FROM THE CHAIR:
PUR SCIENCE & PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION FALL 2015

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PAUL SUM

Warm greetings - and for once I write that without a hint of sarcasm - the North Dakota fall has been spectacular this year!

The department has had another great year. Our efforts to increase high impact learning experiences are paying off.

Students participated in a Model Arab League conference this past spring. The same PSPA-sponsored student organization will host participants from universities throughout the region at our own Model Arab League conference this fall.

Isaiah Frohling and Amy Rassier were our Becraft Scholars last year who traveled to West Point and the U.S. Naval Academy for conferences. Bobbie Lentz is the fall 2015 Becraft Scholar (see her profile on Page 2).

Mary Slack will present her paper, “Children’s Utopia, Adult’s Dystopia: Youthful Optimism in Utopian Writing for Children and Young Adults,” at the Utopian Studies conference this fall.

We also administer dozens of internships for undergraduate and graduate students. As alumni and friends of the department, you can play a vital role in helping to generate more internship opportunities or assisting in the financial support of student experiences. We sincerely appreciate your support.

Contact Sum at paul.sum@UND.edu.

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PSPA majors create legacy in UND Student Government

Students of government regularly become leaders in UND’s Student Government, from secretary to senator to president and vice president. This academic year is no exception. The Student Body President Matt Kopp, Jamestown, ND, is majoring in Political Science and Economics, and Vice President Taylor Nelson, Stillwater, MN, is majoring in Political Science and Norwegian.

Although they shared a ticket to victory, Kopp and Nelson came to student government from different paths - hers was short, and his was long. “I became involved in student council early on in high school, and I knew that I wanted to continue that by getting involved in student government at UND,” Kopp said.

Nelson was hired to work in the Student Government Office her sophomore year. The job inspired her. “After observing Student Senate, I realized how much I wanted to voice my ideas and opinions,” Nelson said. “So, I decided to run for the On-Campus

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OUR GOAL

is to be recognized as one of the finest small political science and public administration departments in the United States.

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My name is Bobbie Lentz, and I am a senior in UND’s Political Science program. I was initially drawn to Political Science as a course of study due to my early interest in government and a desire to pursue a career in public service.

After spending my undergraduate years taking a variety of intellectually stimulating courses and getting to know the department’s engaged faculty, I am certain that UND’s Political Science program is well-suited to my interests and professional goals.

Last winter I took a particularly interesting political communications course that motivated me to apply for an internship in Senator Heidi Heitkamp’s Washington D.C. office. I was able to spend my summer working as a press intern in the Senator’s communications office.

My duties as an intern varied daily and included writing press releases, compiling news clips, and drafting social media posts. I also had the opportunity to attend various press conferences and meetings with members of Congress, constituents, and representatives from popular social media platforms.

My experiences in Washington, along with my experiences as a UND Political Science student, have helped build a solid foundation for a future career in public service, and I feel very fortunate to be part of such an exceptional program.

Bobbie Lentz’s hometown is Rolla, ND. She attended ND Flickertail Girls State in 2011.

Benjamin Kassow is a new Assistant Professor in the Department of Political Science & Public Administration. Prior to starting at UND in 2014, he taught at the University of South Carolina in Columbia and Georgia State University in Atlanta.

He received his PhD in Political Science from the University of South Carolina in 2013, where he focused on questions of how courts discuss and utilize various precedents, as well as on issues of law and the effects of legal changes on policy outcomes. He has secondary research interests in American political institutions and in quantitative research methodologies.

Professor Kassow has several developed research projects, including an examination of how the Supreme Court uses summary decisions (abbreviated, one-sentence to one-paragraph decisions without oral argument) to encourage lower court usage of, and compliance with, Supreme Court decisions.

A second project involves the selection of appropriate count models for modeling the behavior of political actors in the social sciences.

Finally, he is interested in understanding the behavior of state high court judges in terms of decision making and opinion writing, across a variety of institutional (and professional) contexts.

Dr. Kassow’s teaching interests lie in the realm of Public Law (both American and Comparative), as well as American Political Institutions. He is currently slated to teach POLS 115, American Government; POLS 305, American Constitution: Government Powers, and POLS 306, American Constitution: Civil Liberties and has also taught courses on Intergovernmental Relations/Federalism, Law and Society, and Judicial Process in the recent past.

Outside of work, Dr. Kassow’s interests include skiing, hiking, and kayaking, as well as listening to (and playing) music.
EMERITUS PROFILE:
RON PYNN

Retiring in 1999, I left UND with many, many fond memories. The department was blessed with great faculty and a generation of excellent students. I’m proud of that legacy but even prouder that the present faculty have built on that tradition to make the department even better.

My sojourn took me to St. Petersburg, FL, in 1999 for two part-time jobs in retirement - as executive director of the Text and Academic Authors Association and as academic dean for a medical school in Belize (founded by two UND Political Science graduates).

Circumstances in 2004 led to significant change. My wife of 43 years passed away from brain cancer, and the Belize medical school relocated to Grand Cayman. I chose not to relocate there.

As fate would have it, I reconnected with an old friend from graduate school days. She was recently divorced, and in 2005 I moved to Burlington, VT, to be with her near the shores of Lake Champlain.

Time here in Vermont is spent between volunteering at a local charity, the Joint Urban Ministry Project, that provides food and household necessities to low income families, and travel throughout the U.S. and foreign lands.

I hope by maintaining my scholarship fund I can continue to contribute in some small way to the department’s academic excellence and growth.

Dr. Ron Pynn was a PSPA faculty member from 1971 to 1999 specializing in political theory. He now holds the title Professor Emeritus. The Dr. Ronald Pynn Scholarship Endowment continues to support high-achieving PSPA undergraduates. Friends and former students may contact him at rpynn@comcast.net.

2015 SCHOLARSHIPS AND AWARDS

2015 Outstanding Student honorees (l to r): Ruikun Sun, Joseph Schaefbauer, Amy Rassier, and Sarah Vogel

Honored at the department’s Eighth Annual Awards and Recognition Reception on May 7 were Outstanding Graduates:

• Ruikun Sun, Outstanding Graduate in Political Science
• Sarah Vogel, Outstanding Graduate in Public Administration
• Amy Rassier, Outstanding Civic Engagement at the University
• Joseph Schaefbauer, Outstanding Civic Engagement in the Community

Scholarships for the 2016 academic year and the Omdahl Award were announced for these exceptional students:

• Dr. Ronald Pynn Scholarship: Matthew Kopp
• Milton R. Young Scholarship: Roberta “Bobbie” Lentz
• J. Raymond and Frankie MacMaster Olson Scholarship: Isaiah Frohling
• Adrian Dunn Scholarship: Jed Hanson
• Lloyd Omdahl Undergraduate Writing Award: Mitchell Rufer

Harsell, PSPA faculty honored on Founders Day

For the second year in a row, a PSPA faculty member received one of the University’s highest Founders Day awards.

Associate Professor and MPA Director Dana Michael Harsell was recognized at the 2015 UND Founders Day with The UND Foundation/Thomas J. Clifford Faculty Award for Graduate or Professional Teaching Excellence.

Harsell has been MPA Director since 2011. Additionally, he has served as the chair of the University’s Graduate Programs Committee and is Vice Chair/Chair Elect of the University Senate for 2015-16.

The faculty of the Department of Political Science and Public Administration also was honored at Founders Day 2015 with the UND Award for Departmental Excellence in Service.
SCHOLARSHIPS AND SUPPORT

The department is honored to benefit from several endowed funds to support specific scholarships and initiatives, as well as priority needs. Alumni and friends might wish to contribute to these funds or start one of their own.

- Carolyn and Michael Becraft World Affairs Endowment
- Byron L. Dorgan Endowment
- Adrian R. Dunn Memorial Political Science Scholarship
- Mary K. Fischer Endowment
- Vincent and Leona Gilloley Political Science Endowment
- Lloyd Omdahl Undergraduate Writing Award (unendowed)
- Dr. Ronald Pynn Endowment
- Frank and Esther Wenstrom Endowment
- Milton R. Young Scholarship

Recent Faculty Research . . .

Research raises the profile of the department and benefits students by keeping the faculty up to date on the latest trends and methods in the discipline. Here is a selection of recent work:


Brian R. Urlacher’s first book, International Relations as Negotiation, has been released by Paradigm Press (Routledge).