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Arts & Letters : The Journal of Potter College

Potter College of Arts & Letters

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Lindsey Thurman, WKU’s first National Collegiate Honors Council Honors Student of the Year recipient, originally wanted to go to a small, liberal arts college—until her mother convinced her to visit WKU. After overcoming her initial reluctance, Thurman agreed to visit and promptly fell in love with the campus and the people. More importantly, Thurman realized that she could receive a quality education in the liberal arts without the price of a private liberal arts college. “I knew this is where I wanted to be,” Thurman said in a recent interview. Fortunately, the university and Thurman have both benefited from her choice, as she

“I knew this is where I wanted to be”

has brought recognition to WKU, to Potter College, and to the English Department by winning the national award and through her efforts in the honors program.

Coming from the small town of Russell Springs, Thurman admits that she has changed tremendously during her time at WKU. Describing herself before college as a bit of “a goody-two-shoes,” Thurman declares that her years on campus have made her a more multidimensional person—leaving just enough of the sweet, bubbly, straight-A student that arrived. She believes that being around people so different from herself in the residence halls and in campus organizations was a big part of what helped her learn to think for herself and to formulate her own beliefs. New and varied experiences present themselves all the time on a college campus, of course, and Thurman does admit to some initial mistakes; still, she reports that her career at WKU has not produced any regrets. In addition, she acknowledges that she has gained much more than just a quality education in the liberal arts at WKU. She has also gained independence and has learned that she can rely on herself to make decisions.

Because she has changed so dramatically while at WKU, Thurman realizes that she is now a bit different from the people in her hometown. Small town ideas often lean toward different measures of success, she laughs, such as those attained by beauty pageant winner Tara Conner, a former Miss USA who attended high school with Thurman.

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A Word From The Dean

WKU is a university in the midst of transformation for a new era, and Potter College intends to lead the way in defining the role of a public university in the 21st century. Potter is by far the university’s largest college, and all WKU baccalaureate students take several classes in the College. With 12 departments and approximately 230 faculty and staff members, Potter has about 4000 undergraduate majors and over 200 hundred graduate students. We also offer most of the university’s General Education curriculum including five of the six core courses required of all students. With its large number of majors and its role in General Education, Potter College provides about a third of the university’s overall instruction, half again more than the next largest college. In addition, the College has a strong commitment to retaining and graduating students. The number of degrees it awards annually has increased by 45% over the last five years compared to a 24% increase for the university as a whole.

The College keeps quality as its central focus in this transformation. Eight Potter College faculty members have been designated Distinguished University Professors, more than any other college. A Potter College faculty member is WKU’s only recipient of the Acorn Award given annually to one outstanding faculty member across the Commonwealth. Potter has endowed professorships in three departments—History, Music, and Journalism & Broadcasting. It houses the Center for the Study of the Civil War in the West and the Robert Penn Warren Center. The School of Journalism & Broadcasting and the Forensics Program are nationally acclaimed, and the state has designated them as Commonwealth Programs of Distinction. The College also has nationally accredited programs in Art, Music, Theatre, and Journalism & Broadcasting. It is the only university in Kentucky that can claim national accreditation in Art, Music, and Theatre.

To be ready for the 21st century, our students need to get their hands dirty working in their disciplines outside of traditional classroom settings, and Potter College students are embracing that challenge. We’re putting more money into student travel, and we’re creating Student Summer Fellowships to support students who are developing their own scholarly projects. Our students are operating a radio station, performing internationally, interning in Washington, doing cultural conservation with the Eastern Band of the Cherokee, and working in many other initiatives that give them the chance to stretch their learning beyond the classroom and the studio. Potter College students are leading the way in such important university initiatives as the Honors College and Study Abroad. Over 40% of Honors students are Potter College majors, and 35% of WKU’s Study Abroad participants come from Potter College.

I hope you enjoy our newsletter. It provides a brief glimpse of a large and dynamic college that is central to the university’s work. I think you’ll be intrigued by what you learn about the remarkable people—faculty, staff, and students—who are Potter College.

David D. Lee, Dean
Potter College of Arts & Letters
A Different Measure of Success: 
Lindsey Thurman

(continued from page 1)

“My type of success is a foreign concept to them,” she says. “I don’t expect people at home to be that impressed [with the award] because they just can’t relate.”

Thurman’s academic career has taken the usual self-adjusting path—mostly through Potter College. After trying political science and news/editorial journalism, Thurman finally found herself on track for an English major. According to Thurman, finally choosing to major in English was fortuitous. She believes that because of its interdisciplinary nature, English is one of the best backgrounds one can have. As a result of her education, Thurman feels she is now well-equipped with communication skills that will benefit her in the workplace. Her major also offered her a chance to learn about areas of life that extend beyond a simple love of literature and writing. Of the many classes she took, Thurman reports that her “outstanding” Environmental Literature class with English faculty Wes Berry proved to be one of the most interesting. Cross-listed with sociology, the class was comprised of students from a variety of majors and consisted primarily of reading assignments on environmental issues. Because of the diversity of the students, these class discussions were particularly interesting and stimulating for Thurman. Other courses Thurman ranks among her favorites were Tom Hunley’s creative writing classes and Walker Rutledge’s Hemmingway and Faulkner seminar.

In her time at WKU, Thurman has been extremely active in the honors program, of course, which is where she has achieved her greatest rewards and brought the greatest recognition to Potter College and WKU. Besides winning the national honors award, she created several programs for honors students while here, including “BBQ with the Prof,” “Picnic with the President,” BioBlurbs and HonorsToppers. She was also Spirit Master vice-chair, coordinator of the honors section of the Dynamic Leadership Institute, and senior representative to the Honors Development Board.

In November of last year, Thurman received her award at the National Honors conference in
Philadephia. Several months before the application was due, Craig Cobane, director of the University Honors Program, nominated Thurman and gave her the application to complete. According to Thurman, she did not take her chances to win the award seriously, though. It was not until the day before the award luncheon at the Philadelphia conference that Thurman even remembered that she had applied. The next day at the luncheon, Thurman said she noticed her name on a piece of paper listing the top 25 finalists for the award. Thinking that this was all she would have to remember the conference by, she slipped the paper in her purse. Little did she know that she would receive an even better token of remembrance. As the award ceremony continued, the speaker began to describe the winner in detail and Thurman realized that she was the student being described. She says she was “totally floored by it” and calls it a humbling experience. Because she was competing with students from other prestigious universities, Thurman hopes this award will bring more recognition to the College, to the honors program, and to WKU.

Most students would be happy to entertain advice from such a successful graduate, and Thurman’s best suggestion for incoming college students is to get involved on campus. Doing so will give students a drive to complete their degrees, she counsels, and provide them a way to meet new people and to grow. Activities outside of academics can also be a great stress relief from the pressures of school, she adds.

Cobane once asked her what she really wanted to do with her life. Her response was, “I’d really like to be a professional Spirit Master.”

FROM THE EDITOR

In offering the inaugural issue of the PCAL Journal, our hope is that readers might discover more than just the accomplishments of our faculty and the achievements of our students and alumni. There are, of course, already publications that feature these successes, so the goal of the Journal will be to provide more than just a recitation of achievements, awards, and honors—many with which you are already familiar. We also want you to get a sense of what these activities mean for the College and the University and to get to know the people who have worked hard to achieve them. Our objective is that you become more familiar with what is happening throughout Potter College, whether you are a faculty member, an alumnus, a donor, or a staff member. We also hope that you will grow to better appreciate what these activities mean for the college and find encouragement to continue your support for the Potter College of Arts and Letters.

In this spirit, we call upon you to read more deeply about these activities, these teachers and scholars, and these students. But we want more than just attentive and interested readers. We also ask for your support, your suggestions, and your contributions. As you read through these stories, which are but a few of the significant and notable successes that we might have featured, we hope that you will consider any omission as an opportunity to bring those interesting stories to our notice. At the very least, please know that your input is welcomed.

Thanks need to be extended to the people featured in this issue for detailing their activities and for taking the time out of their busy schedules to sit for interviews. Thanks also to David Lee for his leadership and to Mina Doerner for her help and support.

The newsletter will employ interns each semester, and this issue’s internship was awarded to Sarah Durr, whose hard work and attention to detail helped make this inaugural issue possible. Sarah’s experience working on the newsletter is, in fact, exemplary of how the mission of the college can positively affect students and how our students can contribute to the college. Thanks, Sarah.

And so onward, with the hope that, as Plato says, “the beginning is the chiefest part of any work.”

Joe Hardin, Assoc. Prof. of English
professional Spirit Master” because of the opportunities it presents to meet and interact with people. At this time, it looks as though WKU will continue to benefit from its first National Honors Student recipient and Thurmon will, in fact, be able to be a professional Spirit Master of sorts. Upon graduating, she will continue her work with WKU’s honors program. This time her role will be as staff member. In the Fall, she will begin work as an admissions counselor for the honors program. Eventually, she hopes to be more involved in higher education administration.

So it looks as though WKU will get to keep its first National Honors Student of the Year for a while, and that future honors students at WKU will benefit from her experience and wise counsel. And it looks as though the home-town folks will just have to adjust their assessment of what constitutes real success.

**Dream Job**

After 30 years as a professional historian and successful writer, Glenn LaFantasie has found his dream job in the Potter College Department of History. But the road to that position has been a long and interesting one. In 1980, LaFantasie was enrolled in the PhD program in history at Brown University, but left before finishing to support his wife’s career as an officer in the U.S. Army Reserves. Calling himself “the world’s oldest living teaching assistant,” LaFantasie worried, however, about the prospects of beginning an academic career at mid-life. As it turns out, WKU’s history department recognized the benefits of hiring a scholar and teacher with so much “real world” experience and brought LaFantasie on board to become the first Richard Frockt Family Professor of Civil War History and director of the new Center for the Civil War in the West.

From his Cherry Hall office, LaFantasie reports that “there are a lot of challenges, but I do enjoy it, and it’s a wonderful opportunity for me professionally—the greatest gig so far in my career.” That’s saying quite a bit, considering how much LaFantasie has already accomplished as a writer and as an administrator in the field of public history. That experience will serve him well in his work with the new Center, but getting back into the academic study of history is exciting for LaFantasie as well: “I should have done it sooner,” he says.

“One of my desires is to reach out to a broader public.”

The Frockt professorship is focused on strengthening undergraduate study in history, and LaFantasie hopes the endowed position will increase the prestige of the department and, perhaps, lead to a certificate in the study of Civil War history. LaFantasie has begun this past year by teaching a few of the traditional offerings already available in the history department and is developing seminars on Abraham Lincoln and on the Confederacy. These courses will, he says, be for graduate students and majors, for interested students from other disciplines, and for future K-12 history teachers. He hopes that, over time, other faculty who specialize in the Civil War can be added to the roster,
including experts in the military and social history of the Civil War era. This will “give undergraduates, and particularly history majors, a real opportunity to concentrate their studies and really get their fill of Civil War topics, which on the undergraduate level is a very popular subject.”

LaFantasie’s own research explores how the Civil War changed American life. His book Twilight at Little Roundtop, for instance, examines soldiers’ experiences in the battle, which was an important part of the battle of Gettysburg, and how the soldiers who were involved reacted and responded emotionally. Another book, Gettysburg Requiem, focuses on a particular soldier who fought in the battle of Gettysburg, tracing his life from cradle to grave and showing how Gettysburg was not just a turning point in the war, but was a turning point for individual soldiers as well. “Once again,” he says, “it’s that theme of how the Civil War changed the life of this particular individual.” Lincoln and Grant, LaFantasie’s forthcoming book, “will explore some of the same themes by looking at more prominent leaders, one political and one military,” and showing how these two leaders together effectively won the Civil War for the North: “What they came up with was, in my estimation, a policy of what analysts call total war. And so the Civil War becomes the first modern war and signals the rise of the modern military-industrial complex.”

During the war. Already, he says, he has become fascinated by the fact that the Civil War pitched many Kentucky families into conflict—and often actual battle—between brother and brother, cousin and cousin, and even father and son. Kentucky is fascinating “for the division that did occur here,” he says, “and Bowling Green is the perfect setting for that because Bowling Green was named at one point to be the capital of the Confederate state of Kentucky—of which there really was no such thing because Kentucky never left the Union.” LaFantasie feels that Bowling Green is the perfect place to study “the necessary clash and conflict between these two different sides” as this division was very apparent locally. In fact, LaFantasie reports that “in some of the Bowling Green families it manifested itself in a real test of loyalties.” It’s these family conflicts that fascinate LaFantasie and not just the “battles and bullets.” In fact, the loyalties of Kentuckians were essential to the conflict, LaFantasie says, and Lincoln knew that if he lost Kentucky to the South it would shift a lot of resources away from the North’s war effort.

One of the assets that LaFantasie brings to the Center for the Civil War in the West is his awareness of how the public views the subject of history: “one of my desires is to reach out to a broader public, for whatever kind of history I do. My hope has always been to reach a broader audience. There’s a history here [at WKU] of well-known scholars like Lowell Harrison, my predecessor here as a specialist in Civil War history, of writing for a broader audience as well. It’s a distinction here that the Western faculty has established for many long years.” LaFantasie hopes to continue that emphasis with the Center, and once its programs are in operation, he hopes to make many of the activities public and to “bring in scholars to help talk about the Civil War in the West.” This will be an effort to capitalize on public interest in the Civil War specifically and on the general interest in military history. The Center will also provide outreach to the local K-12 schools in the form of workshops for history teachers and programs for students.

Recently, LaFantasie took President Ransdell, Richard Frockt, and other alumni and donors on a tour of Gettysburg in a pilot of what he hopes will be future tours of area Civil War sites. This summer, LaFantasie spent time familiarizing himself with some of these locations on a driving tour: “now that I’m within striking distance of all these significant Civil War and historic sites, I’ll be incorporating a better sense of these sites into the Center’s programs.” There are, he says, many places that are significant to Civil War history in the area and not all of them are well known to the public or to many scholars. At Munfordville, for example, there is a unique battle site that is “a perfect lesson in Civil War battlefield tactics and terrain, so that you could demonstrate that to students and I think they would get a
kick of that—to see how a small Civil War battle actually unfolded.”

Interdisciplinary work will also be a large part of the focus of the Center. As history has become more important to other fields, more scholars make use of the data that historians and history centers gather. “There are indeed,” LaFantasie says, “some great interdisciplinary opportunities here, and we hope to mine them and get other departments in the university involved in the Center. It’s not just going to be a history center, but one that incorporates many disciplines.”

History is about citizenship, LaFantasie believes, and how the past informs and shapes our lives now. It’s the relationship between what’s come before and what’s happening now that matters: “it’s hard to escape the parallels or the differences, and some of those parallels are so human. That is very much a part of the human experience, very much a part of the American experience. I’m not a firm believer in lessons out of history—that if we only learn those lessons then we’ll apply them and we’ll all be all right. History doesn’t work that way and we human beings don’t work that way, either, because some of our most intelligent leaders probably knew the lessons of history and made the same mistakes.” Still, LaFantasie believes that we can judge where we come from and where we are if we study history and at least understand it intellectually: “It’s the human stories that I think appeal mostly to people and that they can understand, and sometimes they can even see themselves in those stories.”

The balance between being a teacher, a public historian, an academic scholar, and an administrator are a challenge, he reports, and the Center will need funding and hard work to develop staff and programs and to obtain physical quarters. Still, these duties are familiar for LaFantasie, who sees all these jobs as a mosaic of work to be accomplished. “It’s worked for me before,” he says, “and so far so good. It feels comfortable, it feels good, and I’m getting things done. I think this is going to work. I’m still able to say ‘yes, this is my dream job.’”

**College Faculty at Work on NEH-funded Projects**

In 2006, Potter College faculty claimed two of the 346 National Endowment for the Humanities fellowship awards. Dr. Jeffrey Samuels and Dr. Richard Keyser each received $40,000 in grants from the NEH for College Teachers and Independent Scholars.

Samuels is an Assistant Professor in the Philosophy and Religion Department at WKU, and Keyser is an Assistant Professor in the History Department.

Both Samuels and Keyser were pleased to receive the awards but humble enough about their work to be surprised by their successes. Keyser reports that when he received the award notification he was sure that it was a rejection and called a colleague...
to come by and “see the first rejection of the grant application season.” Samuels assumed that even if he were eventually to win a grant, it certainly wouldn’t be on his first application. He was “thrilled,” he says, to receive the award and couldn’t have done it “without the help of my colleagues.”

Samuels spent the 2006-2007 academic year in London to finish work on a project that has been an integral part of his scholarship since his days as a graduate student. The research began when Samuels journeyed to Sri Lanka on a Fulbright to study the Buddhist religion of that area. Specifically, Samuels, whose research employs an ethnographic methodology, went to Sri Lanka to immerse himself in the culture. The goal was to come to a better understand how the Buddhist religion intersects with the lives of the Sri Lankans and to examine the aesthetics of that particular form of Buddhism. “The image in the West is that Buddhism is a religion of renunciation,” Samuels says, “but there is a large emotional component in both the recruitment and in the training of novices—what’s called ‘attracting the heart.’”

Before receiving the award, Samuels had originally planned to write the final project while teaching, but he used the time allowed by the grant to go to London and make use of the extensive collection in the British Library instead. The proposed manuscript, entitled Attracting the Heart: Monastic Recruitment, Training, and Monastic-Lay Relations in Contemporary Sri Lanka, is now almost finished, and Samuels expresses a bit of ambivalence about the impending close of the project. “I’m happy to wrap it up, of course,” he reports, “but there is a little melancholy” at finishing. “I’m both happy and sad,” he says, “but there is a sense of closure.”

Back in the classroom, Samuels will employ the knowledge he has gained from his research to inform his teaching. His experiences in Sri Lanka have already given him first-hand knowledge of the workings of that culture and the place of religion in the lives of the people, and the research he has just completed for the project will help him teach his courses more effectively. The goal in teaching courses about Buddhism, he says, is first to disrupt “the representations of traditions” about the Buddhist religion that his students bring with them to class. In his classes, “what’s familiar becomes unfamiliar.” In other words, students often come to class with knowledge or misconceptions about the Buddhist religion that are based on their own experiences and on what they think they know.

In addition, the connections that Samuels has made in his travels will benefit the Potter College and the WKU generally. He hopes to increase the “collaborative” nature of his teaching and scholarship by fostering the connections he has made with researchers at Cambridge, Bristol, and Oxford and with the Sri Lankan Buddhist community.

While Samuels’ work is drawing to a close, the work that Keyser will be doing on his grant is just beginning. In the meantime, Keyser has continued his work under another grant, the Solmsen fellowship at the Institute for Research in the Humanities at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. “Because I received another fellowship . . . and this one required that I go there for the year, naturally I did,” he reports. After spending the summer working in the French archives at the towns of Auxerre and Dijon on a WKU Summer Faculty Scholarship, Keyser will return to the Institute in Wisconsin to continue work on the NEH grant at the research library in Wisconsin. He hopes to have most of the work done on the book by the time he returns to WKU in the Summer of 2008.

“I was interested in the origins of our modern world, and more specifically in the origins of modern capitalism.”
Keyser’s research examines the property dealings of Medieval Europe, especially in the Champagne region. “I originally chose to study medieval Europe,” he says, “because I was interested in the origins of our modern world, and more specifically in the origins of modern capitalism.” He first began researching in the economy of the Champagne region “because several towns of this region just east of Paris hosted the famous Fairs of Champagne, annual trade fairs that brought the merchants of southern and northern Europe together.” What’s interesting, he says, is that this represents a more distant root of our modern Western economy: “It seemed to me that its origins must have gone back the Middle Ages, since already by the dawn of modern times—the age of exploration in the 15th through the 17th centuries—a sophisticated commercial system pushed western Europeans out into the oceans looking for new trade routes and new lands.” The proposed manuscript that will result from Keyser’s research will be entitled “From Gift to Contract: The Transformation of Medieval Property Dealings, Champagne, France, 1100-1350.”

Sarah Durr—

Call Me Ishmael—a Domestic Travel Course in Literary New England

Fourteen of WKU’s best and brightest stepped back in time this May term, visiting historic sites in New England through their enrollment in a “domestic travel” course sponsored in part by Potter College. Walker Rutledge, a professor in the English department, led 12 honors students, graduate assistant Derrick Strode, and Alicia Pirtle from DELO all over New England for a course entitled Literary New England. For this course, students were required before departure to read works from 10 different authors, including Hawthorne, Melville, and Thoreau. During their time in New England, the students visited a variety of historic sites, including authors’ homes and museums. For a less “academic” adventure, the students also went whale watching.

Rutledge reports that it took several offices of WKU to make this trip possible. The University Honors Program, the English Department, and Potter College of Arts and Letters were the main contributors. The Division of Extended Learning and Outreach, Continuing Education and the Graduate College also helped to sponsor the trip.
During their fourteen day excursion, Professor Rutledge and his students visited more than 10 historic homes, including the homes of Louisa May Alcott, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Henry David Thoreau, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Herman Melville, Mark Twain, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and Emily Dickinson. The tour also included such famous literary places as the House of Seven Gables and Walden Pond. Students were also able to visit the Ralph Waldo Emerson home. Even though Emerson’s famous home is not currently open, an exception was made for the WKU students, and they received an excellent tour that went beyond peering through plastic partitions into re-created rooms. While on their tour they were allowed to sit on some of the furniture that Emerson himself had reclined on. Students were ecstatic about the chance. “I’ve sat on Emerson’s couch! How cool is that!!” writes Laura Hess in the online blog students kept while on the trip.

Along with visiting the authors’ homes, the WKU entourage also toured several museums, including the Concord Town Museum, the Fruitlands, the Salem Witch Museum, and the Nantucket Whaling Museum. Another one of many stops was Plymouth, where students walked where the pilgrims walked and toured recreations of the Wampanoag villages. During their time at Plymouth, they visited the Mayflower II, a recreation of the original Mayflower. As an unexpected bonus, they also experienced a “nor’easter” while walking around Plymouth Plantation. Many students expressed their dislike for the inclement weather in their online journals. Brooke Shafar writes, “I’m quite satisfied not to be a pilgrim.” Thankfully, students were there only a few hours before they moved on to the next stop on their journey.

Moving from sites relevant to the 1600’s to those relevant to the 1700’s, the group walked the Freedom Trail in Boston, viewing the Old North Church. They also visited the site of the “shot heard around the world” in the Minute Man National Historic Park at the North Bridge in Concord, Massachusetts. Given the chance of stepping back into American history, students were able to experience firsthand the same things as the first citizens of this country. It was like stepping into history or into a novel they had read. No longer confined to just reading about characters doing things in books, students actually walked the same steps of those about which they had read.

Along with the many educational tours, students also took some time to go on a whale-watching trip off the coast of Massachusetts. It was here that they stepped into the pages of Moby Dick, and in their reflective essays many referred to themselves as “Ishmael” or “Ahab.” On the New England trip blog site, Bobby Deignan writes, “Honestly, you can read a book like Melville’s novel and get a tiny sense of its adventure, but without actually experiencing events like encountering a whale at sea, it’s only as exciting as your imagination will allow. Now I understand why Melville saw this kind of expedition (even though our purpose wasn’t the same as Ahab’s) as worthy of a story of epic proportions.” How refreshing to see students recognizing the excellence of such works as Moby Dick.

During the trip, students were given one free day to explore Nantucket on their own. Several students decided to take an 18 mile bike ride around the island to see the sites up close. Beka Russell writes in her online blog, “As we rode up and down the hills and I came face to face with the Artistic Wonders of the Island, I couldn’t help but think of Melville’s writings.”
with natural beauty, I couldn’t help but think of Melville’s writings: the gentle hills appear as rolling waves as you travel.” While many students wrote of the grueling bike ride and how it drained them of what energy they had left, they enjoyed the trek and seeing many Nantucket sites up close.

After a long year of planning, this trip turned out to be worth every second and all the funds put into it. Students loved the trip and the chance to learn outside the classroom. Beka Russell puts it best when she writes, “As readers, we are trained to look to our books for examples of how we can make situations and lives around us better. Today, for the first time in a long time, it feels as if life itself is finally emulating my literature.”

**The Department of Political Science**

According to its website, Potter College’s Department of Political Science graduates the third highest number of political science and government majors in the state. While many of these graduates go on to law school at highly competitive places such as the University of Louisville, the University of Florida, the University of Kentucky, and Harvard, the Department is about much more than pre-law. Boasting some of the best pre-vocational experiences at the University, the Department is heavily invested in internship programs that have placed students in local, state, and federal governments and on major political campaigns. Saundra Ardrey, chair of the department, reports that they have placed interns at the White House, in Congress, and with the Kentucky Supreme Court system. Regional and national activities have students competing in the Mock Trial and holding a seat on the Security Council of the Model United Nations.

Department faculty includes specialists in public administration; international relations; American, British, and European politics; legislative politics; political philosophy; state and public policy; public law; and security studies. Recent offerings include an extremely active study-abroad course in comparative politics, which has students visiting places such as the Czech Republic, the Baltic States, and London to study the political structures of those countries and regions. Recently, Ardrey has agreed to spearhead a new political engagement program across the campus, which is charged with increasing student awareness and involvement with political issues important to the region, the commonwealth, the nation, and the world.

In addition to offering the major and minor in political science with concentrations in American government, international relations, comparative politics, public administration, political campaign management, and public law; the Department also offers a certificate in political communication, which is a co-offering with the Department of Communication. The Department’s masters level program in public administration, which claims President Ransdell as a graduate, awards what is largely a degree that trains students to work in public management, not-for-profit, and private sector organizations. Besides Ransdell, graduates of this burgeoning program have gone on to earn doctoral degrees and to work as city managers or in legislatures.

Students in political science work as hard outside of class as they do in class. Activities keep them active in politics, government, and advocacy groups. Such work outside the classroom are designed to help prepare them with the oratory, argument, and critical skills they will need in public administration, law, or government.

This presidential election cycle will, of course, have political science students busy as usual running the local Debate Watch and Rock the Vote drive, intern at both major political conventions, and holding inauguration events that will be attended by the likes of Mitch McConnel and Roy Lewis.