

Politics Aside

Political Science & Public Affairs

Winter 2008

A Newsletter of the Department of Political Science & Public Affairs at Western Carolina University

Greetings from Cullowhee

Message from the Department Head, Gibbs Knotts (gknotts@email.wcu.edu)



My name is Gibbs Knotts and I am honored to be the new department head in Political Science and Public Affairs. I am excited to be working with such a great group of colleagues and students.

Our former head, Niall Michelsen, is now an associate dean in the College of Arts and Sciences. Please join me in congratulating Dr. Michelsen on his new position and thanking him for his outstanding work as department head for the past six and a half years.

I want to also pay tribute to Gordon Mercer who has announced that he will begin phased retirement at the end of the spring 2008 semester. Dr. Mercer has served the university for 28 years in a number of positions including MPA director, department head, associate dean of Research and Graduate Studies, and founding director of the Public Policy Institute.

As for me, I am rejoining the department after a two and a half year stint as associate dean of Graduate School and Research. I worked primarily on marketing, student recruitment, and technology issues in the graduate school. Before my time in the graduate school I served as the department's MPA director. I received my PhD at Emory University and my undergraduate degree from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

My teaching and academic research focus on southern politics, political behavior, public policy, and public administration. I do my best to study interesting questions and enjoy writing for both academic and non-academic audiences.

In my free time I enjoy spending time with my family and riding my bike in the beautiful North Carolina Mountains. I also enjoy attending all Catamount sporting events. I live

in Sylva with my wife Stacy and our four year old daughter Whitney.

My return to the department could not come at a better time. The 2008 election season is finally here and I am particularly excited about the national focus on politics.

My number one goal is to create meaningful learning experiences for students. Of course, these experiences would not be possible without the help of wonderful teachers, eager students, and support from our alumni and departmental friends.

If you have questions about the department, please do not hesitate to contact me or visit our website at www.wcu.edu/4772.asp. Please keep us posted on new developments in your life and let us know if we can ever be of any help to you.

NEWS FROM STUDENTS

Students Attend Political Consulting Conference - On Oct. 11-12, 2007, four political science majors, Katheryn Ballard, Jewel Counts, Coley Phillips, and Gregory Hirsh, accompanied by David Liu, attended the American Association of Political Consultants Academic Outreach Conference: Making Democracy Happen, in Akron, Ohio. During the conference, students interacted with professional political consultants and gained indispensable knowledge of political campaigns.

Model United Nations Continues to Shine - On November 3, 2007, students from four global issues classes attended the Model United Nations Conference on campus, cosponsored by the political science department and the Model United Nations Club, in which students simulated the UN Security Council and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and discussed the issues of nuclear proliferation and the war on terrorism. Logan Thomas, Justin McCrary, and Megan Ayscue generously gave their time for organizing and chairing the committees. The conference was supervised by Dr. Liu, Mark Crawford, and Fred Fisher.

On Nov. 15-17, 2007, nine students, Megan Ayscue, Liz Brendle, Galen Edwards, Elizabeth Doane, Alan Goggins, Justin McCrary, Chris Lever, Kourtney Hindman, Logan Thomas, accompanied by Dr. Liu, attended the Southern Regional Model United Nations Conference in Atlanta, representing Argentina and Saudi Arabia. Students gained in-depth knowledge of the United Nations and international relations through this simulation and interacted with students from 14 other regional colleges.

Student Thrives Abroad - Senior Coley Phillips is spending the spring studying at London Metropolitan University and interning with a Labor party Member of Parliament.

College Republicans Win Accolades - Last Spring, the College Republican Club won the award for greatest amount of political activity in support of campaigns in the 2006 Fall elections during the annual statewide assembly of College Republicans. Our own College Republican Club beat out the groups from UNC-Chapel Hill, NC State University, Campbell, and, of course, Appalachian State! Over the weekend of Feb. 6-8, 2008, the College Republicans sent a contingent to the national Conservative Political Action Conference held in Washington, D.C. In late February, some College Republicans will be traveling to Elon University to participate in a weekend seminar and training session to be hosted by the Leadership Institute (out of Arlington, VA).

NEWS FROM ALUMS

Guy Maxwell Long (BS 2007) attended a semester in Beijing University and furthered his understanding of China. He intends to contribute to closer economic ties between China and the United States by becoming an international businessman.

Amy McClure (BS 2007) is studying in WCU's 2-year College Teaching Program.

Annie Decker (BS 2007) has been accepted into Embry Riddle's Master's Program in Aviation Management.

Clare Sabo (BS 2005) is studying Diplomacy in International Relations with a concentration in Human Rights, International Law, and Middle East Regional at Seton Hall University.

We heard from a number of alumni after our last newsletter. Here's what some of you shared with us.

Danna Harrell-Stansbury (BA 1995, MPA 1998) is Director of Administration and Marketing at Land-of-Sky Regional Council in Asheville.

Ellen Percy (Archer) (MPA 1997) lives in Knoxville and is interested in any information about a WCU alumni group in Knoxville (email epercy@comcast.com).

Carilyn Gay Brown (Hart) (MPA 1989) served during Desert Storm (US Army Reserves) as a Family

Nurse Practitioner. She has practiced medicine for over 20 years.

Don Good (BS 1978) is a professor of Education and Mathematics at Milligan College.

Patrick Murphy (BS 1978) retired after 20 years on Capitol Hill. He is currently pursuing a degree at George Washington University in landscape design.

H. Dwight Nelson (BA 1973) graduated from Wake Forest University Law School in 1977 and has been a practicing attorney in Rural Hall, NC, since graduation.

W. David Lee (BA 1972) graduated from Wake Forest University Law School in 1975 and had a private law practice in Monroe, NC, until 2003. Currently he is Senior Resident Superior Court Judge, District 20B.

Please share your news with us!

NEWS FROM FACULTY

Brian Pollins has joined the department as an instructor. Dr. Pollins is professor emeritus at Ohio State University and is currently teaching U.S. Foreign Policy.

Todd Collins, Sean Hildebrand, Dr. Liu, and Chris Cooper all presented papers at the Southern Political Science Association Meeting in New Orleans.

Dr. Michelsen continues his good work with the American Democracy Project. This past summer he attended the ADP annual meeting in Philadelphia and a weeklong conference at Yellowstone National Park exploring the manner in which contentious issues surrounding public lands are handled. He will present a project from his International Politics courses in which students build on work done by the previous class, in the pursuit of achieving the UN Millennium Goals.

Dr. Cooper, Dr. Knotts and Dr. Don Livingston will present a paper entitled "Overlapping Identities: Investigating the Causes and Consequences of Social Identify in the South" at the Citadel Symposium on Southern Politics in March.

Dr. Cooper received the Chancellor's Engaged Teaching Award.

Claudia Bryant continues to serve with distinction as the President of the North Carolina Political Science Association.

The students enrolled in the fall 2007 Active Citizenship Freshman Seminar participated in service-learning projects. The two sections taught by **Vera Guise** worked with Smoky Mountain High School's social studies classes taught by Jason Roberts. WCU students helped the high school students identify and develop solutions to important policy problems. **Fred Fisher's** two sections raised funds for two local charities. Students raised over \$600 for the Community Table of Jackson County and nearly \$1,000 for the Jackson County Sheriff's Office Shop with a Cop program. These activities helped first-year students connect with the community.

MESSAGE FROM MPA DIRECTOR,

Chris Cooper (ccooper@email.wcu.edu)



The MPA program has had another great year. Our enrollments continue to be quite strong and we have placed our graduates in an impressive array of important jobs and internships throughout the state and region.

We are extremely pleased that we have hired Jason Sides as a new tenure-track

faculty member in public administration. Mr. Sides is finishing his Ph.D. at Florida State University and is currently a faculty member at Eastern Kentucky. He specializes in government creation--why some towns choose to incorporate and some do not. He will be teaching courses in budgeting, organizational theory, and nonprofit management in the MPA program. I'd also like to take this opportunity to thank Sean Hildebrand, a visiting professor we had in public administration this year, for his contributions.

We continue to expand our course offerings. In addition to offering a grant-writing class in the summer (which will become an annual course), we offered non-profit management for the first time this spring. Given the vast nonprofit community in western North Carolina, we expect this to be a popular course for years to come. We have also finalized approval of our new concentrations: general administration, public policy, criminal justice, and human resources.

Department faculty and students once again attended the NC City/County Manager's Association meeting where Jessica Stevermer received the Whicker Scholarship, an award 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 faculty has once again worked hard to improve the quality of governance in western North Carolina. Dr. Mercer continued his work with the Public Policy Institute, keeping Western as the focal point for policy debates in the region. Our faculty and graduate students also continue to help local governments conduct surveys and analyze data.

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 have raised \$5,700 and need an additional \$4,300 to begin awarding an annual scholarship. With your help we will be able to award this scholarship to students soon.

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 and some we have already implemented but would like to be able to expand upon.

- ✧ **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, and study room. This room desperately needs updating. Contributions will be used to purchase book cases.
- ✧ **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.
- ✧ **Faculty Development.** Contributions will support faculty attendance and participation in academic conferences, professional meetings, workshops and to conduct research.

If you have questions about making a gift, contact Gibbs Knotts, department head, gknotts@email.wcu.edu.



Students from Fred Fisher's Active Citizenship class present \$921.88 to Sgt. Johnny Hollifield of the Jackson County Sheriff's Office for the Shop with a Cop program.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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OUR CONTACT WITH YOU

We are interested in establishing an alumni mailing list 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 mailing list (mail to the department).

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

Please make the following corrections to my mailing address:

NAME - PLEASE PRINT

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