Department of Political Science
Newsletter

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Department Excels in New Rankings

The Department joined the ranks of elite political science programs in the most recent ranking of universities. In rankings released by the National Research Council (NRC) in October, the Department ranked 14th among all political science programs. Faculty scholarship ranked 5th.

The Department’s ascent can be marked from the last NRC rankings, released in the mid-1990s, when it ranked 47th out of 97 universities. Nearly 15 years later, GW has leapt over more than 30 universities to land a spot among the top political science programs. “The latest rankings,” exclaimed Department Chair Forrest Maltzman, “are a great testament to the University’s commitment to academic excellence and the success of our alumni, students, and my colleagues.”

The NRC conducted an extensive study of 5,004 doctoral programs across disciplines in 212 universities, including 105 political science programs. The NRC examined 20 factors related to faculty scholarship, graduate education, and diversity. The NRC then surveyed a sample of faculty to assess the importance of these 20 indicators in judging programs. Here, four stood out: faculty publications, citation of faculty research, awards per faculty, and placement of graduate students in academic positions. The rankings then reflect a program’s strength in the characteristics that faculty thought were most important.

The NRC released a 90% confidence interval around each department’s ranking to account for uncertainty in any ranking system. The Department ranks between 7th and 22nd in the nation. Much of the Department’s success is attributable to the faculty’s scholarship. The NRC released a ranking of programs’ research productivity, and GW stands between 3rd and 14th nationally.

The Department’s success reflects the University’s commitment to building top-tier doctoral programs and the hard work of both faculty and students. In the early 1990s, the University hired Lee Sigelman to chair the Department, giving him a mandate to build a quality program. New faculty members were aggressively recruited and, once hired, were encouraged to focus on their research and publication. A haphazard pattern of publication was replaced by a more focused effort at placing works in the top journals and with high quality academic presses. Sigelman’s vision for an elite department has culminated with the leap in NRC rankings.

This vision of a top-ranked political science program was advanced by the GW Board of Trustees’ decision to support programs in selected areas where the University’s academic excellence was recognized. This support strengthened the

GW President Steven Knapp (left) and Provost Steven Lerman (right) at the Department’s NRC celebration

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NRC Rankings Continued on Page 2
Faculty Focus

Department Adds International Relations Experts

The Department further burnished its reputation as an elite program during the past two years by adding senior faculty with a record of research and teaching excellence. Michael Barnett arrived this fall from the University of Minnesota to become University Professor of Political Science and International Affairs at GW, and Charles Glaser joined the Department from the University of Chicago in 2009.

Barnett, a renowned expert in international affairs and international organizations, enhanced the Department’s existing strength in international organizations. The opportunities afforded by an elite university in the nation’s capital attracted Barnett. GW, he commented, “has a great faculty, the international relations scholars are first-rate. I have always wanted to be in a place that takes scholarship seriously yet also wants to be ‘relevant.’ There are just a wealth of opportunities here on campus and in Washington.”

One of Barnett’s scholarly interests is humanitarianism, and he has three forthcoming books on that subject. One is geared toward undergraduates, *Humanitarianism Contested: Where Angels Fear to Tread* (Routledge). The other book is one that Barnett struggled over for years, *Empire of Humanity: A History of Humanitarianism* (Cornell University Press). Barnett also is compiling an edited volume on religion and humanitarianism called *Between Heaven and Earth: Secularism, the Sacred, and Humanitarianism*.

Barnett joins another key Department addition from 2009: Charles Glaser. Glaser’s arrival added to the Department’s well-regarded faculty in security studies. Since arriving at GW, Glaser has especially enjoyed launching the Institute for Security and Conflict Studies. The Institute pulls together a terrific group of GW scholars, students, and visitors who are interested in international security. The Institute’s workshop brings leading scholars to GW, fostering engagement with best research in the field.

Glaser recently published a book on international relations theory and security policy with Princeton University Press. The book, *Rational Theory of International Politics: The Logic of Competition and Cooperation*, explores the question of why states sometimes compete and wage war while at other times they cooperate and pursue peace. For instance, Glaser asks, are the United States and China on a collision course or is coexistence possible? Glaser offers an alternative to the prevailing view that the anarchic structure of the international system invariably forces the great powers to seek security at one another’s expense, dooming even peaceful nations to an unrelenting struggle for power and dominance. Diverging from standard realist arguments that focus solely on the distribution of power, Glaser focuses instead on three broad factors: the state’s motives, specifically whether it is motivated by security concerns or “greed”; material variables, including power but also the balance between offense and defense, which determine its military capabilities; and information variables, most importantly what the state knows about its adversary’s motives. He finds that variation in these concerns should inform a state’s choice of strategy. Glaser demonstrates the international environment sometimes favors cooperation over competition; and that information variables, which determine the political relations between states, can be as important as material variables in determining the strategy a state should choose.

This year, the Department also added Stephen Kaplan, a recent graduate of Yale University, who studies the political economy of markets and development in Latin America. Eric Grynaviski, who teaches and researches in international security, foreign policy, and the origins of international cooperation, arrived at GW after completing his doctorate at the Ohio State University.

NRC Rankings

*Continued from page 1*

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The Department celebrated the ranking with a reception in the Sigelman Seminar Room. President Steven Knapp and Provost Steven Lerman commended the Department’s accomplishments.

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For more information on the NRC rankings, visit the Department’s website at http://www.gwu.edu/~psc.
Students Engaged in Learning

Undergraduate Studies Success of Female Students in Ghana

“Why do girls in Ghana enjoy academic success?” asked Sally Nuamah, a senior political science major. Girls in Ghana endure teacher strikes, book shortages, and under-resourced homes. All of these conditions weigh against their prospects for academic success. Yet, the girls Nuamah met were eloquent and articulate, and many women have advanced to important government positions and leadership positions in non-government organizations.

Nuamah is conducting an independent research project seeking answers to this question. This project, funded by the Office of the Vice President for Research at GW, is one of three inaugural undergraduate research awards made by GW. The funds cover the students’ research-related expenses, including payment for students’ time, travel, living expenses, equipment, and supplies. The award will allow Nuamah to spend about two months in Ghana conducting surveys as she conducts this project.

One component of the GW Undergraduate Research award is faculty mentoring. Steve Balla, Nuamah’s mentor, has assisted her in designing the survey that she will use and in navigating the research bureaucracy associated with human subjects research – the Institutional Review Board. “The mentorship aspect of the program,” Balla stated, “is essential in assisting undergraduates navigate the landscape of the world of research.” The research methods class helps one analyze research, Nuamah explained, but it does not prepare one fully to do research.

This experience has added depth to Nuamah’s undergraduate education. Scholarship to create a documentary on Ghanian students. This entailed interviewing about 40 students. The documentary that Nuamah created during her study abroad experience was screened at an anthropology conference earlier this fall, as well as the GW International Research Symposium.

When she returns to Ghana to continue her research, Nuamah will be taking better video equipment thanks to a grant from the Coca-Cola Foundation. Proceeds from the documentary will be used to provide scholarships to students. While there are scholarships currently available to bring them to the United States to study, Nuamah commented there are fewer internal options despite an outstanding national university.

After graduation, Nuamah will enroll in the political science doctoral program at Northwestern University. Balla commented, “Sally has the most important ingredients for success as a researcher - a passion for her subject matter and the persistence to keep moving forward even when things might not be going as she originally envisioned.” Nuamah’s research experience has been invaluable preparation for graduate school: “Sally may very well not have had this kind of opportunity,” remarked Balla, “if she had not been able to demonstrate that she is already taking important steps to becoming a researcher.”
Alumni Engaged in Politics

Alumni Making Mark in Elections

Every year, the Department’s alumni run for and win public office. Major figures in national life earned their bachelor’s degree in political science at GW: Representatives Eric Cantor (B.A. 1985) and Steve Israel (B.A. 1981) and Senator Mark Warner (B.A. 1977).

This fall, David Holt (B.A. 2001) joined the ranks of political science alumni serving in elected public office. Holt won a seat in the Oklahoma State Senate, representing parts of Oklahoma City.

Holt’s path to the Oklahoma Senate began during his years as a GW student. As Holt put it, “By the time I was a senior, I already possessed sufficient work experience on Capitol Hill to obtain a full-time position as an aide to the U.S. Speaker of the House.” After working for then-Speaker Dennis Hastert in his last semester at GW, Holt served in President George Bush’s Office of Legislative Affairs. Later, he returned to Oklahoma and worked for Bush’s 2004 reelection campaign. After that election, Holt worked for Senator Jim Inhofe and then-Lt. Governor Mary Fallin. For the past four years, Holt served as Chief of Staff to Oklahoma City’s mayor, Mick Cornett.

Holt acknowledged the preparation for service he received from GW faculty – Chris Deering, Sarah Binder, Forrest Maltzman to name a few: “Very, very few institutions of learning could have set me on the same path. And now, serving my state in an elected position, I think I am blessed to have a great education, great work experience, and the diverse life experiences one gains in Washington. These tools will allow me to be the best possible representative for my constituents.”

Ironically, Holt’s political science degree became a campaign issue in his primary contest. Holt’s opponent, listing his criticisms in a mailing, included his political science degree. Evidently, the voters in Holt’s district did not hold a political science degree against him as he won the primary by 28 points.

Holt invites anyone to visit the Oklahoma State Capitol and see the GW pennant hanging on the wall of his office.

Faculty Engaged in Scholarship

Department Faculty Host Ethnic Politics Workshop

Harris Mylonas and Henry Hale organized a workshop on ethnic politics that was held at GW on October 15 and 16. The workshop brought together scholars from Yale, Princeton, University of Chicago, UCLA, Oxford, University of Wisconsin, American University, NYU and Georgetown.

The Ethnic Politics Workshop sought to promote new approaches to the study of ethnic politics in the social sciences by bringing together a small interdisciplinary group of social scientists to exchange ideas, brainstorm, and provide constructive criticism of each other’s works in progress.

One goal of the workshop was to improve the way social scientists measure identity-related concepts. Several presentations focused on ways to develop new datasets, refine or augment older ones, or more properly use existing data. Other presentations concentrated on substance, discussing cutting-edge findings on ethnicity’s relationship to phenomena such as coups, violence, voting, political exclusion, and attitudes toward immigrants and refugees.
The Political Science Department and the GW Alumni Association hosted a reception at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association. We were joined by 68 alumni, faculty, and students. It was a great opportunity to reconnect with friends and colleagues. On left, Sophia Moestrop (Ph.D. 2003) and Lee Ann Fujii (Ph.D. 2006).
ALUMNI NEWS & NOTES

Josh Douglas (BA 2002) is an Assistant Professor of Law at the University of Kentucky College of Law.

Mitch Epstein (BA 2004) has worked as a flight instructor since graduation and is beginning his legal studies at Phoenix School of Law.

Eric Lebson (BS 1992) is on a two-year detail from the Office of the Secretary of Defense, currently serving as Director for Pakistan at the National Security Council.

Jared Skok (BA 1995, MBA 1997) is the senior manager for The Blue Foundation for a Healthy Florida, the philanthropic arm of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Florida. He was the recipient of the Jacksonville (FL) Business Journal’s “40 Under 40” award. The award is presented each year to the 40 “brightest, most-promising” business professionals under 40.

Connie Veillette (PhD 2007) began work as Director of Rethinking U.S. Foreign Assistance Programs at the Center for Global Development. She had served as a Senior Professional Staff Member for Senator Lugar (R-Ind) on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

Send News to: Political Science Newsletter, George Washington University, 2115 G Street, NW, Monroe 440, Washington, DC 20052; or email us at polsci@gwu.edu.

Faculty Publications


Bruce Dickson. Allies of the State: Democratic Support and Regime Support among China’s Private Entrepreneurs (with Jie Chen). Harvard University Press.

Thanks to Our Donors

These individuals made contributions to the Political Science Department or the Sigelman Fund in 2010 (January 1, 2010 - November 15, 2010). We very much appreciate your kindness and support for our various activities.

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UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH AWARD FUNDED

Julie Silverbrook (B.A. 2009), whose research was supported by a Luther Rice Fellowship, gave a gift to begin a fund for undergraduate research

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