

Political Science Newsletter

Number 47: June 3, 2019

While hiking last week a friend asked me about the challenge of teaching politics in such a polarized era, and whether or not it was cathartic to express my opinions on “what is going on”; she was surprised when I explained that teaching political science was generally not focused on the current politics of the moment, that I rarely discussed my opinions, and that our job was not to teach students what to think, but how to improve how they think. As I explained that we taught students about enduring ideas, theories, and concepts; gave them tools to use to analyze, present findings, and persuade; that we explain institutions, teach historical and political context, and focus on teaching transferable skills such as writing, reading, and research, she seemed equal parts confused and impressed. So, I continued, and discussed classes my colleagues teach, such as Political Theory, Global Issues, Politics of the Global Economy, Civil Liberties, and my own courses, including Leadership, Geopolitics, and the Senior Project capstone course; as well as our focus on concepts such as power and story analysis, individual consent, the power of law, and constructivism.

Then she asked what our alumni do after graduation, so I discussed the many paths trod by alumni, and used as examples, many of the same people who have submitted updates – as well as talking about where many of this year’s graduates were headed. In the process of answering her question, I not only impressed her, but myself. If you even quickly peruse the updates just in this one newsletter, you will find evidence of not only the sort of success normally pointed to, but equally as important, people living quality lives, taking care of their families, their organizations, their community, and their country. We live in a time groaning for the aptitude and skills for, and for interest and involvement in, citizenry and community; a time where the sort of values and principles taught by our core (REACH) curriculum, and in our major/minor, matter more than ever. Hard work, ethics, integrity, perseverance, appreciation of complexity, and political tolerance matter!

Graduation is always more than celebration. At the end-of-year events, and sometimes gracious cards or emails, many of the graduates shared reflections on the joys and struggles it took to finish; often recognizing that the challenges and difficulties faced forced them to grow and learn. They expressed appreciation for the help and support they got from faculty and peers, and from other mentors and supporters (coaches and staff and family). And, they all persevered and succeeded. So, though graduation is always a bittersweet moment, I know that the ending of this year’s graduates’ time at Mercyhurst means we are sending out another cohort of alumni who are prepared for whatever path they choose or that chooses them, and they are ready for the challenges they will face along the way beyond the gates and the graduation tree. It is a world where the paths are full of surprises, unexpected challenges, and switchbacks, as well as opportunity; and there is a need for people who know what they value, how to try to bring about change, and that they are capable.

BTW, this was once again an amazing year in terms of formal recognition for our graduating seniors, including another Carpe Diem Award winner. But, as it notes above, all our majors and minors have accomplished and succeeded, and as I noted last year “all of them overcame hurdles and obstacles (some facing challenges steeper than others). All completed, or competed and contributed in and to, other majors and minors, and sports and clubs and service to the community, and more than a handful were born overseas. All leave equipped to deal with a world of work where robots, AI, and other emerging technologies and a globalized economy will reshape career paths.

All have earned something important, but only a few get recognized, leaving many, many deserving students out of the limelight – but we celebrate them all – each one.”

Therefore, before talking about awards, here is the list of our 37 graduates for 2019, majors and minors mixed together. Each one is a permanent part of the Political Science Department, and now part of the poli sci alumni group out there contributing, Carpe Diem-ing, and carving their own paths. We had 15 minors graduate (7 of the 15 had our IR and Diplomacy minor), and their majors included Anthro/Archeology, Criminal Justice, Intelligence Studies, Dance, Communication, Public Health, Business Economics and Finance. Our 22 majors included 12 double majors and one triple major (8 of the 13 were Intell majors); of the 22 majors 12 of them focused on the International Relations concentration, with the rest spread out among Pre-Law, Applied Politics, Environmental Studies, a Contract Major, and the regular Political Science major (w/o declared concentration).

CONGRATULATIONS TO:

Abigail Armstrong	Leah Bellitto
Andrew Carges	Gabe Carney
Christopher Chalifoux	Tashi Chonjur
Oscar Collazo	Kelsey Collins
Michael Convery	Jeremy Dahl
Austin Drew	Gabriel Christopher Dylewski
Annie Nicole El Bascha	John English
Chelsea Gunderson	Maggie Hackney
Victoria Haen	Hunter Hoffman
Rachel Hull	Sophia Jensen*
Natalia Joseph	Elise Lashinsky
Aleeshayah Lightfoot	Sara MacDougall
Meghan Maker	Vincent Marrazzo
Jessica Megna	Casey Montana
Sabrina Nabinger	William Patterson
Mark Peckich	Ellen Reifenberger
Mackenzie Ryburn	Morgan Stacey
Kara Szcablewski	Kyle Weber
Maddie Weitz	

*Returning for Fall Semester 2019.

We wish you all well and hope you'll stay in touch with us. Take care!

After the alumni contributions, you will find that I have once again updated my story about *The Award Winning Department* because this year demanded it, with four more students winning major campus awards. That will then be followed, as usual, by department news and faculty updates. The always highly anticipated annual **Summer Reading List**, and a flyer about homecoming 2019, are separate attachments.

WHO'S DOING WHAT: ALUMNI UPDATES

Rich Johns (Major '03) – Things in NYC are still going great. In February, I was appointed Associate Commissioner of Financial Management for the NYC Dept. of Housing Preservation and Development, where I'm now the agency chief financial officer over nearly \$3 billion in annual spending. It was a big change (I now have over 100 employees) but it's going really well. I was also recently accepted into a Fellowship with Marist College, where I am an adjunct, to redesign the MPA programs public budgeting class, so this summer I'll spend a few weeks in a combination of online and in class program where I'll get an overview of online pedagogy while creating the new course. I'm excited to get started. Beyond that, I'm looking forward to summer. I had a great ski season this past winter but I'm ready to move on to shorts and sandals. Finally, congratulations to this year's graduates! I hope the next chapter of your life is as wonderful and exciting as your time at the Hurst!

Frank E. Kostik, Jr. (Major '01) – I am currently assigned as the Chief of Complex and Capital Litigation at Fort Belvoir, VA where I am responsible for training military defense counsel world-wide and defending Soldiers facing the most serious crimes. Last year, I was given an opportunity by the Army to attend American University, Washington College of Law for a full year to obtain an LLM in Criminal Law, Trial Advocacy. It was an amazing professional break and a testament to how seriously the Army is taking its obligation to ensure crime is prosecuted and defended by experienced litigators.

Rich Wagner (Major '96) – The twin girls (Lizzie and Rachel) are now 9 and in the third grade. I have not introduced to the prose of Max Weber as of yet, but soon - perhaps around bedtime. My business is doing great, I hired my 15th employee in January of this year and we now provide business development services in 15 countries and have more than 300 commercial-sector clients. I traveled quite a bit last year in support of both Department of State Embassy operations and a few DoD installations for workforce planning. I did a ton of work in Africa and continue to travel there quite a bit. Most recently, I crossed Mozambique, Somalia (Mogadishu), Morocco (Casablanca, Marrakesh, Rabat), Nigeria (Abuja, Lagos), Mali, Ethiopia, Tanzania, and South Africa (Johannesburg and Pretoria). In addition, I went through most of Scandinavia, Russia (lovely picture attached), and most of Central America. To be honest, all this travel got old really fast, messed with my sleeping cycle, and renewed my stress over air travel and airplane maintenance. I had just returned back from Ethiopia a day before the crash in Yemen. I have a few stories for you on Africa that you would likely find funny and interesting (and mildly disturbing). I will try to carve out time to come up to the arctic tundra of Erie to catch up with you. That said, I am truly grateful for the way things turned out. The foundation of all this (aside from my parents, who deserve a little credit ;)) is Mercyhurst. The older I get and the more I see, the more I realize that the people, the place, and the experience had a profound positive impact on my life.

Dayana Moncada (Double Major '17) – I'm excited to be graduating from Mercyhurst University with a Masters in Data Science. It has been two long years after graduating with the Political Science department with many challenges but also many successes. I presented my thesis to the CIS Department where I shared my research on Mass Shootings in the

United States and I was able to predict victims for the next couple of years. (Which is sad! - but also helpful to law enforcement) After graduation, I will be moving to Chicago, IL to job hunt and start my career as a Data Analyst. I'm very happy for the upcoming summer where I will be visiting San Francisco, California and Anchorage, Alaska, for the first time. I'm hoping I get the chance to do some fishing and hiking in Alaska, and get some really-crisp-fresh air. I'm happy for the new opportunities and looking forward to hearing from you again soon.

Kelsey Soom (Major '18) – I am currently living in Southside Pittsburgh and working as a Lead Analyst for the Suspicious Activity Response Team at BNY Mellon. The job is amazing, I am catching bad guys (money launderers and fraudsters) from behind my computer. I write all day everyday for each of my cases, so all of the writing from the capstone class has come in handy! I miss Mercyhurst and all of the people I was able to meet.

David Wiest (Minor '03) – I am finishing up my 7th and final year at Bishop McDevitt High School. Next year I will be starting on my Doctorate in Curriculum and Instruction at IUP. My hope is to eventually teach at the university level and train the future teachers of America.

Kristen (Brown) Cassidy (Contract Major '03) – Hey Dr C, I don't have that much to report. Things are same old, everyone's just a year older. I am assistant coaching Viv's soccer team and still teaching one class at LECOM. Just got the kids to do an obstacle race with me that was a lot of fun, so will probably look for more opportunities to be active together. I'm still in the strategy office at Erie Insurance and am thankful for the opportunity I have had there. I almost reached out to you recently to see if you knew anyone graduation with a research / intelligence / analysis background because our team potentially had a need, but it's looking like we may fill internally.

Adam Hammer (Major '09) – I continue to work with my father in the financial advisory business. We specialize in keeping people calm when markets turn south. The end of 2018 was a bit rocky, as the markets fell 20%! I had a client call and tell me she was ready to jump off a bridge! (fortunately she came to her senses). By good luck, things have bounced back in 2019. In October of 2018 I visited with old college friend Ashton Farrell ('08). Ashton works in the national park system, currently serving at Ulysses S Grant National Park in St. Louis. Ashton and I ran a 10K race together through downtown St. Louis, a beautiful course, running alongside the Mississippi River & the Gateway Arch. Naturally, we had some "cold beverages" after the race. Finally, I recently returned from a business trip Atlanta, GA. In Atlanta, there is the "World of Coca-Cola". Despite my best efforts, I could not find any Wild Cherry Pepsi. I'm sure Dr. Clemons would not have been pleased :) Hope the Political Science family is well! Everyone ready for 2020?! 😊

Violeta Flores (Major '16) – This year I have continued working for the USAID Justice Strengthening Project in El Salvador as Project Assistant. In August I'll be attending

American University to pursue my Graduate degree in International Development with a concentration in Gender and Development with the hope of helping my country and Latin America from the United States. Hope to visit MU soon!

Sean T. Crowley (Double Major '17) – I recently finished by last year in graduate school at the University of Pittsburgh (through which I spent the last summer studying abroad in Moscow) and earned my Master's in Public and International Affairs. On 20 May, I will ship out to Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri for United States Army Basic Combat Training. Later this year (around early August), I will be enrolled in U.S. Army Officer Candidate School and commission as a second lieutenant around late October.

Margaret Stanley (Major '17) – Hope all is well! I am working at a real estate law firm in Rochester, NY, starting up a decorative cookie business on the side and planning a wedding! Hope you got to enjoy that gorgeous tree out front of the chapel.

Yedzin Tobgay (Double Major '18) – My update is that I will be completing my MPhil at Cambridge this June. I applied to teach at the Royal Thimphu College and got a job as associate lecturer. I signed a one year contract so am hoping to apply for a post doc in America or the UK in the coming year. I will take this remaining year to try to gain some work experience whilst preparing a research proposal for a PhD. That's all from my side. Hope that graduation wasn't too long and brutal and that you are in good health and spirits. [Editors Note: Earlier this year the Cambridge Trust selected Yedzin as the only female scholar to get featured on their scholar spotlight page and it was also shared as their International women's day post. <https://www.cambridgetrust.org/scholars/scholar-profiles/>

Jody Robinson (Major '01) – I'm meeting up with some of my Mercyhurst teammates tomorrow at a cottage for the weekend. I'm currently living in Toronto, Ontario with my spouse Gillian and my three kids. I work at the Loews Bisha Hotel where I am the Director of Security. I have been there for a year and I'm really enjoying the work. I am looking at doing a graduate degree in security next year in either the US or the UK as the security industry is expanding rapidly in Canada. I'm looking forward to coming back to the Hurst this fall. Thanks for keeping touch.

Ross Molinaro (Major '17) – Hope all is well with you! Got to have a fun time at campus during St. Patrick's day weekend - the pub is a really nice addition to the campus, and, not to mention, the drink prices are too. Just got my real estate license and discerning at this point whether or not I want to go the residential or commercial route. The residential housing market in Pittsburgh is doing very well and in the downtown area there's \$9 billion worth of new development going on so whatever choice I make will be a good one.

Jason Shaffer (Double Major '18) – I've been accepted to Johns Hopkins University for my masters in Global Security Studies. I am also continuing my work in a special programs group which is an entity that provides services for the federal government.

Nicole Kubit (Contract Major '07) – So we've almost survived the first year with our daughter! She came 2 weeks early last year on June 10 and has been quite the character ever

since, but I wouldn't change any of it for the world! Work is going well, I'm still at PPG. I recently had an idea for improving our customer experience place 2nd out of 130 entries and it will be implemented in the next few months. Hope all is well at the Hurst!

Casey "CJ" Kilroy (Double Major '03) – Still plugging away here in Pittsburgh - working as a Performing/Teaching Artist with Jumping Jack Theater, a Children's Theater Company in the Pittsburgh region working with children on the Autism Spectrum and those with Sensory Processing Disorders. It's fun and challenging work and keeps me involved in the arts scene here in the city! We are performing downtown as part of the Children's Theater Festival this weekend and it's been a blast so far. Summer reading list this year? I'm itching for some good books... I got stuck sitting in Jury Duty last week and was not motivated to take any reading with me that was sitting on my shelves here at home! It made me realize I need some new books or a trip to the library...Peace, CJ

Karen Eade (Minor '07) – I have just returned from 3 months of volunteering in Northern Ireland at Corrymeela. It's a peace and reconciliation centre that has done this work for the last 50 years. It started just before the Troubles and has continued on its peace work in communities, schools and with lots of residential programs. I first went to Ireland on a Mercyhurst trip so was glad to get to head north this time. Loved the coast, the people, and am glad for a break from the potatoes! And to be back in the Toronto-area! All good things,

Austin Wood (Minor '17) – Dr. Clemons, It was great to talk with you at the Alumni event this past weekend. I am glad to hear that you are doing well! I am still working at AML RightSource in the Cleveland area as an Anti-Money Laundering and fraud analyst. I did get promoted this past year and now I get to enjoy proofreading the writing of others on a day to day basis. How certain people graduated college without a grasp of the english language and knowledge of proper grammar amazes me. Hopefully I can help them to become better writers before I tear all of my hair out. I will likely see you during Homecoming this fall and I hope that you have a good summer!

Mike Walter (Major '15) – It's been a busy year professionally and personally for me. I'm currently managing PAC fundraising and grasstops outreach to members of Congress for a life insurance trade association in D.C. It's been a great experience meeting and working with members of Congress from both sides of the aisle and hearing what they have to say about policy issues. I've learned they're much more willing — even excited — to say what they really think behind closed doors. Personally, we are really enjoying being homeowners in one of the last remaining rural small towns in the D.C. area (Damascus, MD). We've also been busy planning our wedding for this July in the Pocono's. Hope all is well with you and Mercyhurst!

Lauren Kenny (Double Major '17) – Hey, all! My boyfriend and I just bought a house in Lakeland, FL. This past December, I graduated from Florida Southern College with a Master's in Business Administration, and I decided that I am never leaving the sunshine state! We are still playing a lot of beach volleyball, and we got a dog. She is a little cute named Harper, and she loves the beach almost as much as we do. Following graduation, I

started full-time at Aurora WDC as a Senior Analyst doing competitive intelligence (mostly secondary research) for clients in a variety of industries. I am loving it - I've found my people. Hope all is well at the Hurst and beyond. Go Lakers!

Tony D'Abruzzo (Major '03) – I'm still with the State of New York in the Division of Criminal Justice Services as a Training Coordinator. Last month, our program was featured in Police Chief Magazine. If you would like to know more about what I do, in a piece that reads like a paid advertisement, follow the link (<http://www.policechiefmagazine.org/spotlight-connectivity-solve-crimes/?ref=b75def68a6f5192842b939c1b1da1332>). It's interesting work and I love being a part of this program. I got nothing else to update on. The only things that changed in the last year were my apartment and my girlfriend, which has become an annual tradition. No marathons due to a knee injury. One of my more boring years. I really need to stop by campus on of these times where I am driving by. I sometimes pass through Erie on trips back home, but it's usually at a strange time like 1am. One of these days I'll make it back.

Zach Smith (Minor '05) – That tree was always one of my favorites as well. Giving tours as an Ambassador during the spring I always loved walking around the Chapel and past that tree. Life is going well for my family and myself. My oldest will be starting Kindergarten in the fall and my youngest is blissfully in the throes of the terrible twos. Professionally I have been with the federal government at the First Responder Network Authority (FirstNet) for four years. Managing the development and operations of a nationwide telecommunications infrastructure public-private partnership keeps me engaged, and doing it on behalf of the nation's firefighters, EMS, and law enforcement personnel is truly rewarding. My other jobs keep me busy as well. I'm still a volunteer firefighter/EMT with Fairfax County Fire & Rescue and a member of the county's public safety and emergency communications team that works on behalf of the region and the State. Over the past year we have provided communications and IT support to public safety personnel during everything from searches for missing persons in Shenandoah National Park, to the Alt-Right rallies in Charlottesville.

Fanny Perdstrom (Major '17) – I just finished my masters degree in human rights and will start working as a case worker for asylum applications in two weeks. I'm very eager to start this new chapter (and also very happy to never have to write a master thesis again)!

Audra Alexander (Major '18) – Thank you for the pics! I have missed the Hurst and the northeast in general these past few months. I have been living in the greater Orlando, FL area this past year where I taught 10th grade honors and standard 12th grade English at Winter Park High School. I look forward to beginning my legal training on a full scholarship this fall at Regent University School of Law in Va. Beach where I will be a part of the 2022 honors class. Have a wonderful summer!!

Brian Maurelli (Minor '05) – Dr. C., I am currently living and working in Austin, TX. I am the Battalion S3, Operations Officer, for an Army Reserve engineer battalion and I am responsible for overseeing all training and operations. I am enjoying this assignment and the

area while my wife is working on her Master's Degree. Outside of school and work the wife and I am enjoying traveling and seeing all that Texas has to offer.

Ariel Flores (Major '14) – Hello Dr. C, Since I last gave you an update, not much has changed. I am still working for the State Department at the International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Agency (INL). I am still the Outreach Coordinator, and keep on working with local actors and in close contact with Washington. Only thing that has changed is that I have a new responsibility which is managing a support program for the Strategic Communications Directorate of the Honduran National Police. We are supporting them with new equipment, training opportunities, and reference trips to other countries such as Colombia or the United States to learn new skills and methods. As the United States Embassy in Honduras, the mission is focusing in the new guidelines by the president which is illegal migration. It has been a very busy and complicated year due to the amount of people leaving Honduras towards the United States, and the announcement by the president that he would be cutting aid to the region. So that is the focus right now, and we hope for a happy ending. PS. I am attaching the link to INL Honduras youtube channel, most videos have English subtitles if you want to learn a little bit about the different projects we are supporting.

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCQ1xQHuhRhwnLbrYrn-a9nw/videos>

Elise Yablonsky (Major '07) – I am in my fifth year at University Circle Inc. and now serve as the Director of Planning in our Community Development department. One of my current projects is the Cozad-Bates House, a community landmark that is also listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The house is the only remaining pre-Civil War structure in our neighborhood and reflects the legacy of Cleveland's anti-slavery activists who lived in the area and aided freedom seekers through the Underground Railroad network in Cleveland, code named "Hope." Last year, we successfully completed a \$1.4 million capital campaign for Phase 1 which will make the most historic portions of the house and the preserved front lawn accessible to the public through an interpretive center and cultural park. The exhibit and curriculum will highlight Cleveland's role in the Underground Railroad and anti-slavery movements, and will connect to modern questions of freedom centered around the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments. It has been a very challenging (though extremely rewarding) project to lead and the research, analysis and communication skills I developed through the Mercyhurst Political Science program continue to support me through it all. On a personal note, over the past year my husband Mike and I moved into a new home and also welcome our daughter, Sonya Marie. 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 (eyablo@gmail.com).

Danielle Vaccaro (Major '13) – Things have been busy, but good on my end. I still work in the admissions office at Mercyhurst with students from New York, so there's been many trips through the state to Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, Albany, and the Adirondacks. It's a beautiful state to be in! Also, I've been working on wrapping up my masters program in Applied Intelligence through Mercyhurst, and will officially be finished with the degree at the end of August. My final step is to complete a research project, and I'm currently working

on finalizing my topic so I can start researching and writing in June. I'm looking forward to finishing the degree and having a relaxing rest of the year. Those are the biggest updates! I hope to have some more exciting updates soon!

Roxanne Stockard-Hicks (Minor '18) – I'm living in the DC area and working for the CTCEU part of DHS right now. If you know of any Poli Sci folks planning to move here for work soon, feel free to pass on my info! Other than that, not much happening with me, just trucking along.

Jason Sabol (Major '07) --. Always good to hear from you! Things are going well in York, PA where I'm still the Solicitor for the City. We had a change in administration which led to some hand wringing since I serve at the pleasure of the Mayor, but luckily I won the new boss over with my cunning legal expertise and charming wit. Brandy and I celebrated our 10th wedding anniversary last summer so this spring we left our kid with some friends and traveled to Paris and Rome. It was a fantastic trip highlighted by an immersive digital Van Gogh exhibit at Atelier des Lumieres, a visit to Versailles, an incredible food tour in Rome, and in hindsight, seeing Notre Dame two weeks before the fire. Looking forward to reading all the updates!

Bill Melville (Minor '99) – Hope all is well. I have a big change headed my way. I'm finally heading west after years of fits and starts. In less than two weeks, I am moving to Colorado Springs from Nashville. I will continue as a healthcare policy analyst but will be working remote. The change of scenery is pretty key after 12 years in the Southeast. Anyway, it's still hard to believe it is finally happening.

Dana (Hyland) Krishland (Major '05) – I don't really have much of an update at the moment. Work is still the same - working on climate at EPA, trying to make a difference where I can. I focus on climate adaptation and tribal issues, which are both so interesting and complex. We have a lot we could learn from tribes, especially in the area of adapting to new and changing environments. I hope you and the whole department are doing well and enjoy your summer!

Chris Kelly (Major '12) – Lakers, I hope that all is going well for you. I am still happily working at the University of Delaware's Institute for Public Administration (IPA). I was recently promoted to Associate Policy Scientist and am currently expanding my research in public school funding and administration. This has been a very exciting year project wise as I was able to be a Principal Investigator for the first time on a study examining personnel complements, organizational responsibilities, and funding sources for every school district in the state. It was a daunting process but a very rewarding experience for my small team (research assistant and senior adviser). If you're interested in learning more about the study, or the type of work that we produce at IPA feel free to check it out at the following link:

Full Report: <http://udspace.udel.edu/bitstream/handle/19716/24085/School-Administrator-Funding-Analysis-FINAL.pdf>

Brief: <http://udspace.udel.edu/bitstream/handle/19716/24085/School-Admin-Brief-2019%20FINAL.pdf>

On another note, for any students that may be interested in graduate work with a focus on state and local government, the Biden School of Public Policy and Administration at the University of Delaware provides a great opportunity to acquire experience in the field through our research institutes, while furthering your theoretical understanding of public policy in the classroom. If you would be interested in learning more about the programs we have to offer, about the types of projects we work on at our research institute (IPA), or just about graduate school in general, feel free to contact me at cgkelly@udel.edu. Delaware is a pretty fun place to be and we have had a great experience with Hurst students so far. I wish you all the best.



From left to right: Maggie Hackney, Vincent Marrazzo, Dr. Randy Clemons, Meghan Maker, and Morgan Stacey

The Award Winning Department: Political Science

This picture from the **2019** Commencement Awards Convocation, documents the continuation of a most impressive record as four more Political Science students (two majors and two minors) won top graduation awards. The Carpe Diem award, considered the top award Mercyhurst gives out, was won by **Vince Marrazzo** (a triple major). **Maggie Hackney** (double major) and **Meghan Maker** (minor) were the co-winners of the Presidential Excellence Award for Ridge College, and **Morgan Stacey** was a Presidential Excellence Award winner for the Walker College of Business.

In 2015 we used a similar picture to document the continuation of a most impressive history as four of our students won top graduation awards, noting then that: "**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 the three years in between, i.e., 2016, 2017, and 2018?

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. In 2018 **Jonah Jackson (Major)** won the top award given, the Carpe Diem Award, **Audra Alexander** (Double Major – Political Science and English) won the Catherine McAuley Award for Adult Achievement; **Jason Shaffer** (Double Major – Political Science and Intelligence Studies) won the campus-wide Presidential Excellence Award for Adult students; and finally, **Yedzin Tobgay** (also a Double Major – Political Science and Intelligence Studies), was a co-winner of the Presidential Excellence Award for Ridge College. [Yes, alert readers, we pulled a four-peat: the 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2019 Carpe Diem winners.]

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 19 years (2000-2018) 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 medal 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 and only from the 2000 graduation year: *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 20 years, Political Science department students have won how many of these top awards? The answer is 52. 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**.

Eight Carpe Diem Award winners: **Vincent Marrasso '19**, **Jonah Jackson '18**, **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 awards in '02)

Twenty won President's Awards for Excellence for their schools (four in other schools): **Maggie Hackney '19**, **Meghan Maker '19**, **Morgan Stacey '19**, **Yedzin Tobgay '18**, **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.**

Six won either of the two top awards for non-traditional students. **Jason Shaffer '18, and Audra Alexander '18** (a sweep of these awards this year), **Nina Aamodt '15, Bill Demauri '12, Sean Fedorko '11, and Kathy Antus '03.**

That's 52 political science students (38 majors, 14 minors) honored in the last 20 years, just within the categories listed – an average of 2.6 of our students per year earning this sort of recognition.

There are over 50 undergraduate departments at Mercyhurst, and with approximately 10 awards given per year in these nine categories (sometimes a few of the awards have had ties/multiple winners), mathematically speaking, we should average a little less than one award every other year, which after 20 years would be 10 awards, not 52.

And, this type of analysis ignores so many great students, year after year who were not singled out for these distinctions. Add in our unparalleled record of faculty winning teaching awards (three in the last 15 years – 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.

FACULTY AND DEPARTMENT NEWS

Homecoming next fall will be the weekend of September 27-29, with the Poli Sci gathering, alumni tent, football game, etc., **Saturday morning on the 28th.** We are hoping to see a big gathering at our event including, perhaps, a cohort of the majors and minors who keep telling me they intend to get back here but never seem to make it to supplement the ones who will be putting in repeat performances? I've also attached the flyer for our event.

Though our faculty is back to only four people, we hit a new peak of total majors and minors this spring, with approx. 75 majors and 50 minors. The reduced size of the core curriculum (now called REACH) has made it easier for students to double major, so we have fewer minors and more majors than we used to. With such a large class graduating, and a smaller class entering as majors, we will begin the fall down quite a bit from that, but as the academic year goes along, a number of students always "see the light" and either switch their major, add our major, convert their minor to a major, or add a minor.

FACULTY UPDATES:

Dr. Randy S. Clemons – in addition to his other classes taught this year (two sections of Geopolitics, an Honors section of Leadership, and the Senior Capstone course), he greatly enjoyed teaching a new undergraduate course on Public Policy, and his Vietnam War course, which somehow seems at least as relevant today as it was the first time he taught it back at Idaho State University. Despite all that, and his administrative role as Associate Dean of Ridge College, he and three coauthors (Dr. Rolfe Peterson, Dr. Mark McBeth, and Dr. Carl Palmer) have a forthcoming article that will be published by the *International Journal on Minority and Group Rights*, titled “The Narrative Policy Framework and Sticky Beliefs: An Experiment Studying Islamophobia.” Immediately after graduation he sought solace and recovery in the southwest for almost two weeks of hiking, and enjoyed Zion, Mesa Verde, Arches, Canyonland, Capitol Reef, and Bryce Canyon. Summer plans besides class prepping next year’s courses, and his annual trip out west, focus on working with Dr. McBeth on a contracted 4th edition of their **Public Policy Praxis** textbook (our draft is due to the publisher in December this year). I remain appreciative of the opportunity to walk alongside students on their journey, and see so many of them bloom like the graduation tree!

Dr. Joe Morris – continues to serve as department chair and director of the Mercyhurst Center for Applied Politics. During spring semester he worked with 90 students to conduct a poll that focused on registered voters’ perceptions of the Trump Administration. The poll (<https://www.mercyhurst.edu/ridge-college-intelligence-studies-and-applied-sciences/political-science/mcap-polls>) is the third to document declining support for the president and most of his policies among Erie County voters since February 2017. In a separate project, Dr. Morris worked with more than 120 students as they drew new Congressional district maps for Pennsylvania as part of a statewide competition sponsored by an organization called Draw the Lines. Several students won awards - including a First Place Regional Award and a Judges’ Choice Award – for their maps, which were dramatic improvements over the highly gerrymandered map drawn by the state legislature in 2010. The award winners were presented with nearly \$2,000 in prize money at an event held in the Capitol Building in Harrisburg. During the fall semester Dr. Morris worked with WJET, WQLN, and the Erie Manufacturers and Business Association to organize a debate between candidates for Congress. The debate, which was held in the Mercyhurst Performing Arts Center, was attended by approximately 400 people and broadcast by WJET, WQLN, and C-SPAN. During the past academic year Dr. Morris provided political analysis for more than four dozen reports by news organizations (including one for NBC News). This summer Dr. Morris will be traveling to Bend, Oregon to visit his extended family, but otherwise he’ll stay close to home to enjoy the beautiful weather with his wife, transport Logan (turning 10 years old) to and from hockey and lacrosse, and watch Grace’s (now 17 years old) theater performances.

Dr. Brian Ripley – continues to enjoy teaching and updating his courses...classics (such as Global Issues and Comparative Politics of Asia) and new (for him, such as Politics of Russia). Summer plans include doing some reading for work and reading for fun (hey,

what's the difference anyway??) and travel plans to visit family in Minnesota and Savannah Georgia.

Dr. Victoria Rickard – spent the year teaching a variety of courses, engaging in community and university service, and continuing to learn more about Erie and the surrounding areas. This summer, she is teaching her first online course and plans to go on numerous hikes.

Also, please find (attached) the always anticipated, **Summer Reading List**, as well as a flyer about this fall's Homecoming. Take care!