

President's Update



NEWS FROM PRESIDENT NIRSCHEL

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FACULTY & STUDENT RESEARCH...

Honoring our Unsung Heroes at Roger Williams

With the end of another successful year fading in our rearview mirror, I took some time over the holidays to reflect on the tremendous progress that our wonderful students, faculty and staff have helped to generate at this University. As we continue our strategic planning process, “Roger Williams 2020,” the momentum we built in 2007 will no doubt propel us toward the RWU of the future.

As the fall semester wrapped up, many of you joined me for an annual tradition here at Roger Williams—the incredible holiday party dreamed up by Allison Chase-Padula, Jon Small and the countless other dedicated staff who contributed to the process. I was privileged to honor two members of the University community that evening as our Unsung Heroes for 2007: Andy Costanzo and Joan Romano.

Those of you who know Andy know that our new Dining Commons wouldn't function without him. A member of the RWU community since 1986, Andy serves these days as production manager—without his expertise, there would be no food to cook and no machinery or tools to cook with. He likes to work behind the scenes, but you should know that Andy has been a major proponent in helping the University and Bon Appetit develop some of the innovative sustainability initiatives you've heard about recently.



Joan Romano accepts her Unsung Hero award.

Joan, who has worked at RWU since 1993 in the Bursar's Office, the Registrar's Office and the Feinstein College of Arts & Sciences, has developed a reputation over the last 15 years as a go-to person. She's beloved by students, faculty and staff alike, she knows the RWU curriculum inside out and she's a team player who makes the extra effort to ensure that students see her as a resource.

Thank you—Andy, Joan and the rest of our unsung heroes on campus—for your commitment, your dedication and the joy you bring to your work.

With a new semester just underway, this is also a time to look forward. With such things as a compelling lineup of Civil Discourse speakers and a major colloquium that will bring together scholars and experts on the Middle East on the horizon, the spring semester promises to be as exciting as the last. Welcome back, and I look forward to another great year with all of you.

Ray J. Nirschel, Ph.D.

Marine and Natural Sciences Lands Major Grant from National Science Foundation

Exciting news in Marine and Natural Sciences: Last month, the National Science Foundation awarded \$725,000 to fund a marine algae research project led by Assistant Professor Brian Wysor, the project's lead principle investigator.

The four-year initiative will link researchers at RWU, Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History, the University of North Carolina Wilmington and the University of Louisiana at Lafayette with colleagues in Central America in an effort to survey and inventory *benthic marine macroalgae* (seaweeds) from the Caribbean and Pacific coasts of southern Central America. Of the \$725,000, the Roger Williams research team will receive about \$400,000.

“It's a pretty substantial grant in terms of monetary value,” said Robert Cole, dean of the Feinstein College of Arts and Sciences. “And it was great news because it's building partnerships with other universities who are substantially different than us. It's exciting that we're a part of helping the ecology of the world.”

A portion of the award will help support six RWU student researchers and a few Panamanian student researchers to be hosted at Roger Williams over the summer.

UNIVERSITY CALENDAR

JANUARY 29

SAAHP Gallery Opening: “A Model Passion”

JANUARY 31

Civil Discourse: Lou Dobbs

FEBRUARY 27

Civil Discourse: Daniel Ayalon



Nicole Lombardi, Jaclyn Calovine, Josh Hiscock and Donna Darmody earned Student Affairs awards.

Staff Members, Student Leaders Capture National Awards

As last semester came to a close, four staff members and student leaders working in the Student Affairs division were recognized with national awards in honor of their outstanding work at Roger Williams.

Wellness Coordinator Donna Darmody, who has worked at RWU for 16 years, earned one of five Outstanding Adviser of the Year awards presented by the BACCHUS Peer Education Network at its annual conference. The BACCHUS Network—which focuses on health and safety initiatives at colleges and universities—celebrated Ms. Darmody's caring and dedicated service to RWU's student Health and Wellness Educators.

At its annual Region 1 conference, the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators presented its Richard F. Stevens Outstanding New Professional award for Rhode Island to Joshua Hiscock, associate director of Student Programs and Leadership.

Two students also earned awards for their leadership efforts. At the NASPA conference, senior Nicole Lombardi was named recipient of a Catch a Rising Star Undergraduate Student Leader Award. And junior Jaclyn Calovine received the Outstanding Student Leader award from the National Association for Campus Activities at its Northeast Regional Conference.

"Both Jaclyn and Nikki are outstanding student leaders," said Mr. Hiscock, who contributed to nominating the students. "Each of these young women is planning to go into a career in Student Affairs and has worked diligently to program quality events on campus and build community within our residence halls."



Steve Patterson unloads oysters so alumni, student and gardener volunteers can sort, count and measure them.

CEED Teams with Volunteer Gardeners to Rebuild Oyster Population

On a chilly, sunny Saturday morning in early December, University aquaculture experts from the Center for Economic and Environmental Development teamed with volunteer oyster gardeners and marine science alumni and students in a daylong effort to transfer more than 1 million adolescent oysters to local reefs.

The event culminated the second cycle of the Rhode Island Oyster Gardening for Restoration and Enhancement program, which was started in 2006 to reinvigorate Rhode Island's dwindling oyster population. Eighteen oyster gardeners signed up to raise baby shellfish in year one, and now those oysters are thriving on the reefs. This year, the program grew exponentially—more than 70 volunteers asked for oysters, and RI-OGRE had to cap the number of sites at 55.

Led by Steve Patterson, the University's shellfish field manager, and faculty members Timothy Scott and Dale Leavitt, the group counted and measured juvenile oysters and replanted them on Prudence Island and on an experimental oyster reef in Bristol Harbor. Mr. Patterson stressed the importance of rebuilding the population:

"Nearly all the oysters in the state have been wiped out over the last 10 years—I've seen only one place in Rhode Island that has living oysters that aren't a part of this program," he said. "Our goal is to create a few strongholds, protect the oysters and keep them healthy until they can start reproducing. That's going to be a glorious day!"

Into the wild: Professor Dale Leavitt unloads a batch of shellfish onto an oyster reef in Bristol Harbor.





This bathroom before-and-after illustrates the dramatic remodel the students completed throughout the house.

Students Renovate Local Home as Part of Innovative GSB Course

A group of 25 students in the Gabelli School of Business learned the meaning of hands-on experience this fall semester via an elective class on project management. The course's mission to aid less fortunate families from the local area led them to renovate a Bristol home.

Planning for the project began in August and culminated with a four-day remodel over two full weekends in November. Early stages of planning focused primarily on fundraising for the project. The class worked in teams to develop a budget for the home improvements and decided how that budget would be allocated. In November, the group had their hands full on-site, renovating the bathroom, kitchen, bedrooms and exterior of the home, including the patio and yard areas.

"In my five years at Roger Williams, I have not seen our students so excited about and dedicated to a worthy cause," said Maling Ebrahimpour, GSB dean and the course's instructor. "This is an elective course; students are taking it not because they have to, but because they are really interested and they want to help."

Both Dean Ebrahimpour and his students hope that their work will inspire others to become more involved in their communities. There is a plan to continue this new tradition at RWU, renovating one home per semester, and giving many more the opportunity to get involved.

The students worked outside, too, building sheds, patios and gutters and cleaning up the yard.



Professor Ram Gupta Celebrates Diwali at the White House

Roger Williams Professor of Engineering Ram Gupta and his wife, Saroj, were among a select 200 guests invited to the White House last November to celebrate Diwali, the Hindu "Festival of Lights," a holiday widely observed in India to honor the victory of good over evil and mark the start of the traditional Hindu New Year.

Many prominent members of the Indian-American community were present for the event, held in the White House's ornate Indian Treaty Room. They joined Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Nicholas Burns, and Deputy Assistant to the President Brian McCormack. Mr. McCormack delivered a Diwali message from President George W. Bush, who called the holiday "an opportunity to celebrate the bonds of friendship between India and the United States."

The White House celebration came just days after the U.S. House of Representatives passed Resolution 747, which recognized the religious and historical importance of the festival of Diwali and pledged support for the "new relationship of collaboration and dialogue in international efforts between the United States and India."

Professor Gupta and his wife were among guests from across the nation to attend the event and the only representatives from Rhode Island.

"I felt honored and privileged to have been invited to such an exclusive event," he said. "It was quite an experience to go through the layers of security, taken from hall to hall and being individually escorted to each place—including the restroom! The function was all joy and fun, from beginning to end."

AIA Rhode Island Honors President Nirschel as 'Honorary Architect'

President Nirschel can now add honorary architect to his list of credentials. This October, the American Institute of Architects, Rhode Island chapter, named him an honorary affiliate member. The prestigious award is given to "a person of esteemed character who is otherwise ineligible for membership in the institute but who has rendered distinguished service to the profession of architecture."

AIA nominated President Nirschel for his leadership and support of the Rhode Island chapter and for the University's generosity in donating space at the RWU Providence campus to serve as the chapter's "Window on Architecture." The space has become a headquarters for chapter meetings, events and informal gatherings.

In donating space to AIA, Roger Williams became only the third university nationwide to establish an AIA headquarters, joining the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

"The establishment of the space has been transformative on the chapter's ability to engage both the chapter itself and the general public," said Stephen White, dean of the RWU School of Architecture, Art and Historic Preservation as well as a former president of AIA Rhode Island.

Students Quiz Candidates, Debate the Issues at College Convention 2008

For nine undergraduate student leaders at Roger Williams, a December trip to College Convention 2008 in Manchester, N.H., offered a firsthand glimpse at some of the leading candidates for this year's presidential election. The students quizzed candidates—Democrats, Republicans, Libertarians and the rest—debated the issues, refined their views and walked away from the convention with an appreciation for the country's political process.

Junior Juan Escoriza, coordinator for the RWU chapter of Students for Barack Obama, noted that the nine students and two advisers shared a passion for the issues, despite a range of political views. "We respected each others' beliefs," he said. "When a candidate from a different party was speaking, we paid attention to what he had to say, even if we didn't agree."

While some of the major candidates did not attend, the students personally met many of those in attendance. For junior Sarah Dallan, a member of RWU's ONE Campaign chapter, a highlight was the chance to speak to Republican candidate Mike Huckabee about the organization's mission. She gave Mr. Huckabee a ONE Campaign bracelet and noticed him wearing it the next day during a presentation. "I was thrilled that my few moments of speaking with him about something I truly believe in and care about impacted him enough to continue to wear the bracelet," she said.

The students attended the trip with the expectation that over the next 10 months, they help educate their fellow RWU students about the issues and the importance of voting. Junior Alicia Merschen-Perez came home ready to encourage fellow RWU students to vote in November's election. "It's so important to vote and to get our voices heard—and every student's voice at RWU should be heard—so I consider it important to help mobilize them all," she said.

For all the students, the trip was an experience to remember. "Maybe I met the next president and I don't even know it yet!" Mr. Escoriza said.



The students met with Sen. Joe Biden, a Democratic candidate who dropped from the race in early January.

LEGO Robots Invade Campus Recreation Center

Armed with colorful LEGO robots, 46 teams of excited 9- to 14-year-old middle school students from across Rhode Island faced off in the seventh annual FIRST LEGO League Robotics Competition at RWU on Jan. 12.

The competition—hosted by the School of Engineering, Computing and Construction Management for the third consecutive year—was designed to spark a passion for science and technology in kids. Guided by adult mentors, the students spent the last four months building and programming robots made of LEGOs to compete head-to-head in the contest, which required completing a series of tasks related to this year's alternative energy theme.

Matthew Stein, associate professor of engineering, coached his two sons' Warwick team to victory for the second year in a row. In April, the squad will compete at the worldwide battle at the FIRST LEGO League World Festival in Atlanta.

