Matthew Cournoyer, a junior political science major, has been named one of this year’s recipients of the highly prestigious Harry S. Truman Scholarship. The scholarship is awarded to college juniors nationwide who have had very strong academic success, participated in community and public service, have shown strong leadership qualities, and who are making a commitment to a career in public service.

Over six hundred candidates were nominated this year by their campus Truman representatives, and approximately one hundred and fifty advanced to the finalist stage, which involves an intensive interview with a panel often comprised of government officials and former Truman Scholars. Only sixty are ultimately named a Truman Scholar, and Matthew was among them this year.

The award provides up to $30,000 for graduate school. Matthew’s plan is to attend law school and then apply himself to the development of public policy.

Northeastern’s Truman campus representative, Professor Bruce Wallin, mentored Matthew throughout the application process, including conducting mock interviews. Professor Wallin has produced finalists in nearly every year since taking over the campus representative role, but this is Northeastern’s first winner since the 1990s.

Recognition Dinner Features Lt. Governor Tim Murray

On April 22nd 2011, the Political Science Department held its annual Recognition Dinner. At the event, the Distinguished Public Service Award was given, and undergraduate and graduate political science students were recognized for their academic accomplishments during the past year.

Lt. Governor Tim Murray was the keynote speaker and recipient of the Distinguished Public Service Award. Introduced by Professor Michael Dukakis, Lt. Governor Murray spoke about his political career, including his time as mayor of Worcester, before joining Deval Patrick’s successful gubernatorial campaign in 2006. Along with Governor Patrick, Murray was re-elected last fall to serve another term.

In his speech, Murray emphasized that public service is a “generational responsibility” to pass along benefits and a better life to future generations. He encouraged students to get involved in at least one campaign and to think about public service as a career. He also emphasized the importance of listening to other perspectives and the essential nature of compromise in the political process.

A number of students were also recognized for their academic accomplishments at the dinner. Liam Holland received the award for Outstanding Senior in Political Science for his overall academic merit, and Alexis Alison was honored as the Outstanding Senior in Experiential Education for her co-op work and other experiential activities. Fifteen recipients of the Baer Scholarship and nine recipients of the O’Rourke Scholarship were recognized for their accomplishments (see page 6). In addition, Christine Donnelly received the best paper award, and fourteen undergraduate students and eight graduate students were inducted into Pi Sigma Alpha, the honorary society for Political Science majors.
A Note from the Chair...

This is a time for transitions. This past spring concluded the first year of the new College of Social Sciences and Humanities. With a smaller college, the opportunities are there for more collaborative activities with our sister disciplines in the social sciences, including sociology, economics, history and the new School of Criminology and Criminal Justice (formerly the College of Criminal Justice). We’re discussing ways to be more efficient - and more effective - in providing graduate and undergraduate education and supporting faculty research.

In a more personal transition, I am stepping down as chair of the department. After serving in this role for eight years, it is time to move on to other challenges while allowing someone new to help move the department forward. Organizations – like people – have cycles. It seems that this is the time for me and the department to make a transition. I’ve enjoyed the past years of working with my colleagues to strengthen the department.

I started as chair the first year of semester conversion, and have played a role in many changes in the department, including an enhanced PhD Program, development of the online MPA curriculum, and strengthening of the undergraduate curriculum through research methods and capstone courses. It has been an exciting time, and I thank my colleagues for their support and encouragement over the years.

Unfortunately, the transition to a new permanent chair will have to wait another year. An external search for a new chair did not reach a successful conclusion this year, but the process will begin again in the fall. We expect that a new search will be more successful. In the interim, Professor Suzanne Ogden, a long-time member of the department, will serve as acting chair.

As always, I hope you enjoy reading about your alma mater. Please let us know if there are other ways we can connect with you, and I hope you’ll consider supporting the department in the many activities in which we are engaged. Best wishes for the summer and the coming academic year.

Sincerely,

John Portz
Professor and Chair
Graduate Programs Continue to Grow

This past academic year has been another year of growth for our three graduate programs. We welcomed 94 new graduate students to the department, bringing our total number to 206. This is almost double the number of graduate students we had just three years ago. Though there have been adjustments necessary with this growth, we have maintained and developed a diverse and strong group of master’s and doctoral students who bring the university and field of public service great pride.

In addition to the great growth, there have been other significant changes on the graduate front. As written about in our Fall 2010 Newsletter, the Master of Public Administration’s (MPA) introduction of online courses has gone very well. This coming fall we will be offering seven courses online.

Perhaps of greatest importance, Professor Michael Tolley will be the new Graduate Coordinator and Chair of the PhD and MA programs, and Professor Thomas Vicino has been selected as Chair of the MPA program. Though we welcome this news, we unfortunately have to say good bye to Professor Ronald Hedlund who served as the Graduate Academic Coordinator and Professor John Portz, who in addition to being Chair of the department, oversaw the Doctorate Program, as well as many other aspects of our graduate programs.

There have also been a number of graduate students who completed their degrees with us this past year. 21 students earned their Master of Arts degrees and 25 students graduated from the Master of Public Administration program. Three students successfully defended their dissertations this year: Alison Dickson (PhD’11), Kimberly Jones (PhD’11), and Peter Richardson (PhD’11). To acknowledge these accomplishments, we held a Commencement Celebration on April 29th 2011 at Northeastern’s Alumni Center. At this event we were honored to hear both from Professor Michael Dukakis and from student speaker, Austin Faison (MPA ’11).

In addition to the above event, we held our annual graduate programs reception on November 19th 2010 at Kerr Hall Suites (formerly the NU Faculty Club). Almost 100 students, faculty, staff, and alumni joined us at this event. We plan for an even larger turn-out this coming year.

Our graduate programs have also made great progress on the interdisciplinary side. We have had several students who’ve begun to pursue certificates in either Gender Studies or Urban Affairs, and the MPA program is currently putting together a proposal to create a certificate in Nonprofit Management. Finally, Professor Eileen McDonagh will be co-teaching a course with MIT’s Consortium in Women’s Studies this fall on the topic of gender and the state.

One of the major goals of our graduate programs this coming year is to re-connect with some of the alumni from our three programs. Please visit our website, www.polisci.neu.edu/alumni/, for information on how to stay connected with us both in person as well as through social media.

Student Accomplishments

Chris Chanyasulkit (PhD Candidate) has been appointed to the American Public Health Association’s Joint Policy Committee. Additionally, in keeping with her public health background, she is a Mentor Mom for the Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center’s Parent Connection Program. Finally, Chris was appointed as cochair of the Brookline Commission for Women.

Jarvis Chen (PhD student) has been elected President of the Graduate and Professional Student Association (GPSA) at Northeastern.


Marian Simion (PhD Candidate) was primary author of Religion and Political Conflict: From Dialectics to Cross-Domain Charting, published by the Presses Internationales Polytechnique in Montreal. He also co-edited the book, Overcoming Violence: Religion, Conflict and Peacebuilding.

The following PhD students successfully passed their comprehensive examinations and have achieved dissertation candidacy: Lacey Bradley-Storey, Diane Bulpett, Christopher Cunningham, Emma DeSimone, David Hutchinson, and Adam Mosher. Lacey Bradley-Storey and Christopher Cunningham both passed their exams with distinction.
PhD Candidate Recipient of Prestigious Boren Fellowship

It was last May that PhD Candidate, Lacey Bradley-Storey, found out she was awarded a National Security Education Program David L. Boren Fellowship.

The Boren Fellowship is a federal initiative designed to develop a larger and more qualified group of U.S. citizens with foreign language and international diplomacy skills. As part of the program, Boren award recipients agree to work in the federal government for a period of at least one year following the completion of their academic studies. Although the program encourages undergraduate and graduate students to focus on critically-needed languages and the countries in which those languages are spoken, applicants have considerable flexibility in designing their own research and language study.

In Lacey’s case, she applied for funding to spend spring 2011 studying Mandarin at Nanjing University in China before going on to conduct fieldwork on China’s petition system during the summer. Improving one’s language skills in a host country has been a great advantage for Lacey. “Most of my classes are taught using only Mandarin,” Lacey commented, “and as a result, my listening skills in particular have greatly improved.”

The research segment of Lacey’s grant will mainly take place in and around Beijing and Hunan Province. Her main goal is to improve her knowledge and understanding of China’s petition system. China’s petition system, xinfang, translated as ‘letters and visits,’ has roots going back several centuries. We will let our developing expert, Lacey, explain the system in more detail. “The current xinfang system allows people to report grievances to local and higher-level authorities. Complaints may include unfair compensation from land confiscation and housing demolition, consequences of environmental pollution from local factories, corruption, and wage and pension disputes. Petitioners often turn to higher-level authorities for redress, and in a number of cases, they go all the way to Beijing in hopes that central authorities will hear their case.”

“However, Xinfang has a notoriously low rate of dispute resolution. As a result, it plays a major role in facilitating incidents of social unrest. Disaffected petitioners have often engaged in more disruptive actions in order to draw attention to their case.”

By speaking to academic experts, local government officials, and citizens, Lacey plans to research more about the dynamics of xinfang, why it is not functioning as it was intended, and how different actors within China perceive the system. Ultimately, Lacey hopes that her research will allow her to delve even deeper into this issue, and that the language courses will improve her ability to communicate with people on these complex issues.

Support Continues through Undergraduate Named Scholarships

Each year, the department awards a number of scholarships to undergraduate students based upon high merit, financial need, or competitive application. These awards are endowed by endowments from individual or group donors.

Sean Patrick O’Rourke Scholarship

The Sean Patrick O’Rourke Scholarship was established in 1989 through the generosity of Larry O’Rourke in memory of his son, Sean Patrick O’Rourke, a class of 1990 junior majoring in Political Science.

In the fall of 2010 a total of $37,700 was awarded based on high academic accomplishment to the following nine upper-class students: Matt Cournoyer, Allyse Falce, Olga Baranenko, Matt Soares, Alison Prier, Christina Schlegel, Kathryn Barlet, Katherine McKean and Krista McCarthy.

In December 2010, several of this year’s recipients enjoyed dinner with Larry O’Rourke and expressed their gratitude to him in person.

Michael A. and Charlotte G. Baer Scholarship for Study or Work Abroad

The Michael A. and Charlotte G. Baer Scholarship for Study or Work Abroad was established in 1993 by then-Provost Michael Baer and his wife. The purpose of the scholarship is to provide a financial award to support students engaged in work or study abroad.

In the spring of 2011, awards of $200 to $350, for a total of $3800, were made to the following students: Andonis Marden, Ariele Newton, Victoria Hines, Allyse Falce, Colleen Kelly, Cory O’Hayer, Valerie Puleo, Meredith Serritt, Elysia Buckley, Emily Procknal, Thomas Wind, Michael Rubine, Haley Reddington, Key Lewis, Andrew Fantano and Sean Comi. The award is based on academic achievement and the overall quality of an essay requesting support.
Professor Continues Work in Development and Security

Development should be a critical part of U.S. security policy. This was a major point made by Professor William Miles at a recent conference in Italy.

Professor Miles was invited to participate in the March conference by the Africa Command of the United States Army, which is based in Vincenza, Italy. The conference was part of the Leader Development and Education for Sustained Peace Program, which conducts conferences on issues related to civil-military relations for various branches of the Department of Defense.

The conference focused on the Trans-Saharan Counterterrorism Partnership. The Partnership is a Department of State-led interagency initiative to assist traditionally moderate Muslim governments and populations in the Trans-Sahara region to combat the spread of extremist ideology and terrorism. Professor Miles, a specialist in Francophone Africa (including the Sahel and Sahara), was one of six professors from around the country invited to present at the conference.

Professor Miles addressed the importance of development as a tool in counterterrorism strategy. The U.S. Africa Command is concerned with the presence of Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb in the remote, Saharan reaches of Mali, Mauritania, and Niger. The Sahel (the region just south of the Sahara) is considered the third most dangerous region in terms of harboring Al-Qaeda or its affiliates. But it is, according to Professor Miles, a distant third.

“The major challenge in the Trans-Sahel is not terrorism,” Miles told the Army audience, “but underdevelopment. To counter the terrorism that does exist, you need development. But development is a long and complex process.”

Professor Miles pointed to President Obama’s Presidential Policy Directive on Global Development that calls for the elevation of development as a core pillar of American power. The Policy Directive defines a synergy among development, diplomacy and defense to reinforce and complement one another in the interests of national security. By helping countries raise themselves out of poverty into prosperous, stable, and democratic states, U.S. interests and security worldwide will be strengthened.

Professor Miles teaches the undergraduate course on Politics of Developing Nations and two graduate courses relating to international development.

NEPSA 2011

The Department of Political Science was well represented at the Annual Meeting of the New England Political Science Association (NEPSA) on April 28-30th 2011.

Professor William G. Mayer was the section head for American Politics. Professor William Crotty gave a presentation titled, “Barack Obama: Progressive in Washington,” at the lunch reception on Saturday, and Professor Eileen McDonagh co-chaired a discussion on “The State of American Politics,” done over lunch on Sunday. PhD Candidate, Rob A. DeLeo, chaired a panel on “Public Policy Developments in the Northeast”, and Professor David Schmitt chaired a panel discussion on “International Relations: Security in Asia”.

In addition, the following faculty and doctoral candidates presented papers at the annual meeting: Diane M. Bulpett (PhD Candidate), Rob A. DeLeo (PhD Candidate), Professor William G. Mayer, Professor Eileen McDonagh, Adam Mosher (PhD Candidate), and Professor David A. Rochefort.

The 2012 Annual meeting for NEPSA will be taking place in Portsmouth, New Hampshire.
Alumni News

J. Danielle Bachan (MPA’11) was officially awarded the President’s Call to Service Lifetime Achievement Award for completing over 7,500 community service hours in various community service organizations. Danielle also had the honor of representing Northeastern while still an MPA student in a roundtable discussion on education issues with President Barack Obama in March 2011.

Philip D’Agati (PhD’06) had his book Nationalism on the World Stage: Cultural Performance at the Olympic Games published by the University Press of America.

Kristen Hudak (PhD’10) accepted the position of Visiting Assistant Professor at Eastern Connecticut State University. Additionally, her article “Building Microfinance Associations: Goals, Implementation and Policy Implications” was published in the Nonprofit Policy Forum.

Chow Bing Ngeow (PhD’10) joined the Institute of China Studies at the University of Malaya as a Lecturer.

Jack O’Connor (BA’08, MPA’11) was an intern at the U.S. Department of State’s Office of Caucasus Affairs & Regional Conflicts (CARC), in the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, in Washington, D.C. during his last semester in the MPA program.

Joe Salvatore (MPA’94) was recently promoted to the position of Director for the Reports and Information Service Division within the Department of Veterans Affairs’ National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics.

Nicole Wilkins (BS’10) accepted the position of Communications and Policy Associate at the Massachusetts Afterschool Transition of Communications and Policy Associates at the Massachusetts Afterschool Transition of Communications and Policy Association at the Massachusetts Afterschool Partnership (an education non-profit that seeks funding for after school and out-of-school activities.)

Alumni, please forward us news on promotions, awards, publications and other professional accomplishments to polisci@neu.edu for listing on our website and in future newsletters.

New Summer Grant for MPA Students

Earlier this year Jack Lichtenstein (MPA’75) and his wife, Susan, donated funds to create a grant program to help current Master of Public Administration (MPA) students in pursuing experiential learning opportunities. With the number of MPA students engaging in internships more than tripling since last year, the timing of this gift was perfect.

Upon asking for proposals for this new award, we received almost a dozen applicants. All of the students were engaging in activities benefiting their communities, our program, and their developing skills as leaders in public affairs. After careful consideration, a committee of our faculty decided to make awards to Justin Backal-Balik and Chau Ly.

Justin Backal-Balik is participating in the White House Internship Program this summer. This award allowed Justin to pursue this opportunity. As a White House intern, Justin is working for the Office of Management and Administration. The office supports the day-to-day functions of the White House in terms of both operations and personnel, making it the ideal placement for someone pursuing work in public administration.

The second recipient of the grant, Chau Ly, is an intern a little closer to home, at Newton City Hall with the Mayor’s Office. Chau is working directly with the Chief Operating Officer on various projects, such as assisting with developing an implementation plan for a new city ordinance, performance management, and relocating a department into a new facility. Though Chau came to Northeastern with over a decade of experience working for nonprofits, this internship allows her to gain experience in local government.

It is the hope of the department and MPA program to continue this new award in future years through the support of other alumni of our graduate and undergraduate programs. Anyone interested in contributing to this award or in benefiting our undergraduate and graduate students in other ways should contact Craig O’Donnell, Development Officer at 617.373.8148 or cr.odonnell@neu.edu.

MA Alumna Named Pres. Management Fellow

Sydney Schneir (MA’11), who pursued a comparative politics concentration at Northeastern, was selected as a finalist in the U.S. Presidential Management Fellows (PMF) Program. The PMF is a highly selective, rigorous leadership program which recruits outstanding graduate students for two-year developmental fellowships working for the federal government.

After making it through the application, nomination, examination, and interview process, those selected as finalists are given access to specific openings in various federal agencies. In addition to working closely with supervising mentors in these agencies, fellows are given opportunities for specific and general skills-based training, networking, and leadership development.

To anyone at Northeastern who worked with Sydney, her receipt of this prestigious award was not a surprise. Sydney was a very strong and well-rounded master’s student. While taking classes full-time, she worked for a semester as a Teaching Assistant, and then worked in the Massachusetts State House as an intern. Eventually her internship led to full-time employment as a Research Analyst for the Massachusetts House Committee on Climate Change.

These experiences, along with her strong academic record, no doubt played a role in her selection as a PMF finalist. As a PMF fellow Sydney recently accepted an offer to work at the Department of Transportation, Federal Railroad Administration as an Environmental Protection Specialist in Washington, D.C. She will begin working there in September 2011.
Engaging a Community to Surmount Social Barriers

While on co-op in Nicaragua, third-year Northeastern student Colleen Kelly helped women and children hurdle social barriers on everything from gender equality to domestic violence, both by talking about these issues and engaging the entire community.

It ultimately resulted in a profound experiential learning opportunity she later described as “one of the most challenging and exhilarating experiences of my life.”

Colleen, an international affairs and political science combined major, worked from March to June at Mujer y Comunidad (Women and Community) — an NGO that provides health care and other vital services to women and youth in the small, rural town of San Francisco Libre.

She worked alongside one of the organization’s psychologists, who led group therapy sessions for women throughout the town that focused on a range of issues, including gender equality, physical and emotional domestic abuse and HIV/AIDS awareness. Colleen said it was incredibly gratifying to see strong women making progress in the country’s male-dominated culture of “machismo,” and the experience strengthened her own appreciation for the rights women enjoy in the United States.

In addition, she helped organize meetings with local networks of women and youths that would gather regularly for themed discussions. Women would talk about domestic violence and employment, while youths would learn about teen pregnancy and gender equality. The sessions empowered these women and youths to become community leaders who could later inform their neighbors about what they learned.

“It was very far-reaching, and it did a great job of educating so many people with so few resources,” Colleen said.

Colleen was also present for the start of a significant research project the NGO was running to survey community groups on their knowledge of a range of social issues related to gender, violence and sexual health. Participants will be surveyed again in five years to assess the impact these educational programs are having.

Toward the end of her co-op, Colleen participated in a youth celebration, called El Día de los Niños, that helped her put the entire experience in perspective. As she interacted with the children and watched them laugh and dance, she realized how close she had become to the community, and the importance of her organization to its people.

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:
Craig O’Donnell
Northeastern University, 402 CP
716 Columbus Ave
Boston, MA 02120

or on-line at northeastern.edu/giveonline.

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. Checks should be made out to Northeastern with Political Science written in the memo section. 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.
Contributors

William Crotty, Professor
Lacey Bradley-Storey, PhD Candidate
Jarvis Chen, PhD Student (Photos)
Samantha Fodrowski, CSSH
Colleen Kelly, Undergraduate Student
William Miles, Professor
Craig O’Donnell, CSSH
John Portz, Professor and Chair
Lyle Ring, Administrative Coordinator
Sydney Schneir, MA’11
Greg St. Martin, NU Communications
Bruce Wallin, Associate Professor

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Want to make a contribution to the Department of Political Science or Political Science students? Please see page 7 for details.