



Letter from the Chair Supporting Student Success

This year the Department of Political Science has been busy on multiple fronts with new initiatives to support our students. Student success comes in all shapes and sizes, so we have been trying many different approaches to helping students realize their full potential, including efforts in and beyond the classroom.

At the undergraduate level, we are in the midst of a multi-year push to improve graduation rates and attract more majors and minors in our first-year sections of American and Texan government, which are required for all undergraduates at UH. Instructors **Brian Cole** and **Cyrus Contractor** have been helping to lead the charge in this area, and all faculty members who teach these courses have been incorporating new learning tools and technologies to create more interactive classrooms. As a result, the past three years have brought big gains in student achievement in these



Pictured above: **Nita Lineberry** and **Susan Scarrow** celebrating the establishment of the Robert L. Lineberry Graduate Scholarship Fund.

classes. We also have been working to provide more opportunities for majors to concentrate in areas of interest through a variety of interdisciplinary minors, and to make them aware of scholarship opportunities for graduate school and for summer programs (one of which is described on the next page).

At the graduate level we have sponsored a series of professionalization workshops,

including visits by Professor **John Ishyama**, editor of the *American Political Science Review*, who talked about publishing, and UH doctoral alumnus **Carlos Huerta**, who talked about job interviewing at regional universities. Last but not least, the spring semester kicked off with a celebration to mark the official establishment of the Robert L. Lineberry Graduate Scholarship. This new and still-growing fund will support student success for generations to come.

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Focus on: Latin American Politics

Studies of Latin American politics are thriving in our Department, boosted by new hires and a steady stream of students with research interests in this field. UH political science faculty who regularly teach or do research in this field include Eduardo Aleman (legislative politics), Francisco Cantu (electoral institutions), Jeronimo Cortina (electoral behavior and public policy), and Lydia Tiede (judicial politics).

Faculty and students also participate in regular workshops and host visiting speakers. Guests at recent workshops have included Dr. Kevin Casas-Zamora (Organization of American States), Sandra Ley (Duke University), and Monica Pachon (Universidad de Los Andes, Colombia).

In the past two years four students have completed dissertations with topics related to Latin American politics. Recent graduates in this field have a diverse range of appointments, including at CIDE (Mexico), ITAM (Mexico), the University of Glasgow, and at the UH Law Center's Center for US and Mexican Law. For more information, please visit the [workshop webpage](#).

What Does it Take to Get a PhD?

Alumni Spotlight:

UH Political Science alumna Mary Morgan has spent her career in the high tech industry. Upon graduation she joined a computer firm and throughout her career has worked for large firms (Unisys, Cray Research), has been a VP at two different start-up firms, and is currently working for BMC Software, headquartered in Houston. She has held a wide variety of management positions in both sales and operations. Her interest in the computer field actually began in one of her Political Science statistics classes: "That class was my first introduction to computers and opened my eyes to the impact that analyzing data could—and should – have in making decisions. It led to a lifelong belief that the data will 'take you where you need to go'". In addition, she credits her Political Science classes with giving her the skills to assess how complex decisions are made, whether they be in the government, diplomatic or commercial arenas.

Mary Morgan is also active in the community. She is one of the original board members for the Greater Houston Women's Chamber of Commerce, and currently serves on the board and is Treasurer for Crisis Intervention of Houston www.crisishotline.org.

That's the question that students will be exploring over the coming months in the Department's new Summer Workshop on Applying to Graduate School ("SWAGS" for short!). Political Science students tend to be more aware of law school options than about options for further study in political science and public affairs. In addition, they are apt to hear much more about the soaring costs of higher education than about the many good scholarship opportunities.

The SWAGS program aims to combat these problems by encouraging students to consider a wide range of degree

programs and institutions, and by giving them academic skills and counseling that will help them succeed in applications and in further studies.

This year's course, sponsored by the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences and the Department of Political Science, will be led by Assistant Professor **Justin Kirkland**. Dr. Kirkland is passionate about helping students to connect with research in order to realize their full academic potential. This class will provide students with information about different types of degrees and scholarships, help in preparing application materials, and experience in writing research

proposals. All the Political Science majors who completed a similar program last summer have been admitted to graduate schools. UH students who will be starting political science doctoral studies next fall include **Derek Fan** (Ohio State University), **Joshua Jackson** (University of Georgia), **Sidney Simpson** (Notre Dame), and **Ryan Jewell** (University of Houston). Other students will be starting master's programs in various universities in applied economics, politics, public policy, public administration and security studies. Students will also be pursuing legal studies at schools including Duke University and UH. Congratulations and best wishes to everyone!

Outreach Project Helps Houston's Homeless



In December, Political Science graduate students, faculty and staff put aside exams for a while in response to a call for help from Houston's SEARCH Center for the Homeless.

There was an enthusiastic response, and department members filled over 40 large holiday stockings with items such as socks, toothbrushes, hand sanitizer, and granola bars.

Above: graduate students pose with four boxes of filled stockings before they were delivered to SEARCH.

Faculty News

Teaching Awards

Jeremy Bailey was awarded the University of Houston Teaching Excellence Award. Professor Bailey teaches courses in American political thought and political theory in the Honors College and the Political Science Department. He has spearheaded major curriculum reforms while serving as Political Science graduate director and chair of the undergraduate committee, and this year has played a leading role in the ongoing UH bid to get a *Phi Beta Kappa* chapter.

Jennifer Clark was awarded the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences Ross Lence Teaching Award. Professor Clark, who teaches courses in statistics and legislative politics, has successfully incorporated technology into her teaching. She has taught seminars, large

lectures, "hybrid" courses (i.e., partly on-line), and is now preparing a new fully on-line module of the first year American government course. In addition, she plays a big role in the graduate program, advising multiple dissertations and sitting on many comprehensive exams.

UH at MPSA

UH Political Science was well-represented at this year's Midwest Political Science Association Meetings. Three faculty members served as panel organizers: **Jeremy Bailey** (Political Theory), **Ryan Kennedy** (International Security), and **Jon Slapin** (European Politics). In addition, 14 faculty members and 9 students presented papers and posters and participated in roundtables.

In April **Greg Weiher** represented the University of Houston at the Council on Foreign Relations' third annual Conference for Educators April 10-11 in New York. **UH President Renu Khator**, a Political Science department member, is a member of the Council. This relationship complements various programs supported by the Department, such as the National Security Studies Minor, the Center for International and Comparative Studies, and the Diplomat in Residence program under which a senior foreign service officer resides in the Political Science department while informing students in Texas and Louisiana about State Department careers. The conference included presentations on various topics in foreign relations, such as the current crisis in Ukraine, and exposition of the resources CFR makes available for students and

Graduate Students & Alumni News

Abdullah Aydogan was recently awarded a Dissertation Completion grant from the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences for the 2014-15 academic year. His dissertation focuses on parliamentary and presidential institutions and the likelihood of military coups.

M.A. student **Scott Hofer** has been awarded a U.S. State Department critical language scholarship to study Hindi in summer 2014.

Alumnus **Juan Carlos Huerta** has been elected President of the Southwestern Political Science Association. Dr. Huerta is Director of Core

Curriculum Programs and Professor of Political Science at Texas A&M Corpus Christi. MPA alumna **Rebecca Lujan Huerta** was recently appointed City Secretary for the City of Corpus Christi.

Dr **Michael Bruter** of the London School of Economics was co-recipient of the Market Research Society's 2013 award for 'Best International Research' for his project 'Inside the Mind of a Voter'. The judges praised the paper for "the thorough, innovative research approach and ... the useful insights on how to reengage the electorate with the electoral process."

Recent Faculty-Student Publications

Abdullah Aydogan and Jonathan Slapin, "Left-Right Reversed: Parties and Ideology in Modern Turkey," *Party Politics*, 2014 (forthcoming).

Michelle Belco and Brandon Rottinghaus, "In Lieu of Legislation: Executive Unilateral Pre-emption or Support During the Legislative Process," *Political Research Quarterly*, 2014 (forthcoming).

Jennifer Clark and R. Lucas Williams, "Parties, Term Limits and Representation in the U.S. States," *American Politics Research*. 2014.

Justin Kirkland and R. Lucas Williams, "Partisanship and Reciprocity in Cross-Chamber Legislative Interactions," *The Journal of Politics*, 2014 (forthcoming).

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Advice from an Alumnus: Careers in Public Affairs

George Kelemen went from running track at the University of Houston to running the Government and Political Affairs division of the Airports Council International-North America (ACI-NA).

After graduating from the University of Houston with a degree in Political Science, Mr. Kelemen worked for the American Cancer Society Action network and the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) for over 10 years and for Governor George W. Bush in Austin. Based in Washington, DC, he currently serves as ACI-NA's Senior Vice President of Government and Political Affairs. He serves as the association's chief lobbyist and leads the development of strategies to influence congressional and legislative actions affecting airports and the aviation industry.

He is responsible for developing and implementing political strategies and initiatives that complement a sustained and politically valuable public visibility plan for airports.

This Spring semester, Mr. Kelemen returned to the University of Houston and spoke to a class on Congress about the lobbying process, including how advocacy works in the legislature on a range of topics from health care, the budget process and transportation issues. He also addressed an interested group of *Pi Sigma Alpha* students about the importance of mentorship, developing relationships across partisan divides and finding quality opportunities to work in government or campaigns before graduation.



A proud UH alum, he spoke fondly of taking several political science classes with Professors Donald Lutz and Richard Murray and credited them with sparking his interest in learning and applying the legislative process.

Faculty Experts in the News

Faculty members have featured frequently in national and local news media this spring. Expert commentators have included **Brandon Rottinghaus** speaking to *National Public Radio* and local media about the Texas primaries, **Richard Murray** commenting in multiple outlets on Texas elections, Scott **Basinger** quoted in a *Washington Post* blog on the

political impact of scandals, **Susan Scarrow** in a *New York Times* article on the expanding use of primary elections outside the United States, **Jeronimo Cortina** speaking to the *Salt Lake Tribune* about Mexican cartels, and **Tanya Bagashka** giving several interviews on Russian politics.

Also receiving multiple mentions in national news media were **Ryan Kennedy's** research on analysing "big data" and problems with the Google flu tracker, published in *Science*, **Robert Carp's** research on Obama's judges, and research by faculty member **Ling Zhu** and grad student **Markie McBrayer** on state politics and healthcare enrollment.

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- Visit our [Department web page](#) and Facebook Page for more news.