On April 23, 2010, the Department of Political Science held its annual Recognition Dinner at the Egan Research Center. As in past years, we celebrated the accomplishments of our undergraduate and graduate students, and we honored an accomplished leader in public service.

This year, the Keynote speaker and recipient of the Distinguished Public Service Award was Dolores Mitchell, the Executive Director of the Group Insurance Commission (GIC). The GIC oversees the health insurance system for state, and many local, government employees. Ms. Mitchell has served in this position since 1987, through the administrations of six different governors. Under her leadership, the GIC has been credited with holding down health care costs in a very difficult environment.

Originally appointed by Governor Dukakis, Ms. Mitchell was introduced at our event by now-Professor Dukakis. During her keynote address, she spoke of the many challenges in the health care field as well as the challenges – and benefits – of public service. She recounted beginning her political career in state politics as the cabinet secretary for Governor Dukakis in his first term. It was an added plus to hear the Governor and Mrs. Mitchell recall their early days of public service together.

In addition to our keynote speaker, a number of students were recognized at the event. The Outstanding Senior in Political Science Award was given to two students: Jacqueline Normandin and Brendan Rigby. The Outstanding Senior in Experiential Education was given to Ina Spaho. Christopher Cunningham won the best paper award for graduate students, and Dan Doyle won the paper award for undergraduate students. In addition, 26 students were inducted into Pi Sigma Alpha, the national honorary society for political science.

This fall, the Master of Public Administration (MPA) Program continued a pattern of substantial growth which had begun with the Fall 2009 semester. The entering Fall 2010 class of 62 students is the largest for the program since the late 1980s.

Two factors seem to account for this growth. First, as a professional degree, the MPA Program has always had a counter-cyclical nature when the economy falters. Many people see weak economic times as an opportunity to enhance skills that will improve employment options when the economy inevitably improves.

Second, and we think more significant, is the addition of the online program. Since the fall of 2009, we began accepting online MPA students and offering any student the opportunity to take an online course. We started with three online courses in that first fall, and have grown steadily since. This fall we are offering five online courses, and all but one is at capacity. Of the 61 entering students, 26% reported in their application that they plan to take online courses only. Further, 52% of new students reported that they intend to take a mix of online and traditional classroom courses. The development of online classes clearly has had a major impact on the MPA Program. Moving forward, a major challenge will be developing the capacity to sustain this growth while maintaining the high quality of instruction that has always been an essential part of the program.

The Outstanding Senior in Experiential Education was given to Ina Spaho. Christopher Cunningham won the best paper award for graduate students, and Dan Doyle won the paper award for undergraduate students. In addition, 26 students were inducted into Pi Sigma Alpha, the national honorary society for political science.
A Note from the Chair...

This past year has been busy, particularly at the college level. As noted in the Winter 2010 edition of Political Science News, college restructuring has moved Political Science into the new College of Social Sciences and Humanities (see page 4). There were many meetings and discussions over the past year as part of this transition. A new college constitution was approved and a new governance structure established. On September 1, the new dean, Georges Van Den Abbeele, joined Northeastern.

I’m optimistic for the new college. With a smaller size and more focus around social sciences and humanities, I think there will be many opportunities for our Department to work closely with others in the new college.

Within the Department, one of the biggest changes is the dramatic increase in graduate enrollments, particularly in the MPA Program (see cover). Over the past year, from spring 2009 to this coming fall 2010, the program has almost doubled in size. A dip in the economy accounts for part of this increase – during difficult economic times people often turn to education as a strategy to find new jobs – but another major factor is the new online program. This has significantly expanded the market for our MPA program.

Spring 2010 Events

President’s Day Lecture

On February 17, Professor William Crotty, the Thomas P. O’Neill Professor of Public Life at Northeastern, gave the 13th annual President’s Day Lecture. The title of his talk was: “Barack Obama: A Transformative President?” Professor Crotty’s short answer to his own question was ‘no.’ President Obama’s policy focus has been less successful in the world of legislative politics and creating a transformative presidency. Professor Crotty concluded that Obama’s non-ideological, centrist approach has not been effective in building bipartisanship across Congress. Given President Obama’s reliance on a Democratic majority in both houses of Congress, the upcoming midterm elections will be critical to the future of his administration.

NU Research and Scholarship Expo

The Department of Political Science again had a strong turnout of faculty and students participating in the NU Research and Scholarship Expo on March 24, 2010. Of special note are Krista DeNofrio’s (MPA’10) exposition titled “Nanotechnology in the EU: Applying German and UK Approaches towards Chemicals Regulations” and Brandon Rigby’s (BA’10) “You Built It; They Never Came: The Underutilization of the Iraqi Special Immigrant Visa,” both of which won awards in the graduate and undergraduate Business and Social Sciences categories respectively. The following is a list of other Political Science students and faculty who participated in the Expo this year:

“Big Government for Small Technology: European regulation for nanotechnology” - Professor Kirsten Rodine Hardy

“Egypt and the Muslim Brotherhood: Human Rights and Human Wrongs” - Kimberly Jones (PhD Candidate)

“Empowering Democratic Citizenship: The Welfare State as Constitutional Rights and Government Spending” - Professor Michael Tolley

“Governing an Emerging Technology: Anticipatory Policymaking and Nanotechnology” - Rob DeLeo (PhD Candidate)

“Patterns of Path Dependence in Shaping National Research and Development Policies” - Johannes Eijmberts (PhD Candidate)

“Regimes, Norms & Moral Progress in International Relations” - Professor Denise Garcia

To learn more about the Expo or any of the above research projects please visit www.northeastern.edu/expo/.
PhD Student Studies Punjabi in India

This past summer, I had the opportunity to live in India and learn Punjabi as part of the U.S. State Department’s Critical Languages Scholarship (CLS) Program. Through CLS, graduate and undergraduate students undertake critically-needed foreign languages by traveling to, and living in, the regions of the world where they are spoken, including locations in the Middle East, Russia, East Asia and South Asia.

In my case, I applied and was accepted to study Punjabi in Chandigarh, the capital of Punjab. I attended daily language classes taught by native Punjabi instructors and I lived with a Punjabi family. I often put my Punjabi skills to the test outside the classroom: hailing an auto-rickshaw, shopping at the market, ordering food at a restaurant.

I elected to go to India to learn an Indic language in part because of my general interest in ethnic conflict, and more specifically, my interest in the rivalry between India and Pakistan. The tension between the two is especially pronounced in Punjab, where in 1947, the partitioning of the Indian subcontinent effectively cut the province in half, leading to the slaughter of thousands.

In a limited sense, I witnessed these charged emotions when I visited the border town of Wagah, site of the only road crossing between Pakistan and India. There I attended the nightly “lowering of the flags” ceremony. Sitting among thousands of Indian spectators, I watched as the soldiers “stationed” at the crossing marched into view. One by one, they charged theatrically toward the crossing point, coming face-to-face with Pakistani soldiers at the gate separating the two sides. Much to the delight of the crowds on both sides, each soldier, only steps away from his counterpart, gestured menacingly at the other. At ceremony’s end, each side lowered its national flag. However, each was careful not to lower it any faster than its rival, as it would bring great shame if one’s flag were lowered while the other’s still flew.

Punjab is also the homeland of the Sikhs, the ethnic/religious group who, despite living alongside Hindus for centuries, waged a separatist campaign against India in the 1970s and 80s. Punjab today is largely peaceful, but the memories of violence and terror still linger. There was much I was able to learn from those who lived through the conflict, a valuable opportunity for someone interested in conflict studies and conflict resolution. My host father, for example, described in striking detail the curfews, road checks and police presence common during that time. Outside the Golden Temple in Amritsar, shopkeepers eagerly presented books and photographs of the military’s attack on Sikhism’s holiest shrine more than twenty-five years earlier. Hindu Punjabis, meanwhile, recounted their fear of being forced to choose between being Punjabi and being Indian.

Having this type of access to those who lived through the conflict – as well as the ability to speak to them in their native tongue – boosted my knowledge about Punjab and India. More generally, it improved my understanding of ethnic conflict and strategies to reduce such conflicts. Perhaps most importantly, it allowed me to work on my speaking and listening skills in the critical language I have become determined to master. In professional and in personal terms, learning a new language through CLS was one of the most exciting and important experiences of my life. That, along with a little Punjabi, is what I learned this past summer.

-Christopher Cunningham (PhD student)
Another Award Winning Year for Northeastern’s UNA

The United Nations Association (UNA) of Northeastern wrapped up another successful year in 2009-2010, emerging as national champions in the Model Arab League program, and bringing over 600 high school and middle school students from the Greater Boston region to Northeastern’s campus for several Model United Nations conferences.

The UNA began the year by attending the Boston Area Regional Model United Nations (BARMUN) conference at Boston University. At this conference, NU captured the Best Small Delegation award, and Khalid Lum (Class of 2011) received the Best Crisis Delegate Award for the second year in a row.

Another highlight for Northeastern’s UNA was winning two Honorable Mention awards at the prestigious Harvard National Model United Nations conference, one of the largest Model UN conferences in the world.

The UNA is also very active in Model Arab League. During the fall 2009 semester, UNA welcomed students from 14 universities throughout the region for the Northeast Regional Model Arab League (Nermal). Highlights from the spring 2010 semester include: winning awards in every committee and an Outstanding Delegation award overall at the Southeast Regional Model Arab League Conference, and taking home the top award in 7 of 8 committees as well as winning the Overall Outstanding Delegation award at the National University Model Arab League in Washington, D.C.

Northeastern’s UNA also hosted several events for area middle school and high school students. The Boston Middle School Model UN (MSMUN) was hosted in partnership with the United Nations Association of Greater Boston (UNA-GB) in November. At this event, over 200 middle school students engaged with UNA members to learn about diplomacy and international relations in a hands-on, experiential setting. In the spring, Northeastern hosted two high school Model United Nations conferences – the Boston Invitational Model UN and the Boston Regional Model UN. Both of these conferences were a great success, and planning has already begun for next year’s events.

-Matthew Cournoyer (Class of 2012)
Senior Capstone Publishes Online Journal about Bush Presidency

Led by Professor Michael Tolley, twenty-eight students in a section of the Senior Capstone course this past spring explored the major areas of scholarship in political science by focusing on the presidency of George W. Bush. Why Bush? President Bush was in office at the time these seniors commenced their studies in political science. Most were preparing their college applications when President Bush won reelection in 2004, and most began as freshmen in fall 2005 when criticism mounted over the Bush Administration’s handling of Hurricane Katrina and the insurgency in Iraq.

These students were then given an opportunity to research and write their own study of an aspect of the Bush presidency. The fruits of this research were published in an online journal called Student Pulse (See Years of Tumult: Retrospective Analyses of the George W. Bush Presidency at www.studentpulse.com).

This spring’s Senior Capstone course gave these students who ‘came of age’ during the second half of the Bush years an opportunity to assess the legacy of the Bush Presidency and then share their work with a wider scholarly audience.

Professor Crotty Organizes “Promise of Democracy” Series

Professor William Crotty, Thomas P. O’Neill Chair in Public Life, hosted several speakers in spring 2010 as part of the “Promise of Democracy” Speakers’ Series. The Democracy Series brought outstanding academicians to the Northeastern campus to discuss key processes and problems of democratic development around the world. Presenters from this past spring included:

• Jerome M. Mileur, Professor Emeritus of Political Science, University of Massachusetts at Amherst. A scholar of the presidency, Professor Mileur spoke on “Policy, Constituency and Performance in the Obama Presidency.”

• John C. Berg, Chair of the Department of Political Science at Suffolk University. An expert in political parties, elections, development and environmental issues, Professor Berg spoke on “The Politics of a New Presidency: Barack Obama in Year One.”

• John D. Spence, Jr., Professor of Political Science and Associate Dean of the College of Liberal Arts at the University of Massachusetts at Boston, spoke on “Emerging Democracies in Contemporary Central America.”

• John Allen Peeler, Presidential Professor of Political Science Emeritus, Bucknell University, gave a talk titled, “Comparative Politics of Democracy and Global Hegemonic Influence: Prospects for Democracy as the West Declines.”

Faculty Updates

Professors Michael Dukakis and John Portz completed their study of public leadership and management. Titled Leader-Managers in the Public Sector: Managing for Results, their book was published this summer by M.E. Sharpe. Dukakis and Portz identify six major practices of successful leader-managers, based on their in-depth interviews with seven leader-managers in the public sector.

Other recent book publications include:

• Professor Amilcar Barreto completed his study of nationalism, titled Nationalism and Its Logical Foundations, published by Palgrave Macmillan (2009).

• Professor William Crotty completed an edited volume on the recent presidential election, titled Winning the Presidency, 2008, published by Paradigm Publishers (2009);

• Professor William Miles, with his son Samuel, wrote a book that borrowed from his own memoirs, titled My African Horse Problem, published by University of Massachusetts Press (2008);


• Finally, we are proud to report that Professor Eileen McDonagh’s book, The Motherless State: Women’s Political Leadership and American Democracy, published by the University of Chicago Press (2009), won the 2010 David Greenstone Award for the best book published in the field of politics and history from the Politics and History Section of the American Political Science Association.

A Long-time Friend of Niger

Professor William Miles’ relationship with Niger began when he served as a Peace Corps Volunteer from 1977 through 1979. More recently he and a group of students created the African Borderlands Community Development – Politics of Developing Nations (ABCD-PDN) project. ABCD-PDN allows Northeastern students to research, create, and implement small development projects to aid villages in Niger and Nigeria. One of their most recent activities was with Friends of Niger (FON), which Professor Miles discusses below.

Pop Quiz: What’s the first goal of the Peace Corps? (Answer: assisting other countries in their development) What’s the third goal? (Answer: educating Americans about these other countries) How do you combine goals one and three? (Answer: read on)

Thanks to a $500 grant from FON, matched by the Department of Political Science and individual donations, students in my Development Administration and Planning course have designed and funded a real-life development project for a village in Niger. The students, most of whom had no previous connections to Niger, are now strongly connected to a community in a country that is not on the radar of most Americans.

This FON-sponsored project was an integral part of the course. Students spent the first weeks of the semester reading about successful projects throughout the developing world and about rural life and development activities in Niger. The students then proposed, in writing, individual projects that were reviewed and critiqued by the class, before working together to hammer out a collective proposal to be delivered, as a role-playing simulation, at a meeting of FON.

Only this was no simulation. Unbeknownst to the students, I had arranged for FON treasurer Larry Koff to make a surprise appearance in class. The connection between the students and “far-off” Niger was greatly intensified by the encounter, as Larry followed the students’ presentation with accounts of his own Peace Corps experience. Larry talked of the “attraction of living outside one’s bubble and connecting to some very special people, relationships, and experiences.”

There were three final components to the students’ project: microcredit financing (two-thirds of which was dedicated to the neediest women in the community); supplies and furniture for the village schools; and market hangars for the farmer’s and women’s associations. Anna Weber (MA ’10) described her experience developing the project as “far more educational than any depiction of a case study in a textbook or classroom lecture.”

I made a public presentation regarding the ABCD-PDN project and its collaboration with FON in November 2009 at the African Studies Association Conference in New Orleans. It is my hope that this collaboration becomes a model for other Returned Peace Corps Volunteer groups and Universities. For further information on this and other projects through the ABCD-PDN project visit, www.polisci.neu.edu/achievements/development_projects/.

-Professor William F.S. Miles

Updates from Co-op

These are certainly challenging times for Co-op job development in the political field, but we have added a number of new positions over the last year.

Several jobs in the Governmental Affairs area have been developed with the Massachusetts Department of Transportation, the Dewey Square Group, and the Massachusetts Dental Society. Also in Massachusetts, we’ve created an event management position with the National Alliance on Mental Illness.

In the legal arena, several new opportunities are being offered, including a Legal Research Assistant at John Hancock, a Client Intake Worker with MetroWest Legal Services, positions in Intellectual Property venues at Mintz Levin and Ochitutti, Rohlicek & Taso, and a Legal Records slot with Ropes & Gray in New York.

In Washington, DC, we now have openings with U. S. Senator Jack Reed of Rhode Island and the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness.

Unfortunately, we have also lost jobs in government because of economic and budgetary constraints. I would therefore welcome any leads for paid or stipended political, legal, or non-profit positions. I can be reached at w.wray@neu.edu or (617) 373-4210.

Bill Wray, Co-op Coordinator
Who is a Political Science Major?

For the third year in a row, we conducted a survey of Political Science majors in the Senior Capstone course. With three years of data, including 241 responses, some clear trends provide an overview of the typical Political Science major:

- One-quarter of our majors are from Massachusetts. New York State is close behind as the home for twenty percent of Political Science majors.
- One-quarter of our majors also are transfer students.
- Sixty percent of our seniors started as Political Science majors in their freshmen year with thirty percent adding the major in their sophomore year.
- About fifteen percent of our majors completed a double major, and about half completed a minor, with History being the most popular.
- Among subfields in Political Science, Law and Legal Issues attracted the most interest, with American Politics, Public Policy and International Relations close behind.
- When asked about probable careers, about one-third of our seniors picked lawyer as their number one choice. This was three times higher than any other choice, with distant runner-ups being public administrator, nonprofit organization, and policy analyst.
- For the first year after graduation, about seventy percent of our students plan to work. About fifteen percent plan to attend law school and less than ten percent plan to continue their education in graduate school.
- Importantly, in the subsequent year, over half of the students planning to work in their first year after graduation intend to return to school, either in graduate studies or law school.
- Indicative of this long-term interest in education, forty-five percent of seniors intend to earn a law degree and forty percent hope to earn a masters' degree.

New College of Social Sciences and Humanities

As reported in the Winter 2010 Political Science News, college restructuring is well underway. The old College of Arts & Sciences is officially in the history books. As you read this, there are now three new colleges at Northeastern: College of Science; College of Arts, Media and Design; and College of Social Sciences and Humanities. The Department of Political Science is part of the new College of Social Sciences and Humanities.

Over the summer the most important step taken was the hiring of deans for each of the three colleges. By mid-July, that goal was met. Xavier Costa from the Elisava Design School at Universitat Pompeu Fabra, in Barcelona is the new dean of the College of Arts, Media and Design; J. Murray Gibson from the Argonne National Laboratory in Illinois is the new dean of the College of Science; and Georges Van Den Abbeele from the University of California, Santa Cruz is the new dean of the College of Social Sciences and Humanities.

Dean Van Den Abbeele was most recently the dean of humanities at Santa Cruz, and prior to that was at the University of California, Davis for 16 years. He is an author and translator with research interests in French and European philosophical literature, literary theory and translation, and he has a particular interest in the intersection of humanities and public policy. He holds a B.A. from Reed College and a Ph.D. in romance studies from Cornell University.

Stephen W. Director, provost and senior vice president for academic affairs at Northeastern, had this to say regarding Van Den Abbeele becoming the first Dean for the new college, “Dr. Van Den Abbee’s experience in overseeing several departments and leading a world-class institute of humanities studies will be invaluable as he leads our new College of Social Sciences and Humanities.”

For our part, the Department is looking forward to working with Dean Van Den Abbeele and the other programs and departments within the new College of Social Science and Humanities.

Help Support Political Science

Your gift will help continue and expand many of the activities that are featured in this newsletter.

Please send contributions to:
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You may designate your contribution for a particular purpose, or you may leave a discretionary gift to the Department by selecting other and typing in the Department of Political Science. Your gift is tax deductible as allowed by law.

If you would like to discuss giving opportunities in more detail, contact Craig O’Donnell, Development Officer at 617.373.8148 or cr.odonnell@neu.edu.

Alumni News

Joseph Coehlo (PhD’09) was hired as an assistant professor in a tenure-track position at Seton Hill University in Pittsburgh, PA. He begins this fall, teaching courses in comparative politics and international relations.

Karl G. Trautman (MA’86) recently published The Underdog in American Politics: The Democratic Party and Liberal Values (Macmillan Press, 2010). After finishing his MA at Northeastern, Karl earned a PhD at the University of Hawaii. Currently, he is the Chairperson of the Social Science Department at Central Maine Community College and the editor of The New Populist Reader.

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