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As a new academic year begins, the Department of Political Science & International Studies wanted to reach out and touch base with our alumni. We realize it has been awhile since our last newsletter but we have quite a few changes to announce.

The first is that I have returned to the "big" office as Chair of the Department. It has been 6 years since the last time that I worked in that capacity and in that time we were led quite successfully first by Dr. Andrea Rubery and then Dr. Mark Chadsey. Also, since the last time that I was Chair, we were part of a different school. As I'm sure you are all aware the College at Brockport reorganized several years ago and we are now part of the School of The Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences (TAHSS). You likely have received updates about the activities of the School and I will do my best to continue to keep you up to date.

We have several new members in our faculty as some of our long-time colleagues have retired, most recently Dr. Stephen Ullman. While we miss him I know that he is thriving in his retirement and is happily ensconced on a small lake in New Hampshire. Dr. Robert Shum joined us last year and this year we are pleased to welcome Dr. Nilay Saiya as our new Director of International Studies. They each have contributed to this newsletter to tell you a bit about themselves below.

If you are ever in the area, please stop by for a visit. We love hearing what our alums are doing since graduating from Brockport.

All of my best,
Dr. Dena Levy
What have we been up to?

On January 8-10, 2014, Dr. Andrea Ciliotta-Rubery will be participating in the 7th Annual World Universities Forum in Lisbon Portugal; a forum designed to address the changing needs of both university students and curriculum alike. In her piece entitled, “Turgenev, Extremism and Aristotle's Solution to the Mean: An Interdisciplinary Case Study of Theory, Literature and Contemporary Events,” Dr. Rubery attempts to bridge the various gaps in student knowledge by demonstrating the interconnectedness of those ideas present in the works of philosophy, literature and contemporary politics. By uncovering the universal and transcendent themes of texts and applying them to contemporary political events, students may begin to understand the complicated, shared and lasting concerns of the human experience. This paper is the direct product of Dr. Ciliotta-Rubery's course entitled "Politics and Literature;" a course specifically designed to expose students to a thematically diverse reading curriculum.

Introducing: Dr. Nilay Saiya

I am an Assistant Professor of Political Science and International Studies and Director of International Studies at The College at Brockport. I earned my Ph.D. from the University of Notre Dame in 2013 before joining the faculty at Brockport this fall. My family hails from India, though I spent most of my life in the U.S., being born and raised in Hershey, Pennsylvania.

My research agenda reflects my interdisciplinary background and interest in the intersection of religion and international relations, especially the roots of religious terrorism. At Brockport I teach courses related to international security and American foreign policy. In my spare time I enjoy biking, traveling and rooting for the Philadelphia Eagles on Sunday afternoons.
The European Union Simulation club (EuroSim) sponsored by the Political Science and International Studies department is very excited to participate in this year’s event hosted by the University of Twente, Netherlands. The four-day conference in January is a simulation of European Union politics in which students are assigned alter-egos of politicians in various institutions of the European Union. Brockport’s own Dr. William Andrews began the trans-Atlantic simulation in the late 1980s and we are proud to be active members in the consortium of around twenty American and European universities. This continent-alternating model European Union is the oldest simulation of its kind and regularly has about 200 students participate from the member schools.

Last April’s event at East Stroudsburg University in Pennsylvania debated data retention policy and was a fantastic learning experience and also an eerie foreshadowing to the U.S.’s own privacy issues concerning electronic media data and government access. This year’s subject at EuroSim is standardizing a minimum wage across all EU member-states.
While this may seem to be a strictly European issue, our students can relate to this because it translates down to an issue of fairness. This is a highly contentious topic as member-states in the EU have great diversity in income levels and each comes with their own sense of social fairness. To prepare for the conference abroad, our students are researching the ideological positions of their alter-egos, the directive on minimum wage policy, and on the logistics side—fundraising and planning their itinerary.

After the conference, the EuroSim club typically travels to other European cities for a cultural side-trip. This year we will travel to Amsterdam to take in the canal city and visit some of its famous sites: the Rijksmuseum (which houses much of the Dutch Masters collection) and the Anne Frank House. We will then travel to Paris and take guided tours of Place de la Concorde, Champs-Elysses, Arc de Triomphe, Eiffel Tower, Les Invalides, the Louvre, and the Palace of Versailles. For our students, January cannot come quick enough.

- Dr. Steven Jurek

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**Introducing: Dr. Robert Shum**

I teach courses at the intersections of politics with public policy and administration. I apply a broad range of theoretical and methodological approaches to my current research interests in energy and environmental policy, to which I also bring my earlier experience of international legal and policy processes in practice, as a trade lawyer and participant in international trade negotiations with the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, and, before that, as a specialist in international trade and finance policy at Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government. Prior to arriving at The College at Brockport, I was a fellow at the Bologna Center of Johns Hopkins University, so I am still looking for a place where one can find genuine Emilian “culatello” ham in the Rochester area.
Ghana

The winter intersession program takes a group of students from The College at Brockport, and others from various universities around the nation, to a learning experience abroad; in this case, in Ghana/Africa.

The program is designed to provide a learning opportunity through direct field experience, outside classrooms, where students encounter different people from a different culture in different settings and circumstances (visit in orphanages, schools, rain forest exploration, wildlife safari, mountain climbing, exposure to local history, art and music performance, religious practices, markets, social life etc.). Experiences in these settings and circumstances usually awake, spark, and stimulate inquiries that benefit the intellectual growth and life experiences of participating students.

As a faculty supervisor, I find this experience enriching, stimulating and encouraging as it allows me to engage students more holistically outside classroom, and the process, to increase the teaching/learning impact through practical events. In the end the experience allows me to truly be an "educator".

- Dr. Jean Kachiga
Political Science Students Help Assess the “Civic Health” of Brockport, and Other American Democracy Project News

This past academic year, political science students in research methods courses aided Brockport’s chapter of the American Democracy Project by taking stock of the “Civic Health” of the campus. The College at Brockport was chosen by the American Democracy Project to be part of their "Civic Health Initiative." This is a three year program in cooperation with the National Conference on Citizenship to assess civic engagement on campuses across the nation. The task for campuses in the first year was to conduct a “baseline study” of campus civic engagement. We saw this as a great opportunity to engage students in some practical research, and so the survey was conducted by our students.

The term “Civic Health” is quite new, it essentially means a measure of civic engagement within a community – whether that is a campus, city, state or nation. It includes five main areas of activity;

1) “Service” – this dimension of civic health includes both formal and informal ways of serving the community. Formal participation is working as a volunteer through an organization while informal service is working with neighbors to fix a community problem.

2) “Participating in a Group” – this dimension of civic health assesses how many members of a community participate in associations or community organizations.

3) “Connecting to Information and Current Events” – this dimension of civic health assesses how many members of a community access information about politics and current events either through traditional news sources – print, radio, TV – or via on-line formats.

4) “Social Connectedness” - This dimension assess informal activity that fosters community relationships and communication. These activities include such things as eating dinner with friends and family, talking to neighbors and doing favors for others.

5) “Political Action” – This dimension of civic health includes electoral participation such as voting and voter registration as well as more active forms of political engagement such as boycotting products or attending political meetings.
When the political science students analyzed the data they had collected they discovered that College at Brockport undergraduates were very strong with respect to rates of volunteering and performing community service and far above the national average when considering group participation and social connectedness. Areas of weakness included voting and political action as well as regularly accessing the news – in each of these areas the students at Brockport participated at slightly lower levels than comparable groups nationally.

Three political science students compiled a Civic Health Report using the data and presented it to an enthusiastic audience at this year’s American Democracy Project national conference in Denver. Moving forward the challenge for the this years’ political science research methods students is to replicate the survey among Brockport’s faculty and staff, while the American Democracy Project committee is busy working on programs to improve the colleges “civic health” in areas identified as weaknesses.

In other news, the Brockport chapter of the American Democracy Project has an upcoming speaker in their Distinguished Lectures series that might be of interest to political science alum. Early in the spring semester, on February 11th acclaimed ecologist and author Dr. Sandra Steingraber will lecture on the connections between the use of toxins and fossil fuels in our day to day lives and their detrimental impact on the environment and children’s health. She frames her research in ways that make it accessible to the general public and urges citizens to work together to improve the nations’ natural environment and well-being.

- Dr. Susan Orr

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Special Thanks to Ashley Burek, Krishaon Ewing, and Allyson L. Kehl
How easy/difficult did you find it to land an internship once you had been accepted into the program?

Dr. Fitzpatrick, the Director of the program, and I spoke a lot on the phone about what kind of internships I was interested in. I had mentioned that Amnesty International was my first choice, and that I would be interested in any sort of internship that they had available. So, that was the first application I sent in, and it was the first internship I heard back from. All in all, I think it was a pretty swift process.

How did you find living in DC? Was it hard to find a place to live? What kind of social scene did you find? Were people friendly and welcoming?

I had friends who had done the program before me, and they told me where they had lived. They all tended to choose The Towers at UTC, in Hyattsville, Maryland, so, that’s where I decided to live. The only downside to living there was it was a long commute into work every day, and I spent over $1000 on the metro alone. However, paying for rent in the outskirts of D.C. will always be less expensive. If I had to choose again, I probably would try to look on the internet for a cheap apartment closer to the heart of the city (if I could find one—the closer you get to the city, the more expensive it will be).

There’s always something to do in D.C.; going out to a restaurant for happy hour, or walking around the monuments and museums. I feel that no matter what type of person you are, you’ll find something that you will enjoy in D.C. My favorite thing that I did with my friends was visiting the Jefferson Memorial at night; the city looked so beautiful lit up. If you do decide to go to D.C. in the spring, I would suggest going to see the cherry blossoms. It may seem very touristy, but it’s a must-see.

The people were definitely very friendly—D.C. is after all well-known as being one of the happiest cities to work and live in. I never really ran into anyone who wasn’t cheerful, except on those Monday morning rides on the metro going to work. D.C. is definitely a very social town, and everyone is always willing to chat and, in turn, network.
Danielle Pierleoni  
Senior Political Science  
&  
Graduate Public Administration Major

Please describe in brief the organization/person you interned with in DC and a little about your day to day activities while you were there.

While in Washington, DC, I spent the semester interning for the Republican National Committee (RNC). While at the RNC, I held the official title as Digital Strategy Intern. I was responsible for tracking the GOP’s social media outreach, projecting future goals in terms of numbers and statistics, and recruiting prospective digital employees. The Digital Strategy Department, including myself, focused mainly on analyzing the RNC’s website (GOP.com), their Facebook page, Twitter page, and the GOP email account. I would also occasionally draft or edit Facebook posts, Tweets, and GOP blog posts.

How has the Brockport DC program helped you prepare for your future career? Did you make any contacts that might prove helpful in future job searches?

The people that I met in DC will be useful contacts when I am looking for a job post-graduation. I gained knowledge about the different job opportunities that are available in DC. People were always willing to give me suggestions on how to secure a job and sell myself.
“Try and do everything you can while you’re there. A semester seems like a long time, but it goes by so quickly, so, fill up your weekend with activities and any local events. Connect with others in the Brockport Washington Semester program, and in your individual internship. Those other interns are great people to turn to for advice and friendship. The interns at Amnesty International all became a very close-knit group, and I’m still in contact with all of them today. Those other interns also could prove beneficial down the road, when you’re looking for a job.”

- Kirsten Wade

“My advice for someone who is thinking about joining the Washington Program is to start looking at different places to intern now! You will realize that there are so many opportunities out there. Keep in mind that DC is expensive. Brockport offers scholarships for students in the program and can help you find cheap housing if necessary. The connections that you make while in DC and the simple fact that you are living and working in our nation’s capitol is what makes this program so great.”

- Danielle Pierleoni
Ushering in A New Era

As the outgoing Chair of Political Science and International Studies Dr. Levy has asked me to say a few words about my three year term as Chair. To do that I must briefly returned to the time when I was hired by the department. I was very fortunate to join the department at a time when senior leadership in Political Science International Studies was about as strong as it will ever be. It was a fun time to be a junior faculty member in the department. When I came on board Drs. Ray Duncan, Robert Getz, Stephen Ullman, Walter Borowiec, and Barbara Jancar were the core senior faculty in the department. In short order Dr.s Rubery, Levy, and I joined the department in the mid-1990s. In those days it was not unusual to find Ray Duncan dancing in the hallways with Barbara Jancar or to hear Walt Borowiec’s booming laughter pouring from his office. Bob Getz could be relied upon for sage advice while Stephen Ullman was the very definition of collegial colleague and dedicated teacher. In their own way each served as a mentor to me. Over the next several years most of them retired until only Stephen Ullman was left. They were all missed.

Unfortunately for a long time too many of them were not replaced and the department shrank. Under the guidance our senior colleague Dr. Ullman Dr.s Rubery, Levy and I did what we could to maintain the esprit de corps and the high standards set by our predecessors but it was a difficult task. The department also lost a secretary, Marcy Stickles, who had served the college for over thirty years. The good news is that by the time I became Chair the tide was starting to turn and our department was growing again. With the addition of Dr.’s Stephen Jurek, Susan Orr, Robert Shum, Nilay Saiya and Jean Kachiga and a new secretary Lisa Chevalier our department is once again a vibrant community serving students at The College at Brockport.
I can claim no credit for the revival of the department for, as all department Chairs know, whether a department shrinks or grows is determined by forces largely beyond our control. If I can take any credit at all for the direction of the department it would be for steering it in the direction of collegiality and commitment to students. In every personnel decision made during my term as Chair I’d like to believe that I put those considerations first. Of course in a department like mine whose members overwhelmingly already share those same values it was easy to provide such leadership.

I was eager to take on the task of being Chair of the department and I am now every bit as eager, and delighted, to return full-time to the classroom. Stepping down as Chair was made all the easier because I know my successor Dr. Dena Levy is a more than capable Chair. This is Dr. Levy’s second term at the helm and, as such, she has the benefit of her prior experience in that role. Moreover, she is a gifted natural administrator whom I have no doubt will do a great job of leading the department into the future.

- Dr. Mark Chadsey
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