will be showcased in March on the presiding lectern of the Model U.S. Senate. In addition, William also included a provision in his estate for an endowed fund benefiting the Floyd M. Riddick Model United States Senate. Anyone interested in contributing to this fund should contact Ms. Kate Pearce, Director, Annual and Planned Giving at 386-822-7461 or kpearce@stetson.edu.

THANK YOU William for your service and dedication to the Floyd M. Riddick Model United States Senate.

William B. Collum, Political Science Major Martin Zahn, and the Dean of Arts and Sciences Grady Ballenger.
Alumni Notes

Class of...

2008
Zekiah Wright is working for the Department of Veterans Affairs in Orlando, Florida.
Erin Lea is attending Stetson Law School.
Alesia Sedziaka is attending the University of Arizona Graduate School in Political Science, a Ph.D. program.
Ana Jachymiak is working at Rechel & Harriman P.A. a law firm in Tampa, Florida.
William S. Barth spent his summer in Dubai, United Arab Emirates working for Suez Energy International in their Legal and Human Resource Departments. He is currently attending Stetson pursuing an MBA.
Pamela Silverman is attending law school at Nova Southeastern University’s Shepard Broad Law Center.
Pamela Freeman is working as a Financial Advisor for J.P. Morgan Chase in Orlando.
Amanda Bartholomew is teaching English in the Bilingual Program within the Ministry of Education in Madrid, Spain.
Melissa Curran is attending Stetson University working on completing her MBA while working at NASC as in intern in their Diversity Affairs Department.
Steven Richardson took a semester off before beginning Stetson Law School in January 2009.
Morgan Davids relocated to Atlanta, Georgia after graduation and is currently a Sales Professional with Bloomingdale’s hoping to get into management or a buyer position.
Brittany Green is attending Stetson Law School and hopes to practice in the field of elder law.
William B. Collum is a file clerk for Carlton Fields Attorneys at Law in Tampa, Florida, and will be attending Stetson Law School in fall 2009.

2007
Melissa Pancost is currently working with Teach for America.

2006
Matthew H. Morton attended Oxford University in England and finished his Masters in Evidence Based Social Intervention and was invited to stay and continue for a joint-DPhil with the Department of Social Policy and Social Work and Said Business School.

2002
Louis Barbieri, III is an Associate at Morris, Manning & Martin, LLP in Atlanta, Georgia

1997
William R. Moore Co-Chair of Orlando ACORN’s Anti-Foreclosure Committee.

1994
Robert "Jake" Bebber is serving in the Navy in Afghanistan.
Matthew H. Greeson is City Manager, Worthington City Administration, Worthington, Ohio.

Please keep the department updated by emailing the Political Science Administrative Assistant, Gail Lenkiewicz at glenkiew@stetson.edu with news and or changes in your email address.

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