

President's Update



NEWS FROM PRESIDENT NIRSCHEL

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AROUND THE WORLD...

Bringing Roger Williams University to Our Nation's Capital



Recently, Paula and I had the privilege of being among a select group of guests (120) who celebrated Lincoln's birthday and Ford's Theater at the White House.

We were greeted by "Battle Hymn of the Republic" played by a military band, escorted into Lincoln's bedroom (and given an update by Karl Rove), viewed the table where President Nixon signed his resignation letter and chatted with President and Mrs. Bush. He recalled his time visiting the Livingston family in Bristol—Marty Livingston is a neighbor and honorary degree recipient—and, of course,

Mrs. Bush spoke glowingly of her experience as our 2006 commencement speaker. Subsequently, I spoke with Vice President Cheney about a mutual acquaintance and touched base with Civil War historian Doris Kearns Goodwin, another highlight of the evening for me.

At dinner I was able to share Roger Williams stories with a host of Lincoln scholars. I was proud to describe Professor Tackach's Lincoln Conference on campus, Chief Justice Frank Williams' Lincoln expertise (he is an honorary degree recipient of the law school and member of our Board of Overseers) and the storyline of "Mr. Lincoln's Wars" by Professor Adam Braver. James Swanson, an author and noted Lincoln collector, is a friendly rival of the Chief Justice when it comes to collecting historic artifacts.

Over dinner, I had the chance to share our sustainable energy efforts with the CEO of Sunoco, discuss foreign policy with Sen. Richard Lugar of Indiana, and historic preservation with the chairwoman of the Ford's Theater renovations. Our conversation was immeasurably enriched by the array of examples I could cite of the great work done by the faculty, staff and students at Roger Williams.

I was honored to carry the Roger Williams message to the White House again—and am proud that I have so many good stories to convey to people in corridors of influence in our nation's capital.



Professor McCormack, Katelyn Lowe, Timothy Shanahan (International Reading Association), Meghan O'Neil and Julie Harris-Steed (Bermuda Reading Association).

Future Teachers Wow Educators at International Conference

In early February, juniors Katelyn Lowe and Meghan O'Neil traded snowy Rhode Island for the sunny skies of Bermuda, as they presented at a Bermuda Reading Association conference to a crowd packed with parents, educators and administrators.

The elementary education majors had approached Rachel McCormack, Associate Professor of Literacy Education and the students' trip adviser, about attending a literacy conference. After securing funding and deciding on the Bermuda event, Katelyn and Meghan spent weeks preparing a project: "Parents and Children Reading Together." The presentation gave tips for nurturing an early love of literature and offered suggestions for age-appropriate books. The pair even gave their presentation a twist by raffling off the books they mentioned.

"They really were poised and professional during their presentation," says Professor McCormack. "They were the only students from the U.S., so it added a whole new perspective to the conference."

The young women even had the honor of meeting Bermuda's Minister of Education and the President of the International Reading Association—both of whom praised their work. Their visit was such a hit that parents and teachers alike invited them back next year.

UNIVERSITY CALENDAR

MARCH 6

"Service through Philanthropy" with Dr. Vartan Gregorian, President of the Carnegie Corporation of New York

MARCH 7

Socrates Cafe:
"How Important is Security to You?"

MARCH 22

"Civil Rights in the 21st Century" with poet/activist Nikki Giovanni

APRIL 2

"Promoting New England's Marine Economy" featuring Sen. Jack Reed and Leon E. Panetta, former White House Chief of Staff



International Honor Society Opens First Rhode Island Chapter at Roger Williams University

Roger Williams launched the first Rhode Island chapter of Phi Beta Delta, an international honor society, earlier this semester. Phi Beta Delta, founded in 1986, honors those in higher education who serve internationalism—the idea of a world connected, of respect for different traditions, of the need for education—to enhance knowledge of the many cultures around the globe.

The Epsilon Rho Chapter of the society held a ceremony in February to induct 54 charter members of the group, which includes University faculty, students and administrators.

“With our University motto being ‘Learning to Bridge the World,’ we are particularly delighted to welcome Phi Beta Delta to our campus,” says University President Roy J. Nirschel, an honorary member of the society. “This organization’s mission is a perfect fit with our commitment to promoting a global perspective among our students.”

Since it was founded 21 years ago at California State University - Long Beach, Phi Beta Delta has grown to more than 134 chapters worldwide. The chapter officers of Epsilon Rho are Kevin Hayden, President; Roxanne O’Connell, Vice President; Matt Gullo, Secretary; and Kenna Luguri, Treasurer.

Law School Begins Sustainability Initiative

Building on the Marine Law Symposium—the law school’s first “green meeting,” held last October—and the public showing and discussion of “An Inconvenient Truth” in January, the University’s Ralph R. Papitto School of Law has created a student-led Sustainability Initiative.

With assistance from the Marine Affairs Institute, a select group of students will focus on reducing the environmental impact of the law school and building a culture of sustainability. The effort will include an environmental audit of the law school building to identify ways to reduce its energy consumption, generation of waste and overall impact on the environment.



In early January, Jared Goldstein, Associate Law Professor, introduced the screening of former Vice President Al Gore’s global warming documentary, “An Inconvenient Truth.” Following the film, Allison Rogers—Miss Rhode Island 2006—led a discussion for a packed room of law students and local community members. Ms. Rogers, an environmental activist who’s using her reign as an opportunity to educate people on environmental issues, analyzed the film and offered insights on how universities can better serve the environment.

As the school’s Sustainability Initiative develops, stay tuned for related events later this spring including a student-sponsored kick-off event.

Pulitzer Prize Winner Analyzes College Admissions Biases

Getting into America’s top universities isn’t always easy—but it can help if you’re rich or famous, bestselling author Daniel Golden said at a Feb. 15 discussion and book signing in the Mary Tefft White Cultural Center.

Mr. Golden, a Wall Street Journal reporter who wrote “The Price of Admissions: How America’s Ruling Class Buys Its Way Into Elite Colleges—And Who Gets Left Outside the Gates,” shared the ins and outs of the admissions game. He contends that elite universities, driven by prospective fund raising dollars, award a portion of coveted spots to wealthy or legacy students, regardless of academic achievement.

Mr. Golden discussed the genesis of his theory, the reporting work required in seeking to prove it and the reactions from the universities exposed. He also spoke about the challenges that up-and-coming universities (such as Roger Williams) face in the admissions process and how they can avoid such biases in their own admissions practices.



Forensic Anthropologist Discusses Work at Disaster Scenes

In what may have been the most solemn topic of a Mary Tefft White Lecture yet, forensic anthropologist Richard Gould relayed his firsthand accounts of the atmosphere following three recent disasters: New York's Ground Zero after Sept. 11, New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina and Warwick, R.I., after the Station nightclub fire. At all three sites, Dr. Gould helped locate, record and recover the bodies of victims.

"It was a fascinating lecture and surprisingly positive because he didn't focus on the gruesome details," says Betsy Learned, Associate Dean of the University Library. "He focused on the teamwork approach at the three sites, the humanity of the groups and how each team member brought different things."

Dr. Gould, Professor of Anthropology at Brown University, has studied human cultural and behavioral adaptations to stress, risk and uncertainty across the world from Australia's Western Desert, to subarctic Finland, and even Bermuda, where he researched shipwrecks and losses at sea. The final lecture of the "Dimensions of Leadership and Service" series will feature Dr. Vartan Gregorian, President of the Carnegie Corporation of New York and former President of Brown University, on March 6.



Richard Gould (left) addressed University and local community members in the Mary Tefft White Center.

Law School Creates Professorship in Honor of Judiciary Legend

When Rhode Island Supreme Court Chief Justice Joseph R. Weisberger retired from the bench in 2001, he concluded a public service career that spanned more than 50 years. On Feb. 6, the School of Law hosted a reception at Providence's University Club to announce the creation of the school's first named and endowed professorship in his honor.

More than 70 members of the state's legal community—from Justice Weisberger's fellow justices to his former law clerks—turned out to show their support. Board of Trustees Chairman Papitto, President Nirschel and School of Law Dean David Logan presented the Chief Justice with an engraved wood chair to commemorate the professorship. Former clerk Susan Leach DeBlasio honored Justice Weisberger with a touching speech.

Dean Logan says the school's first endowed professorship is "a remarkable achievement for such a young school with a young alumni base. We'll conduct a national search for an outstanding teacher, scholar and public servant worthy of serving in a position with Chief Weisberger's name."



Roger Williams honored former Rhode Island Supreme Court Chief Justice Joseph R. Weisberger with the first endowed professorship in the School of Law's history.



"Cora's essay envisions a way in which writers help us to see the world differently."

PRESIDENT ROY J. NIRSCHEL

Freshman Earns Presidential Honors for Reason & Respect Essay

When freshman Cora Tetreault sat down to pen a submission for the "Reason & Respect: A Journal of Civil Discourse" writing contest, she never imagined the recognition she would receive—\$100 cash and an award presented personally by President Nirschel.

The student writing competition called for entries related to service, the winter edition theme of "Reason & Respect." Cora, a legal studies and psychology major, wrote the essay, "'Interpreter of Maladies': A Common Place for Cultures," which explored author Jhumpa Lahiri's portrayal of civic engagement. "I argued that Ms. Lahiri wrote the stories to show that although people come from different cultures, we are all still human beings," Cora says.

Despite a number of strong submissions, it was Cora's essay that stood out to the contest judges. "Cora's essay envisions a way in which writers help us to see the world differently," President Nirschel says. "It's a kind of service which is not often recognized."

Architecture Professor Honored for Innovative Designs

There is more to Nantes, France, than meets the eye on a first glance, in part thanks to Roger Williams Architecture Professor Julian Bonder. As the lead architect for the city's Memorial to the Abolition of Slavery, he designed a tunnel that winds its way for four blocks underneath the city.

Now, the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture has honored Professor Bonder with an award commemorating his innovative designs. The Faculty Design Award is the result of a 2003 partnership with MIT architect Krzysztof Wodiczko; the two designed an underground memorial on the banks of the Loire River. "The ground of the city is an archive, it can tell a story," Professor Bonder says. "We expose the underside of the city and ultimately expose citizens to the history of slavery."

The memorial, now in the final stages of development, is slated for completion in 2009. Visitors to the site will enter a dimly lit passage and can pause to read names of French slave expeditions inlaid in the floor. Moving down the passage, visitors will view gigantic sheets of glass, inscribed with legal and official abolitionist text, which slice through the side of the tunnel like a spade. "It's a non-representational project—we don't want to represent slaves or slavery," Professor Bonder says. "Instead, I wanted to create a space to draw an emotional response to slavery."

Professor Bonder's designs caught the eye of those in the architecture world, earning him one of only four ACSA Faculty Design Awards out of nearly 70 submissions. So where will he go from here? "We would like to do something on campus," Professor Bonder says. "Perhaps within the frame of civil discourse—something to get the community involved."

Hawks Conclude Successful Winter Athletics Campaigns

It's been a busy, successful winter season for the Roger Williams athletics teams. Here's a quick recap:

Men's Basketball: Senior Brandon Parrish made Roger Williams history on Feb. 8 when he joined the exclusive club of University basketball players to score more than 1,000 points. Needing only 6 points to put him over the mark, Brandon scored 8 points in the game against Anna Maria College. Parrish joined 18 men and six women at Roger Williams in the 1,000 point club. The team finished its season with a tough overtime loss to Wentworth Institute of Technology in the Commonwealth Coast Conference (CCC) quarterfinal game and a 15-10 overall and 10-6 CCC record.



Women's Basketball: The women's basketball team hosted a meet and greet, complete with an autographs session on Feb. 10, for a troop of 50 Girl Scouts and their families. The second annual "Girl Scouts Got Game" featured a talk by the basketball team about the importance of a college education, the role of women in competitive sports and the importance of teamwork. The Girl Scouts were then treated to dessert and prime seats for the Lady Hawks' win against Eastern Nazarene College. On Feb. 20, however, the team lost in its CCC quarterfinal matchup against Endicott College on, finishing the season 12-14 overall.

Men's and Women's Swimming: The men's and women's swimming and diving teams both performed well at the New England Swimming and Diving Championships on Feb. 16-18. The men's 400-yard medley relay team earned the highest finish for Roger Williams, placing second with a time of 3:45.5. Both the men and women improved on their 2006 finishes. The men posted a fourth-place finish out of 12 teams, and the women placed sixth out of 22 teams.

Wrestling: Roger Williams was center stage when the University hosted the New England College Conference Wrestling Association Championships on Feb. 17 and 18. It was the fifth time that Roger Williams has hosted the 15 teams in the conference for the national qualifier event. The Hawks finished fourth, and senior Andrew Lacroix was a wild card selection for the NCAA Division II National Championships. The team also was honored with the Team Sportsmanship Award as voted by the officials.

