Greetings from the Chair

It is good to be writing you again. This has been a year of much change at the College – new financial pressures, the design of a new structure for the academic programs, etc. – but I’m happy to report that the Political Science program remains a vibrant and thriving one. This newsletter provides some in depth discussion of what we have been up to, so let me just present an overview or guide to what follows.

Our students continue to find much success and enrichment in a variety of directions. We continue to have great success in placing students in law school, and are currently mentoring students who will pursue graduate study in political science and public policy. On campus, our Model United Nations team guided by Dr. Michael Aleprete participated successfully in competitions in Chicago and Toronto, and just finished hosting another smashing High School Model UN competition at Westminster. A variety of students have been involved in research projects on campus; the accompanying story about the work of Rochelle Snyder and Anne Tillie in supporting Dr. Aleprete’s work on borders in international politics gives you a taste of how this work enhances our overall academic program, but there are a number of similar efforts continuing across the department. (This past September I was able to accompany Ms. Snyder, who intends to pursue a Ph.D. in political science, as she attended the American Political Science Association annual meetings in Washington, D.C.) There have also been a variety of speakers on campus over the year – alumni who are practicing lawyers, a fascinating talk on the 2014 congressional elections by Ms. Ashley Davis ’97, a presentation on lobbying and public policy careers in Washington by Ms. Keri Moss from the American Chemical Society, and Prof. Rachel Vanderhill of Wofford College (a collaborator on some of Dr. Aleprete’s work) who gave an excellent and insightful lecture on the Ukraine crisis as well as speaking in the Russian Politics class. Meanwhile, I also accompanied three of our majors on a trip to Harrisburg to lobby legislators as part of the Student Lobby Day sponsored by the Association of Independent Colleges and Universities of Pennsylvania (AICUP). These opportunities help provide our majors with the kind of preparation for their future career choices of which we have long been proud.

Our faculty remain active in both their scholarly lives and in campus leadership positions. Dr. James Rhoads continued his record of active publication and conference attendance, as well as leading a key faculty committee. At the same time, he has begun the process of organizing our Fall 2015 Mock Presidential Nominating Convention...more news on this soon! Dr. Shannon Smitchens continues her very productive work on comparative courts and criminal justice systems, often in collaboration with Dr. Kristenne Robinison in sociology, and is now chair of the all-College Honors Committee. Dr. Aleprete played crucial roles in leading the First Year and new International Studies programs while maintaining his active program of scholarship. As for me, since my last letter I have presented papers in Dublin, Ireland, and at the University of Warwick, UK, and have finished work on two papers that will be published next year. I am particularly...
looking forward to teaching a new course this fall in International Political Economy, my main area of research. All in all, this combination of student engagement and faculty scholarship and leadership continue to distinguish our department and position it well for the coming years.

This will be my last letter as “Chair.” As part of the new academic structure, the Political Science program is now part of a larger academic division, The Division of Social Sciences and Humanities (DSSH), which is currently headed by Dr. Tim Cuff. I am continuing in a leadership capacity as the program coordinator for political science and as such you can be sure that the program and major will continue to serve our students and the College in the same effective ways. In the meantime, we hope you enjoy the updates in this newsletter and look forward as usual to hearing from and seeing you in the coming year.

Best,
Edward S. Cohen
Professor of Political Science

**STUDENT LOBBY DAY IN HARRISBURG**

On Tuesday, April 21, Dr. Cohen accompanied three Political Science majors on a visit to the Pennsylvania State Capitol in Harrisburg. The purpose of the visit was to lobby legislators to secure financial aid for college students, and was part of the annual Student Lobby Day sponsored by the Association of Independent Colleges and Universities of Pennsylvania (AICUP). The students met with five legislators, were recognized on the floor of the PA Senate, and met two Political Science alumni for dinner the previous evening.

Andrew House (student), Dr. Cohen, Ellen DeWeese (student), Sen. Elder Vogel, Alyssa Huff (student)

**Smithey and Robison Study Probation Practices**

Professor Shannon Smithey is engaged in two research projects at present. The first is a policy evaluation project with Dr. Kristenne Robison of the Department of Sociology and Criminal Justice Studies. Since the fall of 2011, Smithey and Robison have gathered data on 500 local probationers, to develop a general picture of who is on probation, what probation programs are commonly used, and what factors correlate with recidivism. They have delivered several scholarly papers on the subject, with the most recent focusing on probationer success. Their data show that most probationers are successful in completing their programs of supervision without committing subsequent offenses. For example, older probationers and those in relationships are more likely to be successful. Conversely, people with histories of substance abuse are less likely to be successful. However, the majority of people in all these categories complete their terms without running afoul of the law again. Smithey and Robison have presented these findings at several meetings of the American Society for Criminology, to the Westminster faculty and to the staff of the probation office itself. Several Westminster students, including Jennifer Duvall, Matt Shiner and Kirsten Hess, have been involved in the project and have assisted Smithey and Robison in presenting the findings to the annual meetings of the American Society of Criminology.

Smithey’s other project explores the impact that experiences with crime and corruption have on people’s attitudes toward the government in Africa. At this year’s meeting of the American Political Science Association, Smithey delivered a paper demonstrating that personal experiences with crime and bribe paying tend to increase personal activism, most likely because they give citizens a reason to make demands on the state. Conversely, general perceptions about the government’s ability to respond to crime, provide for justice, and control corruption have a significant impact on public willingness to follow the law and pay their taxes. Professor Smithey will expand on this research in this fall’s Henderson Lecture.
The City That Moves The World

As a political science student graduating in May of 2016, I wanted to spend my last summer as an undergraduate in the city that moves the world: Washington, D.C. After some research, I chose to participate in American University’s Summer Semester Program in the School of Professional and Extended Studies, becoming a student of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee Press Secretary Adam Sharon. In addition to class at American University, I interned for the Reason Foundation, a libertarian-leaning think tank that hopes to advance “free minds and free markets.” At Reason, I coauthored a piece on e-cigarettes to be distributed to legislators across the nation with the Director of Government Reform Leonard Gilroy.

With Adam Sharon’s expansive D.C. network, I had the opportunity to sit in on a Foreign Relations Committee Hearing on Iran, watch a State Department Press briefing, view a taping of “Meet the Press,” meet with a Legislative Affairs Adviser in the White House, and so much more. Additionally, my time in D.C. allowed me to witness the monumental U.S. Supreme Court decision on same-sex marriage and the celebration that ensued on the historic steps of the Court. My summer semester in D.C. has been nothing short of an extraordinary formative experience for me as an up-and-coming graduate of Westminster College.

McCandless Award and Maps

BY MICHAEL ALEPRETE, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

I had the honor of receiving the College’s 2014-15 McCandless scholarship award to pursue my research on the Strategic Development of Land Borders. This reward reduced my teaching load this spring and provided me a small grant to conduct my research. Because of this funding I was able to hire two research assistants, juniors Rochelle Snyder and Anne Tillie to help me collect data for the project. So if you saw them by the copier or wandering the halls with maps that is what they were up to. They have been helping me digitize old paper maps of the road systems along international borders. We are developing a data set to allow us to analyze the historical evolution of these road systems using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) software. We have also received funding from the Drinko Center to continue to collect data over the summer. Andrew House will be joining the project in May and I will be off for additional GIS training in Miami over the summer. We hope to begin to publish our research efforts in 2016.

Anne Tillie, Dr. Michael Aleprete, and Rochelle Snyder discuss which maps to scan and trace next for Dr. Aleprete’s research project.
Westminster’s Model UN program completed another successful year. Last November they sent 17 students to the American Model United Nations (AMUN) Conference in Chicago. Westminster’s team sent two delegations: one representing Pakistan and one representing the Holy See. The Pakistan delegation was headed by senior Alyssa Huff, while senior Mara Sawdy led the Holy See. Westminster always fields competitive teams at AMUN, winning awards four or the last five years. Senior Jessie Klousnitzer and junior Alec Fisanick won outstanding delegate awards representing Pakistan in the Historical Security Council. In General Assembly 1st Committee the Westminster students representing the Holy See, first year Alina Clough and sophomore Ellen DeWesse, won outstanding delegate awards. Two delegations of Westminster students will return to Chicago Nov. 21, 2016 for the AMUN Conference and will represent Italy and Iceland.

In addition to competing in Chicago, Westminster travelled to Toronto to compete at the North American Model United Nations Conference held at the University of Toronto. This conference focuses on historical and crises simulations. The Westminster delegation was led by the organization’s president, Jessie Klousnitzer. Westminster plans to return to Toronto next spring for the 2016 conference.
The Model UN year organization ended its year by hosting its 7th Annual High School Conference, WMUN. More than 230 students from 18 area high schools registered for this year’s event. Westminster students picked the topics, designed all of the scenarios and staffed the committees, running the day-long event which took place on April 13, 2015. The conference promotes international awareness and enhances educational experience of the high school students from across the region. The Westminster staff was led by the conference’s Secretary General Jessie Klousnitzer.

Model UN @ Westminster receives generous support from SGA, the Dranko Center, the Department of Political Science as well as from Global Solution Education Fund-Pittsburgh. Students interested in joining the Model United Nations Club should contact their faculty adviser, Dr. Aleprete, or Alec Fisanek, who will be the organization’s president.

Students win awards at the American Model United Nations. Ellen DeWeese, Dr. Michael Aleprete, Alec Fisanek, and Jessie Klousnitzer.
Women's Leadership Program At Chatham Very Worthwhile

BY ELLEN DEWESE, '17

My experience at the New Leadership Program hosted by the Pennsylvania Center for Women and Politics at Chatham University this summer was very rewarding. The program allowed me to connect with 40 other young women from across the state for one week. We had the opportunity to work closely with a former State Representative and former State Supreme Court Justice, and talk to many influential women making differences in state politics today, including the founder of the center, the late Elsie Hillman. We also made a trip to Harrisburg, where we saw first hand how complex the political system is and why women play an important role. Personally, the experience helped me to decide what type of career I will pursue, and I have made lasting connections with other people who have a passion for public policy, government, and the role of women in these areas.

Ellen DeWeese goes to the state house as a part of her leadership conference

Ellen DeWeese and Edward Cohen

RHOADS PUBLISHES AND PRESENTS RESEARCH

Dr. James Rhoads, professor of political science, published “Q Methodology” in Sage Cases in Methodology, which provides an overview of Q Methodology as a means to scientifically studying the subjective. This article also demonstrates the use of Q through a case study approach – highlighting earlier research by Rhoads and Dr. Michael Aleprete on elite views of US foreign policy.

Rhoads also published, “Studying Audience Subjectivity: Reactions to Death of a President” in Parasocial Politics: Audience, Pop Culture and Politics, edited by Jason Zenor. This chapter uses Q Methodology to explore how viewers responded to the controversial film, Death of a President.

Additionally, Rhoads presented “Science and the Single Case: The Study of ‘Cole’, the Political Administrator at the 2014 meeting of the International Society for the Scientific Study of Subjectivity in Salt Lake City. Rhoads also presented (along with Dan B. Thomas of Wartburg College and Larry Baas of Valparaiso University), “Calibrating the Narrative on Assessment in Higher Education” at the Salt Lake City meeting. Finally, Rhoads served as a panelist on both a “Teaching Q” panel as well as a panel of “Experienced Q Methodologists” at the Salt Lake City gathering.
**Pi Sigma Alpha Induction**

In a fitting way to end the academic year of 2014-2015, four students were inducted into the Political Science Honorary, ETA Omicron chapter of Pi Sigma Alpha on May 5, 2015 in a brief but memorable ceremony. Inducted were Ellen DeWeese, Colin Gribben, W. James Newman, and Alec Fisanick. All were presented with their official certificate and Dr. Shannon Smithey’s famous Pi Sigma Alpha congratulatory cupcakes.