

University Update



NEWS FROM PRESIDENT NIRSCHEL

ISSUE 2 | FALL 2006

IN OTHER NEWS...

The Roger Williams Community—A Big Presence in Election Season

As you know, Rhode Island is home to several closely watched elections—both local and statewide. Political campaigns, especially when the candidates are neck and neck, really drive home to me the importance of civic engagement. And I get a lot of satisfaction from knowing that many Roger Williams faculty, staff, students and alumni are actively involved in the election process this year.

In fact, when I began to take note of the number of University people either running for office or working to get someone into office, I was struck by the deep Roger Williams presence in races all over Rhode Island.



This special edition of University Update offers a partial “Who’s Who” of Roger Williams people involved in this year’s political campaigns. From our beloved Ray Cordeiro, to Roger Williams law student Spencer Maguire, to two of our alumni working as chiefs of staff for Rhode Island politicians, you can find Roger Williams representatives pitching in.

This edition of the Update features profiles of a few faces in our wide Roger Williams network, faces of people making the election process as vital and relevant as ever. No matter where they stand on issues or on what side of the political aisle they occupy, you’ll see that they bring to their work that characteristic Roger Williams energy and optimism.

Meanwhile, on campus we are doing what we can to encourage voters to exercise their responsibility. Students who need transportation to the polls, for example, can take a RIPTA bus from the Lower Commons on Nov. 7 to the Franklin Village polling place. We’ll even throw in free coffee for those waiting to grab a ride.

As you read these brief bios, I hope they’ll move you to remember the importance of doing your part this year by taking the time to vote. I bet that there is one thing every person profiled in this Update will agree on: Every election, and every vote counts.

Roy J. Nirschel, Ph.D

Student Senate to Host Bristol Town Council Forum

With the questions percolating and the candidates ready, the Roger Williams University Student Senate will host the inaugural Roger Williams Town Council Candidate Forum on Thursday, Nov. 2, less than a week before Election Day.

“We’re thrilled to host an on-campus forum,” University President Roy J. Nirschel says. “Students will get a chance to hear their local leaders discuss the issues up close, in person. And, they’ll get to ask the questions.”

Roger Williams senior Mike Witek, president of the Student Senate, will introduce the town council candidates, and all questions will come from audience members. Each candidate will have the chance to respond briefly to queries, with political science Professor Hans Schattle serving as moderator.

The event begins at 7 p.m. in the Law School Appellate Courtroom (Room 283), and it’s free and open to the public. For those unable to attend, the University radio station, 88.3 WQRI, will broadcast the discussion live.

The town council election will be held on Nov. 7—nine candidates are competing for a five-seat panel.

UNIVERSITY CALENDAR

NOVEMBER 2

Town Council Candidate Forum

NOVEMBER 3-5

Singlehanded National Sailing Championship

NOVEMBER 9

Civil Discourse Speaker: David Gergen



Congressman Patrick Kennedy Presents \$200,000 Allocation to University

In the midst of a busy campaign for re-election, Congressman Patrick Kennedy visited Roger Williams University to celebrate a \$200,000 federal appropriation he secured for the Justice System Training and Research Institute at the University's School of Justice Studies.

"We've all seen the great work the Institute does for police officers in the state, New England and even the world," University President Roy J. Nirschel said. "Congressman Kennedy's leadership made it happen. You are not going to find a more dedicated Congressman or a greater friend to the University than Patrick Kennedy."

Joining Congressman Kennedy, President Nirschel and Institute Director Robert W. McKenna at the ceremony were several law enforcement and criminal justice professionals who have benefited from the program, including representatives from the Middletown, R.I., Police Department, the New England Association of Chiefs of Police and the Turkish National Police.

The current award will support the Institute during 2007. "What happens at Roger Williams needs to happen everywhere," Congressman Kennedy said. "The Institute is becoming a leader in law enforcement training. I'm proud to be here today to keep the Institute going."

Law Student Spencer Maguire, Candidate for State Representative



Spencer Maguire, a third-year law student at Roger Williams, is currently battling incumbent State Rep. Ray Gallison for the District 69 seat. Mr. Maguire, a Republican, has worked in public policy and government for most of his adult life.

He graduated from Syracuse University with a major in political science, then moved to Washington and landed a position working for Rhode Island Sen. John Chafee. He worked his way up in Sen. Chafee's office to become legislative coordinator and stayed on when the senator's son, Lincoln, was elected to his late father's seat.

"I always admired John Chafee," Mr. Maguire says. "It became clear to me that public servants can really make a difference in the lives of the people they serve."

In 2001, Mr. Maguire left Washington to work with a New York state senator in Buffalo. He gained an influential position with State Sen. Mary Lou Rath, but left that job when his Marine reserve unit was deployed to Iraq. Mr. Maguire believes his experience as a soldier will impact how he'll serve in public office.

"In Iraq, the basics of life were missing," Mr. Maguire says. "The people there want the same things we want here—working sewers, electricity, clean water...the general basics that a government should provide."

After serving his country, Mr. Maguire moved to Kansas and earned a master's in public administration while working for a state elected official. Eventually he returned to his native Rhode Island and chose Roger Williams for law school.

"I've always thought the practice of law was an honorable career," Mr. Maguire says. "And a law degree is a very versatile degree, so I decided to come to Roger Williams."

Alumnus Reginald Centracchio, Candidate for Lieutenant Governor



At age 17, Reginald Centracchio began a life of public service by enrolling in the National Guard. Over the course of the next 48 years, he climbed the ranks and became one of the most decorated officers in Rhode Island history.

In the mid-1980s, Mr. Centracchio paused to earn his bachelor's in public administration from Roger Williams. With a degree in hand, he was on the fast track to more promotions within the military.

In 1995, Mr. Centracchio was named the Adjutant General of Rhode Island, making him the only National Guardsman to climb from the rank of private to major general. Ten years later, he retired from the military, but he knew he could still look forward to years of public service.

Mr. Centracchio, a Republican, is turning his experience into a bid for lieutenant governor. He's currently running against two other candidates.

In 2000, Roger Williams honored Mr. Centracchio with its Distinguished Alumnus Award. To this day, his involvement with the University remains strong, as he still serves as advisor to the Continuing Studies program.

Alumnus Ray Simone, Chief of Staff for U.S. Sen. Jack Reed



Roger Williams alumnus Raymond D. Simone ('74) admits that psychology is not the undergraduate major you might expect for a high-level political staffer.

Mr. Simone serves as chief of staff for Rhode Island Sen. Jack Reed, a position he has held since successfully managing Reed's campaign for the House of Representatives in 1990. Though he may not have anticipated a career in politics, he loves his job. Why? He never stops learning, he's involved in events that become history and best of all, he helps the people of Rhode Island.

We can thank former President Jimmy Carter for turning Mr. Simone away from psychology and toward politics—President Carter's Comprehensive Employment Training Act, created to fight the high unemployment rates of the 1970s, funded his first job in the governor's Citizen Information Service. He flourished in the position; when his boss, Robert K. Pirraglia, became the governor's general counsel, he asked Mr. Simone to serve as his assistant.

The new position found Mr. Simone interacting with the top figures in Rhode Island politics and gave him experience campaigning when Mr. Pirraglia ran for Congress in 1982.

Fast forward to 1990. When fellow Cranston resident Jack Reed started searching for a campaign manager, a mutual acquaintance suggested Mr. Simone. Sen. Reed hired him, and the two have worked together since.

"I am proud of many things in my life," Mr. Simone says. "But two things especially: I am proud to be a graduate of Roger Williams, and I'm proud to work for Jack Reed."

Alumnus Chris Albert, Chief of Staff for Lt. Gov. Charles Fogarty



"Roger Williams has had a huge impact on where I am today." That's how Chris Albert—chief of staff for Lt. Gov. (and aspiring Rhode Island Gov.) Charles Fogarty—sums up the University's influence on his career.

Mr. Albert, who graduated with a bachelor's in communications in 1994, accepted an internship with the city of Providence while an undergraduate at Roger Williams. Post-commencement, his experience paid dividends immediately as he landed a job as a mayoral aid in the Buddy Cianci regime.

He climbed the ranks, earning a position as associate director of government relations and working as a lobbyist for the city. In 2001, he joined Lt. Gov. Fogarty as chief of staff.

"Looking back, my career in public service is a bit of a surprise," Mr. Albert says. "But my internship sparked something in me, and Roger Williams led me down the path to where I am today."

So, any aspirations of becoming a candidate himself?

"Sure, those aspirations are always there," he says. "I've been fortunate to work with great people, and I've seen how we've really been able to make a difference in the lives of the people in Rhode Island. That makes you feel good."

"I am proud of many things in my life. But two things especially: I am proud to be a graduate of Roger Williams, and I'm proud to work for Jack Reed."

RAY SIMONE ('74), CHIEF OF STAFF FOR U.S. SEN. JACK REED



Sen. Jack Reed Speaks on Public Service

As an army ranger, paratrooper and military captain, Sen. Jack Reed answered the call to public service early in his career—since then, he's served 16 years in the nation's capital.

Sen. Reed presented a lecture titled "Answering the Call to Public Service" to a standing-room-only crowd of students, faculty and community members on Oct. 10. After discussing his military and political background and encouraging students to consider careers in public service, Sen. Reed entertained questions from the audience.

He'd just returned from a trip to Iraq, and he spoke about the challenges of extracting U.S. troops from the country, a popular topic from questioners.

The lecture was the second in a four-part series titled "Dimensions of Leadership and Service," made possible through a generous gift by alumna Mary Tefft (Happy) White ('76).



“I share the University vision of bridging the world...”

Kenneth Marshall, Bristol Town Council

For Town Councilman Kenneth Marshall, public service has always been a way of life. “I was class president in high school,” Mr. Marshall says, “and also a member of the Close Up Foundation program, which allowed me to travel to Washington, D.C., to become familiar with civic service.”

Years later Mr. Marshall is just as involved. The Democrat holds a seat on the Bristol town council, and he hopes to continue in that role following the coming elections. He’s up against eight other candidates, and only five will be selected for a seat on the council.

It’s his work in another arena, however, that ties him to the Roger Williams community. Alternate energy sources have always fascinated him, and Mr. Marshall joined forces with Eleftherios Pavlides, professor of architecture at the University, to study wind turbines.

“When Dr. Pavlides’ work came to my attention, we paired up to secure permits to do wind turbine research in Bristol,” Mr. Marshall says.

The result? This year’s Election Day ballot in Bristol features a referendum on wind power. The following question will be presented to voters: “Should the town pursue the installation of a wind turbine in Bristol provided an appropriate site is identified?”

The voters will decide. Regardless of the outcome, however, Mr. Marshall believes his work reflects the goals of Roger Williams.

“I share the University vision of bridging the world,” he says. “The small steps we take today will help build the world community of tomorrow.”

Alumna Diane Mederos, Bristol Town Administrator



Nearly 22 years ago, Diane Mederos made a decision that changed her life—she decided to swap her teaching job for a career in public service. “I just woke up one morning and really wanted to run for office,” she says.

Ms. Mederos launched a campaign for town clerk, won the election and has worked in the Bristol town hall since. With elections looming, the Bristol Town Administrator and Roger Williams alumna hopes to continue her two-decade political run.

After learning that she qualified for tuition remission at Roger Williams (as a town employee), Ms. Mederos began taking night classes; by 1994, she’d earned her second college degree, this one in business administration.

So what does she like about her current job? Well, she’s a native Bristolian and enjoys serving in a position that benefits her community. “I like seeing that we make a difference in town,” she says. “We inventory what we need to do for Bristol and get it done.”

Out of the office, Ms. Mederos found a variety of other ways to keep involved in public service. She has served as a member of the Rotary Club, East Bay Mental Health Center and the Bristol Fourth of July Committee, to name just a few. In 2001, the town awarded her one of its highest honors—she was named the chief marshal of the Bristol Fourth of July Parade.

Ms. Mederos revisited Roger Williams for the 2006 Commencement event and played a special role in the ceremony. “I was proud to lead the entire procession into the tent,” she says. “Not only was I representing my class, I really felt that I was representing my town.”

Associate Athletic Director Ray Cordeiro, Candidate for Bristol Town Council



In 1975, when Bristol native and current Roger Williams Associate Athletic Director Ray Cordeiro retired from a 19-year professional baseball career, he never imagined that he’d become active in local politics, let alone serve on the town council for a decade.

Mr. Cordeiro returned to Bristol after retiring and started work in the Athletic Department in 1981, coming on as the full-time baseball coach. Soon, he met his wife and the man he credits for sparking his involvement in politics.

“My father-in-law spent 16 years in the state House of Representatives and Senate,” Mr. Cordeiro says. “One day I made some comments on how things were being done in town, and he told me to get involved and do something about it.”

Mr. Cordeiro credits his baseball credentials and family ties for helping him during his first town council campaign in 1992. He won a seat, lost it in 1994, regained it and served until 2004, when he lost his spot again. Since then, he’s remained active in town through various boards and organizations, and he hopes to return to the council following the November elections.

And, yes, that baseball experience—he played for the White Sox, Pirates, Athletics, Tigers and Astros during his career—has helped him along the way. “It was an awesome experience,” Mr. Cordeiro says. “I have been in every state except Alaska and almost every country in South America because of baseball.”