

Political Science Newsletter

Number 45: May 30, 2017

First, the faculty congratulates this year's 28 new alumni (21 majors – a record! – and 7 minors) who join your ranks. This class was one of our most diverse in many ways, including geographically. Our majors include students from Nicaragua, Sweden, Honduras, Rwanda, Canada, and even Erie 😊.

Jon Antonio	Violeta Bermudez	Conor Bodlak
Brian Comey	Sean Crowley	Evan DeMayo
Alyson Golenberke	Aaron Henry	Nick Hiltz
Christine Hoh	Lauren Kenny	Sam Lioi
Tom Matheson	Sarah McGuigon	Ross Molinaro IV
Dayana Moncada	Igor Ngabo	Marissa Peltz
Fanny Perdstrom	Ainars Safonovs	Amanda Salasek
Margaret Stanley	Brett Swan	Hannah Tombaugh
Victoria Vaccaro	Rebecca Watts	Jaquan Williams
	Austin Wood	

The end of Spring Semester, with all of the graduation events, is always a bittersweet time for faculty and seniors alike, as it is a time of beginnings and endings. That theme, beginnings and endings, seems like a nice jump off point for an editorial commentary before moving on to important stuff (the alumni updates, department news and faculty updates, summer reading list, and such). Let's take on the elephant (and donkey) in the room.

Comment: Elections, especially Presidential elections, are -- as are graduations -- turning points that mark beginnings and endings. This past election season, and the very much non-honeymoonish first 100+ days of the Trump presidency, has seemed a turning point on steroids. I know people (business people, academics, and salt of the earth people) who were overjoyed with the election results and many who were filled with despair by it. How might we think about the election, these reactions, and what has followed since then, as a community of people concerned with policy and politics, and inspired by the values of a Mercy and liberal arts education? As usual, I don't have many answers, but I do have a few thoughts.

First, though there are many legitimate questions about the strength of our institutions and democratic norms, and concerns about the reality of a constitution that is more than words on a piece of paper, but less an institution than an idea needing individuals and institutions to breathe life into it; remember that our system of government was built to both allow active government, and to constrain government and the individual desire for power. The office of the president has incredible power to do good and ill, yet Congress, the courts, the states, local government, and even the diverse set of agencies and employees who comprise the bulk of the executive branch, provide checks on that power – as does an independent media, corporations, non-profits, IGOs and NGOs, and individuals who choose to be citizens not just consumers. Thus, it is up to us to read, research, and write; to communicate, advocate and donate; and to analyze, organize, & vote wise.

Second, though it can be difficult, awkward, frustrating, and challenging: listening to and reading news sources you disagree with; talking to, and more importantly listening to, people who see the world differently than you do; and, making sure we act on our beliefs rather than just talk about them; matters.

Whether the issues are jobs, environmental regulations, LGBTQI rights, immigration, education, the opioid crisis, crime policy, the first or second or fourth amendments, or the myriad of international threats and issues ranging from refugees/IDP to clean water, from R2P to the resource curse, from climate change to nuclear proliferation, from NATO, Article V, and the EU to dealing with China, or from trade deals to (take your pick) Russia, North Korea, Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, Yemen, etceteras, the facts matter -- but so do the bottom-line value questions that undergird so much of policy debate. In fact, they matter more as they drive policy.

Trump supporters need to think about how the policies being advocated, implemented, or ended, relate to questions of justice and mercy, especially for the poor, the oppressed, and the vulnerable. Trump's opponents need to ask what motivated his supporters, why so many people were angry, ready to vote for change, and felt harmed by changes that they (his opponents) embrace. His supporters need to think about the very real fear and sense of alienation engendered among many immigrants – including college students – (especially those with relationships to undocumented residents), minorities, and many sexual assault victims. His opponents need to think about the downside of globalization, the costs as well as the benefits of laws designed to protect our air, water, and health, and why a stated goal of “America First” resonated so strongly despite the slogan's tainted history. For both sides, a deeper understanding depends on respect, empathy, and – yes – conversation. I write this knowing deeply and personally how difficult it can be. Our deepest values can make it seem almost impossible or indefensible to engage respectfully with ideas we find offensive, and to consider as valid, claims we are certain are wrong, and people who are ill-informed and argue based on false or anecdotal facts. And, this is not an endorsement of the false equivalencies so often haunting our political arguments and partisan media presentations. If 97% of experts agree on something, the three percent's view should not be presented as equally valid (though occasionally they may be correct).

However, if we cannot carry on a conversation, if we eschew debate and attack each others assumed motives, if we respond to words that outrage us by showing disdain and disrespect for the those who uttered them and disengage, rather than engaging them in a spirit of concern, humbleness, curiosity, and respect, we fray the social capital of the community we need to build to address the very real challenges that confront us. The authors of the book *Predisposed* argue that understanding the role of genetics in political predispositions might help us empathize with and understand (which literally means to stand among, to stand in the midst of) our political opponents. This makes sense to me, because at some level, remembering our opponent's humanity, needs, fears, and values is central to an inclusive dialogue and therefore to both understanding and democracy.

Third, as our alumni surely know, but we all sometimes forget, while college and a major or minor in Political Science helps prepare you to engage with the world (by helping students to: find their own path; recognize both their strengths and weaknesses; be capable of research, clear writing, persuasive presentations; and develop their work ethic, resilience, time-management skills, and determination), higher education should also help people realize that so much of life falls outside the political realm. While politics really, really does matter, it is not even close to the end of the story.

Love, children, joy, friends and family, a walk in the mountains or along the shore, a child's laughter, a friend's departure, silence, singing, an embrace, a good book, and an endless list of other such things are the essence of our life journey. These things are not divorced from politics, and they are all clearly affected by politics, but they are also a cure for politics, offering us a necessary balm. Take courage, but also take a break. Step up, but also step back and dance, and throw a baseball with a child, or “throw one back”. Read that beach book, celebrate, call that friend, or – don't take this wrong – take a hike. ☺

Okay, enough (too much?) professing by the professor. Let's get to the main event.

WHO'S DOING WHAT: ALUMNI UPDATES

Ariel Flores (Major '14) – Last year, I was working with the National Party of Honduras, which is the party of the current president and which has a majority in Congress. I worked there from May 2015 to October 2016 in the Communications and Marketing department. In November 2016 I started a new adventure, this time working with the United States Embassy in Tegucigalpa. I am currently working with the Department of State in the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs as the Outreach Coordinator. I am still doing a lot of communications and marketing tasks. I spend time writing ASDARs, cables and weekly reports for the folks in Washington with the different projects the agency sponsors and is involved with local law enforcement agencies. We work very closely with the Police, Attorneys, Forensic Medicine, Financial Crimes agencies etc. Honduras just received A LOT of money from the United States to fight illegal immigration, Gang Violence and drug trafficking, and INL manages some of these funds + the funding US Congress has assigned to us. I am very thankful to the Mercyhurst Political Science Department, because without your help I wouldn't have been able to land this job. I really hope I can come soon and visit.

Rich Wagner (Major '96) – In terms of an update, things are steady-as-she-goes. Business is good as I am going into my seventh year of operation and now have over thirty clients and 300+ project engagements per year. I have been fortunate enough to expand into overseas development work with USAID, DoS, and foreign government (airports, ports, etc.). This has allowed me to really deploy my political science education (and to further recognize just how important it is to convey critical thinking through written and verbal communication). The girls - Lizzie and Rachel - are 7.5 (twins) and now have determined that the most important thing on the planet is their iPods (thanks Grandma...). All is well, traveling a bit overseas (as mentioned) and I am looking forward to visiting Maputo, Mozambique (leaving May 1) for meetings on port operations. Just so you know, I am still on the lookout for that Max Weber bobble head. When I find it, well, just keep a space available on your desk...

Elise Yablonsky (Major '07) – Last year I was promoted to Planning Director for University Circle Inc. (UCI), the non-profit community service corporation for Cleveland's eds, meds, arts and cultural district. It's an exciting time to be working in physical development here, as we are in a period of tremendous growth. To give you a sense, we have 700 apartments currently under construction and over 1,000 planned or proposed over the next few years. With the RNC in Cleveland last summer, we've recently completed many enhancement projects, including a refresh of our main avenue streetscape, 40-point interpretive signage program, building facade lighting, mural program, and installation of a new bike share system. Managing the projects and the various stakeholders is always a challenge, but the research, analysis and communication skills I honed through the Mercyhurst Political Science program continue to support me in making it work! We are now in the midst of a strategic plan which will help set the course for the organization over the next 10 years. On a Hurst note, I am still serving on the Mercyhurst University National Alumni Board of Directors, so please reach out if you have any alumni-related questions or concerns (eyablonsky@universitycircle.org). On the personal side, Mike and I are happily living in Cleveland's Detroit Shoreway neighborhood with our dog Mosby. I am also serving as a Take A Hike tour guide this summer, so if you find yourself in Downtown Cleveland on a Tuesday evening, please drop by for a free walking tour! [Ed. Note: Now two people have told you to take a hike. That may be a sign!]

Andrea (Hashim) Hansen (Minor '04) – We welcomed our second child, Hannah Hansen, on May 2. Hannah and her brother, Alexander (19 months), are getting along famously. The shift to parenthood, particularly of 2 kids under 2, has been a GREAT challenge, but well worth the ride! Michael and I will celebrate our 4th wedding anniversary this fall and we reside in our hometown of Bakersfield, CA. I continue to run a dance nonprofit advocacy organization, [Kern Dance Alliance](#) (KDA). We have worked on many projects that help to make dance more accessible to larger populations in Kern County. A few of those programs include [SHINE for Girls](#), which combines math and dance for girls 6-8th grade to not only increase their math competency, but also enhance their interest in STEM. [Books in Motion](#) links dance and literacy for children K-3rd grade, and we just launched [danceABILITY](#), a dance program for children with mental and physical disabilities. KDA is rewarding work and has been received VERY well by our community. As one of the many Mercyhurst Dance Majors that also dabbled in Political Science, I would be remiss if I did not mention how politics continues to shape my world! It is amazing how quickly running a nonprofit links you into politics. Current House Majority Leader, Kevin McCarthy and his wife Judy, have become wonderful supporters of KDA- both are Bakersfield natives. Plus, my long time friends are now politicians, Vince Fong is now a CA Assemblyman- 34th District and Karen Goh is now the Mayor of Bakersfield. KDA has truly benefited from their support and continues to grow with their official political "seal of approval". PS- because I am doting mother... here are our VERY cute kids (yes, Hannah is wearing a tutu!!) [Ed. Note: Yup, a pink tutu, and very cute children]

Sandra Grance (Major '02) – My quick update is that after 13 years in DC I made the move to the west coast last September to start a new gig at Herbalife Nutrition in Los Angeles. It has been a great change for me even though it's been difficult being so far from my family that is almost all still in Western PA. My uncle passed away earlier this year, you may have seen from the local news, (Judge) Bob Sambroak. He was such an important influence on my interest of law and politics and my overall college experience but I was fortunate enough to make a quick trip to Erie to see him before he passed as well as being back for the funeral. My role at Herbalife is similar to my previous one at the American Beverage Association in that I am working in state and local government relations. Hope you have a great summer and thanks for keeping in touch with everyone and giving us all a sense of community long after we leave the Hurst.

A.J. Zahuranek (Major '15) – It is difficult to believe that two years have gone by since my graduation. Since leaving Mercyhurst, I moved to Washington, DC to get a Master of Arts in International Affairs from the George Washington University. I've had tremendous success thus far, thanks in no small part to the wonderful teachers I had at Mercyhurst, and am on track to graduate from there with distinction in two weeks. I am finalizing the presentation for my Master's capstone, a research project on the United Nations in Haiti, and trying not to panic too much about it. Job-wise, I had the pleasure to work at a small government consulting firm and am currently in the Scholar Program at the National Governors Association, the group that represents and provides research for the governors of the various U.S. states and territories. Admittedly, "scholar" is just a very polite way to say "intern," but the work has been enjoyable and the opportunities phenomenal. I did not expect to ever be in a position to say, "I had doughnuts with the Governor of Rhode Island," but here we are. Were it not for the current political climate and the D.C. Metro system catching fire every few days, I would say that I have had a rather good year. I hope that everyone else is doing just as well if not better. I look forward to seeing this year's summer reading list and seeing how everyone else is doing. I send my best wishes to Dr. Federici, Dr. Surzhko-Harned, Dr. Clemons and all my former professors. For books I can recommend *A Canticle for Leibowitz* by Walter M. Miller, Jr., *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood, and *Black Flags: The Rise of ISIS* by Joby Warrick.

Kristen (Brown) Cassidy (Contract Major '03) – I took a job with Erie Insurance a little over a year ago in the Customer Experience group and have really enjoyed the transition from manufacturing to insurance. I learned a lot and enjoyed the time but have since moved to a role in their newly formed strategy unit. It has been a great opportunity and I am excited to see where it goes as we cement some of the changes we are introducing. I recently had the pleasure of getting a cube mate who graduated from the Hurst RIAP program, Thomas Frank, and it has been great getting to know him and the unique perspective he is offering our group (fueled by his Hurst background, of course). I am sure I will have more goodness to report along the way as our practice matures. Still teaching at LECOM on Saturdays and running around with the kiddos like crazy. I am planning to go to the Erie Alumni happy hour next week - hope to see some familiar faces I haven't seen in awhile.

Kylie McCormick (Minor '13) – after completing my Masters in Divinity at Fuller Theological Seminary I moved to the U.K. I am now in my first year of a PhD studying musicology and theology. Along with that I'm also a music journalist. Not necessarily using my poli sci degree directly, but still exploring fun things! Hope you and everyone at Merchurst are doing well.

Joanna Olmstead (Major '05) –). Hi Dr. Clemons, it's been a number of years since my last update. Life is great! I'm back in my hometown of Port Huron, MI. Paul and I are having a blast with our 14-month-old son Ryder, and parenthood has so far been the most challenging yet rewarding experience of my life. Maybe someday we'll have another Laker in the family! Best wishes to Dr. Federici and the rest of the professors.

Carrie Gambino (Minor '13) – I've been with Erie County Senior Services in Buffalo for over a year now, where I am the Outreach Aide for the department. It's a rewarding job that I really enjoy. Over the summer, I plan on putting my Notary stamp to good use as I petition for local candidates endorsed by the Erie County Democratic Committee. I can't wait to chase wind-blown papers down suburban streets and attempt to convince people that I'm not selling something or trying to use their signature as part of a identity theft scheme. All for democracy! Summer reading recommendation: [Reclaiming Hope: Lessons Learned in the Obama White House About the Future of Faith in America](#) - and not because my cousin wrote it and I'm mentioned in the Acknowledgments section...okay, that's exactly the reason.

Ali Iaquinto (Minor '15) – After graduation in 2015 I completed an internship with the FBI in Detroit and was offered a full time position in the Operations Center as an Operational Support Technician. Currently, I am in the same position but I work with the Violent Crime squads. There is no shortage of crime in Detroit, so we keep plenty busy. Despite its problems, downtown Detroit is experiencing a lot of growth and I am trying to explore as much as I can when I'm not working. It's been a great two years and I'm thankful for what I learned with the Mercyhurst Poli Sci and Intel programs. My congratulations to the graduating class and as always, go Lakers!

Jessica Hilburn (Double Major '15) – I defended my master's thesis on Vietnam antiwar activism with distinction in March 2017 and will be graduating from Edinboro with my MA on May 13th. I also presented my research at two national conferences this year in Atlantic City, New Jersey and Albuquerque, New Mexico. I am still employed with Benson Memorial Library and have been doing some interesting local historical research and am gearing up for our fun summer reading season!

Dana (Hyland) Krishland (Major '05) – I'm continuing to work hard, alongside my brilliant colleagues, at identifying and using the best available science to inform EPA's work on climate change. As always, if you have any students interested in environmental issues and/or working for the government, feel free to give them my contact info and I'd be happy to chat some more.

Tony D'Abruzzo (Major '03) – Dear Doc C, in January, I took a new job working for the State of New York as the Technology and Training Coordinator for the Crime Analysis Center Program. Pretty confident that I'm the only person in America with that job title. Wasn't thrilled with the idea of leaving Pittsburgh, again, but this is a tremendous opportunity that I couldn't turn down. Now I'm living in Albany, NY and spending most of my time driving to different parts of the state. The actual job is to set up training for crime analysts and to standardize technology across our centers. It is the only program of it's kind and is continuing to expand. Other than that, I just ran my 11th, and arguably dumbest, marathon last week in Pittsburgh. This year, my friends and I raised almost \$7000 for Project RUN, a charity that teaches nutrition and exercise to kids in underserved neighborhoods. We got a little press about it this year, with an appearance on Pittsburgh Today Live and an article on an online newspaper (<http://triblive.com/local/allegHENY/12256722-74/pittsburgh-marathon-motivates-runners-for-myriad-reasons>). I've attached a picture for your amusement. [Ed. Note: Tony, running a marathon as Chewbacca, was amusing!] That's about it for me. I, like everyone else, was sorry to hear about Dr. Federici's departure. My assumption is that he wanted to be closer to Dollywood, which no one can argue with. It's a tough loss, but at least the department is still in good hands. It was great to see the alumni pull together and do something good in his honor. Thanks to those who organized it. Goes to show you how well you've kept the alumni all in touch with each other with these newsletters. We all still feel we are a part of the Mercyhurst community because of them. Congrats on another year in the books, and to all of the graduating seniors.

Mike Walter (Major '15) – It's been a busy last few months for me in D.C. I successfully completed my first year of grad school in the Political Management program at George Washington University, and just recently started a position managing fundraising efforts for several Republican House members with a small Republican fundraising/political consulting shop. Political consulting is what I've always wanted to do, and I'm excited for the new challenge after discovering that working in the U.S. Senate isn't nearly as exciting as it seems. I wish Dr. Federici all the best in his new position and cannot thank him enough for everything he has done for me. I wouldn't be where I am today professionally without the writing and critical thinking skills I gained in his classes.

Jill Bucceri (Major '00) – I'm currently working at Amazon Web Services in Herndon, VA, as a Contracts Administrator for our Public Sector. As you can imagine we are growing at a rapid pace & are hiring all the time. Plus we have an impressive public policy division in our DC office. I encourage anyone interested in the tech field to check out our job postings online!

Brian Maurelli (Minor '05) – I am currently finishing up a deployment to the Middle East in support of Operation Inherent Resolve. I will be returning to the states to attend professional development course for the military for a year. I have read a few books over the last year. A few I recommend are: *In Cold Blood* by Truman Capote, *Mr. Mercedes*, *Finders Keepers*, and *End of Watch* by Stephen King.

Tim Krysiak (Minor '05) – The past year has been a busy one! Since my last update my wife and I bought a house in the Houston Heights and adopted 2-year-old boxer/beagle mix named Haley. We visited Montauk and the Hamptons last summer and traveled to Hawaii this spring, visiting Maui and Big Island. Sadly, Haley had to stay in Texas! In 2016, I led the Statoil effort to access drilling rights in deep water Mexico. This was the first time in history the Mexican government has allowed private investment in deep water oil and gas activity. In December, I attended the bid ceremony in Mexico City and nearly jumped out of my seat when the Minister announced that Statoil won two blocks with our partners BP and Total. With the Mexico project complete, I've begun working for Statoil's clean tech venture capital fund, called Statoil Energy Ventures. This \$200 million fund is designed to give the company insight into new technology and business models that could influence the transition to a low-carbon economy. So far the fund has invested in four clean tech companies and I monitor our investment in ChargePoint, a California-based electric vehicle charging company. ChargePoint has exciting technology which could enable faster adoption of electric vehicles. Last month ChargePoint signed a [strategic partnership with Uber to develop a network of flying electric taxis](#), with first flight in 2020! In addition, I'm leading an effort to identify US solar projects in which Statoil can invest, which has been a great opportunity for me to apply my business development skills to renewable energy projects and power markets. In 2017, Statoil sponsored me to attend the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) Leadership Program. WBCSD is a CEO-led organization that helps mobilize progressive corporations to support the UN Sustainable Development Goals. WBCSD runs the program in conjunction with Yale University and it includes participants from over 30 different corporations. So far, I've focused my research on the nexus of sustainability and investing and, in the second phase of the course, I'll focus on how public-private partnerships can boost energy efficiency in "smart cities." Earlier this year, I started teaching at Mercyhurst, which has been a truly rewarding experience. I'm nearly finished teaching my first course, INTL 625 Intelligence and Business Strategy. The course took me months to prepare, but it was a valuable experience to organize and communicate the key lessons from graduate school, business school and my career. My students have delivered some excellent work so far and I'm excited to review their final projects this weekend! Also, I'm looking forward to being back on campus for Mercyhurst Homecoming this fall. I hope to see many of you there!

Bill Melville (Minor '99) – I'm still working in Nashville on health insurance market analysis. The last few months have been interesting to say the least and I still have no clue what form of final bill will emerge. What passed the House makes the Affordable Care Act look like model legislation. After dealing with implementation of Obamacare throughout the past seven years, I'm not sure I have the stomach for another drastic upheaval in the healthcare system. In case I never said this before, studying foreign policy and global politics has been instrumental in understanding health insurance and hospital markets. The fight for market share is not unlike The Great Game. In reading, I recommend Glass House: The 1% Economy and the Shattering of the All-American Town, Brian Alexander. It's an excellent dissection of how a small, independent town can see its prosperity wither. It would be worthwhile for anyone wondering why the Rust Belt and Appalachia flipped for Trump or fans of J.D. Vance's Hillbilly Elegy.

Caitlin English (Minor '15) – Not much has changed since the last update. I am still employed at Frederick Police Department as a Crime Analyst and have been working there for about a year and a half now. I really enjoy working at FPD as an analyst and I enjoy learning something new every day. My personal life has been quite busy as I am getting married in just a few weeks (June 17th). I am excited to be getting married, however, I am more excited for wedding planning to end! Wish me luck!

Jule Gardner Banville (Major '95) – Hello to the greatest political society in existence. I'm so glad to still be a member. Wishing all the best to Doc Federici and whatever his next adventures will be. How honored are we that Doc Clemons is still at the helm? I told him, but will tell you all, too: In my life as a college prof, I often think about the great ones I knew at Mercyhurst. Since I majored in Clemons, well, he's No. 1. This job is harder than we all knew when we were wide-eyed (when not hungover), and he made it look easy. I have no earth-shattering news. I'm an associate professor going up for tenure at the University of Montana School of Journalism. In the last year, I produced an audio documentary in collaboration with a staff writer/former student at the Bozeman Chronicle. You can listen here if at all interested: <http://lastbeststories.org/episode-8-the-plane-crash/> This spring semester, I teamed up with another prof (also my hubs, Lee Banville) and our best students to take on an ambitious reporting project digging in on the effect of methamphetamine in Montana. It's a big deal around here and I'm super proud of the work we did. We're told our U.S. Sen. Jon Tester's staff is using it to write a bill. It also aired as an hourlong special on Montana Public Radio. <http://metheffect.com/> Like the Hurst, my university is in a budget crisis. Things have happened. Things will happen. Until then, I continue to teach journalism and sometimes do it. I have two littles: Kate, who's 7, and Maggie, who's 5. We're dragging them to Ireland for most of July. Wheee! Book rec: "The Snow Child," by Eowyn Ivey. It's escapist, beautifully written. Hope you are all well and happy. [Ed. Note: I've previously plugged her podcasts, so will instead mention how very well-done the metheffect website is. I passed it on to several professors I know who teach in related areas.]

Christie Stratthaus Grisetti (Major '98) – It has been 23 years since I first stepped foot on campus and 19 years since I became an alumni. Time sure does fly. I did visit campus early last summer. So nostalgic. I would love to go back again. I thoroughly enjoyed my time there. With Dr. Federici leaving, I feel even older! I've been with my company for 17 years now and my girls are growing fast (they will be 12 and 9 respectively in 2017). My piece of advice to any graduating senior and any other current student that reads these updates is enjoy every single second...every single paper you have to write...every single all-nighter you pull because these are the best days of your life.

Jill Curry (Major '04) – By way of an update, not too much new here. I'm still working as a fiscal analyst for the Utah State Legislature. We wrapped up our legislative session mid-March. I'm still working on public and higher education which have been great issue areas in which to work. It's been fun assisting legislators as they try to make some positive changes in education e.g. in public education, our appropriations subcommittee chairs were able to secure funding for educator licensing fees so the state will pay for educators licenses starting in July rather than teachers having to pay. Aside from work, the kids keep me busy and we also have plans to do some exploring out west later this summer.

Jeremy Dickey (Major '13) – Hey Dr. Clemons, hope all is well at Mercyhurst! Since I've last checked in, I've started a new job. I am now the Media Specialist and Communications Director for the City of Takoma Park, Maryland, just outside of Washington, D.C. It's a really exciting and challenging position. I work with the Mayor and City Manager on a wide array of communications projects and am acting spokesperson for the City. This has been a really great step into the right direction, and links two of my passions, politics and communications! Takoma Park is certainly a fun and quirky City, if you've never heard of it, just do a Google search and you'll understand what I mean. That's all for now. Thanks

Chris Kelly (Major '12) – All is well in Delaware. Last summer I was promoted to Assistant Policy Scientist at the University of Delaware's Institute for Public Administration. Over the past year I have worked on a variety of contracts such as facilitating the hiring of a local school district's superintendent, a fiscal impact analysis of the modification of school district boundaries, a statewide master plan for school libraries, and college access initiatives. I've enjoyed my experiences as a staff member at IPA so far and am grateful for the excellent public service related skill set that the Political Science Department at Mercyhurst University helped me develop. I hope that all is well and please feel free to contact me if you have an interest in the graduate programs at the School of Public Policy and Administration at the University of Delaware (Joe Biden has launched a new initiative within our school called the Biden Institute, so it is a very exciting time to be in Delaware). We are always looking for graduate students and research assistants with an interest in public service. [Ed. Note: Of our many new alumni headed off to law or graduate school, two of them are actually following in Chris's illustrious footsteps, and starting their Masters programs at the U. of Delaware this fall]

Rachel Brown (Major '12) – I am happy to report that I have decided to accept a position in the Class of 2020 at the University of Chicago School of Law. I am incredibly excited for this amazing opportunity and look forward to a new adventure. I recently resigned from my position as a Community Health Navigator with Amerihealth Caritas in order to take the summer "off" to prepare for the madness that will be 1L year. I look forward to using the time to catch up on some reading and travel.

Neal B. Hammill, Jr. Esq. (Major '93) – Some of our more seasoned alumni knew the amazing Neal Hammill. Neal was a single parent who rode his wheel chair to class, after driving his van to campus, then tangled with Old Main's ancient elevator, traveled to DC with his peers, crashed on a snow drift outside Herman's Tavern, wrangled for bonus points, and won the Sr. Eustace Taylor Leadership Award when he graduated in 1993, before heading off to law school. His death this spring could not go unmentioned, even though his failure to send in an alumni update actually had him owing me bonus points ☺ <https://www.bruggerfuneralhomes.com/obituaries/10628>

FACULTY AND DEPARTMENT NEWS

DEPARTMENT NEWS:

One, **homecoming** next fall will be the weekend of September 29, 30, October 1, with the Poli Sci gathering, alumni tent, football game, etc., on **Saturday the 30th**. We are hoping to see a big gathering at our event including, perhaps, a cohort of the 2012, 2007, 2002, 1997 majors and minors looking at 5th, 10th, 15th, and 20th year reunions? Thanks much to all the alumni who were able to visit last fall. It's always a great opportunity for our current students!

Two, the annual beat down of "underclassmenandwomen" ☺ by the faculty-senior volleyball squad did happen again this year despite bad weather meant that drove us inside for both our picnic and volleyball this year at the year-end "beach" party. Despite scheduling this the day after the annual senior bar-crawl, and our two graduating volleyball team stars being absent (no connection, I'm sure), once again the good guys (and gals) prevailed.

Three, we are pleased to note that **Sam Lioi** (Double Major – Political Science and Business Competitive Intelligence) won the *Carpe Diem Award* (still deemed the top award given at graduation – and you can watch his graduation speech here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j8cWH7zdHnc>) Consequently I have once again updated and attached to the end of this email, our website document titled “The Award Winning Department” which documents the department’s unparalleled success in terms of such recognition for our students (as well as some for the faculty). Moreover, **Lauren Kenny** (Double Major – Political Science and Intell) won the award as the top female Scholar Athlete.

FACULTY UPDATES:

Dr. Victoria Rickard – Our new colleague, joining us in the Fall, is Victoria Anne Rickard. She earned a Ph.D. in political science from the University of Oklahoma, where she held a Fellowship at the Carl Albert Congressional Research and Studies Center; a Juris Doctorate from Michigan State University, with concentrations in international law and intellectual property; a Master of Arts in International Affairs from American University, with a concentration in international politics; and a Bachelor of Arts from Gonzaga University, where, as a Regent Scholar, she studied history and political science (and basketball). Victoria’s primary teaching and research interests lie in the areas of American politics, law, international relations, public policy, and gender. She has presented papers at national conferences, and her research has appeared in the *Journal of Public Budgeting, Accounting & Financial Management* and *Politics & Gender*. Victoria is originally from Boulder, Colorado. Welcome!

Dr. Joe Morris – worked with nearly 100 students during spring semester to conduct a poll of Erie County registered voters. The poll was the first of six polls focusing on Erie County voters' perception of Donald Trump's policies and job performance. Speaking of the 2016 presidential election, Dr. Morris is preparing to teach a new honors course on the Trump Administration in Spring 2017. This summer he will be staying close to home to enjoy the beautiful Erie summer with his family, hockey camps with Logan (soon to 8 years old!), and theater performances by Grace (15 years old). On his summer reading lists are Jonathan Gottscholl's *The Storytelling Animal: How Stories make us Human*, Dan P. McAdams's *The Stories we Live by: Personal Myths and the Making of the Self*, J.D Vance's *Hillbilly Elegy: A Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisis*.

Dr. Brian Ripley – I just want to pay tribute to my friend and colleague, Dr. Michael Federici. His intellect, humor, work ethic, and passion for this profession have been an inspiration to all of us. Dr. Federici will be sorely missed. I wish him and his family the very best as they begin this new phase of their lives in Tennessee.

Dr. Randy S. Clemons –since the last newsletter the third edition of his coauthored public policy textbook (**Public Policy Praxis: A Case Approach for Understanding Policy and Analysis**) made it into print. As noted elsewhere previously, it features a case study coauthored by one of his former student research assistants, Elise Yablonsky ‘07, and also a new case coauthored by his 2015-16 student research assistant, Juliet Hilburn ‘18. He also presented a paper examining public opinion and Islamophobia at the APSA conference in Philly as part of an ongoing research endeavor with Drs. Peterson and Palmer, that also resulted in a paper presentation by his coauthors at the WPSA this spring. Along with administrative work, adjusting to the idea of life without Fed-X, and prepping classes this summer for fall (including a new seminar on African Politics which has landed at least six new books on his summer reading list), he has plans to travel to the beautiful Pacific Northwest and

continue his return to running shape, spend time with family and old friends, and – yes – take a hike (or five). Finally, as promised, you will find next the text of updated *The Award Winning Department* document, and please find (attached) the always anticipated, **Summer Reading List**.

The Award Winning Department: Political Science

The picture above was taken at the **2015** graduation awards dinner, and documented the continuation of a most impressive history as four more of our students won top graduation awards. **Hallie McDonald** (Major) won the President's Award for Excellence for the School of Social Sciences (graduating with a 4.0); **Nina Aamodt** (Major) won the Catherine McAuley Award given to the top Adult student on campus; **Stefani Baughman** (Double Major – Political Science and Intel) won the Award as the top Honors student, the Mother Borgia Egan Honors Award, (and she was the university's Fulbright nominee), and **Emily Francis** (Minor) won the Bishop's Award for Excellence (also with a 4.0). Additionally, 23 graduated with Latin Honors (including 9 of the 25 students university-wide who completed the Honors Program requirements as well. Pretty impressive in a department known for its rigor!

But, you ask, what about 2016 and 2017? Well, in 2016 **Caleb Ohmer** (Double Major – Political Science and English) won the Carpe Diem Award and **Matt Hatfield** (Triple Major) won the award as the top Honors student, the Mother Borgia Egan Honors Award. Perhaps completing that triple major (Poli, Psych, and Religious Studies) and the honors program curriculum with a 4.0 had something to do with his selection ☺. Then, in 2017, **Sam Lioi** (Double Major – Political Science and Business Intelligence) won the Carpe Diem Award. Sam's speech can be accessed here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j8cWH7zdHnc>

Also, the year prior to 2015 (2013-14) we had several students selected for individual awards. **Alethea Gaarden**, Double Major (Political Science and English) won the Bishop's Award for Academic Excellence (basically the equivalence of Valedictorian, but she had to also have the record to edge out a number of other 4.0 students). Another 4.0 Double Major (Political Science and Business Intelligence) **Mary Mancuso** won the President's Award for Excellence for the School of Social Sciences (encompassing Political Science, Intelligence Studies, History, Sociology/Social Work, and Criminal Justice). Additionally, **Steven Messina** (Double Major, Political Science and Intel.) was Mercyhurst's nominee for the Marshall Scholarship, and a total of twelve of ours graduated with Latin Honors (including two who completed the honors program requirements as well).

But, impressive as this is, it is not a new story, as an analysis of the last 18 years (2000-2017) will show. For this analysis, we looked only at the "graduation" awards. Thus students who were the Mercyhurst University Prestigious Award Nominees such as **Steve Messina** '14, or even if they won at the national level (e.g., **Joe Delgado** '04 or **Tim Krysiak** '05) are not included for this honor count. Nor does it keep track of how many students graduated with Latin honors, or the Scholar Athlete awards. Starting in 2000 also eliminates a number of award winning students that we can rattle off without doing any research including **Randy Hilliard** and **Bill Melville**, both '99, **Emilio Collovacio** '98, **Amy Kovach** '97, **Jule (Gardner) Banville** '95, and **Neal Hammill** '93.

Our apologies to any and all other pre-2000 award winners, but the list below represents only the following awards: *The top two graduation awards, the Carpe Diem and the Bishop's Award for Academic Excellence; the President's Awards for Excellence given by each school and to one adult student each year on a campus-wide basis; the Alumni Recognition awards, the Leadership award (now called the Frank Barry Award), the Catherine McAuley Award to the top Adult student, and the Mother Borgia Egan Honors Award given to the top student in the honors program.*

So, in the last 18 years Political Science department students have won how many of these top awards? The answer is 44. Below are the years, names, and awards won.

Five Bishop Award winners: **Emily Francis '15, Alethea Gaarden '14, Jill (Gloekler) Curry '04, Chris Roos '02, and Amber (White) Vance '01.**

Six Carpe Diem Award winners: **Sam Lioi '17, Caleb Ohmer '16, Dinorah Sanchez '10, Tim Krysiak '05, Casey Kilroy '03, and Billy Byrnes '02.** (Note that we swept the top two in '02)

Sixteen won President's Awards for Excellence for their schools (three in other schools): **Hallie McDonald '15, Mary Mancuso '14, Brian Lombardo '13, Melissa Kirwin '11, Meghan Raynor '10, Sarah Rudawitz '09, Elise Yablonsky and Dina Bastianni '07, J.J. Mikulec and Valerie Nezich '05, Pat Collins '04, Kristen Brown and Danielle Aloschen '03, Jay Starliper '02, Mike Jones '01, and Andrea Ellison '00.**

Eight won Alumni Recognition or Leadership awards: **Paige Thomas and Spencer Vuksic '13, Rachel Brown '12, Ian Michalski '10, Lindsey Kole '06, Mike Foglio '05, Perry Wood '01, and Scott Koskoski '00.**

Five won the award for the top Honors student (this award only started in 2005). **Matt Hatfield '16, Stefani Baughman '15, Liz Eidner '12, Ashley Herman '07, and Kristen Hudak '05.**

Four won either of the two top awards for non-traditional students. **Nina Aamodt '15, Bill Demauri '12, Sean Fedorko '11, and Kathy Antus '03.**

Again, that's 44 political science students (32 majors, 12 minors) honored in the last 18 years, just within the categories listed.

And, it ignores so many great alumni, year after year who were not singled out for these distinctions. Add in the our unparalleled record of faculty winning teaching awards (three in the last decade – more than any other department at Mercyhurst), and it's easy to see why calling the Political Science Department "The Award Winning Department" makes complete sense.