

President's Update



NEWS FROM PRESIDENT NIRSCHEL

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SHARING OUR EXPERTISE...

In an Election Year, Practicing the Art of Civil Discourse

As we watch this year's presidential candidates campaign in anticipation of the party conventions and next November's general election, one of the things most fascinating to witness is the interaction between candidates with disparate ideas. The act of communicating respectfully despite differences in opinion—something that's been so fundamental to our nation's development—is clearly a challenge at times, even for those at the highest levels of government.

On that note, we began this semester's Civil Discourse series by inviting CNN journalist and legendary financial newsmen Lou Dobbs to campus in late January. I'm sure that some of you are supporters of Mr. Dobbs and the ideas he embraces; for just as many, I know that your views fall at the opposite pole on the political spectrum.

Whatever your politics, I'm sure that you can appreciate that Mr. Dobbs cares passionately about the future of the United States and is committed to making his voice heard—that much was clear to me after meeting him in person. I commend all of you for the respectful, thought-provoking conversations in which you engaged our guest speaker during his visit.



Elsewhere on the Roger Williams campus, discussion, debate and consideration of the issues shaping our state and our nation are robust. Many of you are actively engaged in the political process, campaigning on behalf of Hillary Clinton, Mike Huckabee, John McCain, Barack Obama, Ron Paul and others. I encourage you all to continue that impassioned conversation in this election year and to ensure that your voice is heard.

Later this month, we'll welcome Daniel Ayalon, former Israeli ambassador to the United States, to discuss prospects for peace in the Middle East. That event offers a great preview for what promises to be an impressive collection of experts and scholars who will visit RWU for our Middle East colloquium in April. And next November, following the presidential election, political commentator and recurring RWU visitor David Gergen will return to Bristol to analyze the results. It should be an exciting election year at Roger Williams.

As for Mr. Dobbs, he pledged to reconsider the tone of his rhetoric following his appearance at RWU. "I'm really into discourse," he said. "Civility sometimes eludes me. But I promised Roy that I would do better, as a result of having been here, in the future."

Roy J. Nirschel, Ph.D.

Justice Institute Partners to Create State Victim Assistance Academy

In a recently developed collaboration, RWU's Justice System Training and Research Institute has partnered with Family Service of Rhode Island to begin work toward creating a State Victim Assistance Academy to help service providers learn how to aid victims suffering from the effects of a crime.

"This is an opportunity to help people deal with victimization in such a way that it may be as minimally traumatic as possible," said JSTRI Director Robert McKenna.

The Office for Victims of Crime, within the U.S. Department of Justice, will fund the academy over a three-year period. Director McKenna said Family Service of Rhode Island approached JSTRI as an educational partner in the venture: "We have the framework and the history to provide high-quality education and training to criminal justice practitioners."

Nearly 30 other states offer State Victim Assistance Academies, typically one-week courses that discuss victimology, victims' rights and victim services. Attendees will include counselors and any victim service providers who deal with victims or victims' families during every stage of the criminal justice process.

A steering committee—comprising individuals from public and private criminal justice agencies—has begun planning the academy, which is set to launch in 2009.

UNIVERSITY CALENDAR

FEBRUARY 27

Civil Discourse: Daniel Ayalon

MARCH 25

Mary Tefft White Series: Witold Rybczynski



Maling Ebrahimpour (left), dean of the Gabelli School of Business, accepted the key and plaque from Joseph Dias, president of Chapel Building Corp.

Gabelli School, Beta Gamma Sigma Unveil Honorary Bronze Key

Last December, students, parents, faculty and staff gathered at the Gabelli School of Business for the unveiling of a significant new school centerpiece. GSB was the proud recipient of a bronze key, symbolizing academic excellence, from Beta Gamma Sigma, the national honor society for business schools accredited by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business.

Beta Gamma Sigma is an internationally known and respected honor society, with 468 chapters on six continents. Roger Williams was invited to join the honor society in 2005 when the Gabelli School earned accreditation. Membership in Beta Gamma Sigma is the highest recognition a business student anywhere in the world.

According to Associate Dean Marian Extejt, membership in BGS has a range of benefits including access to an online job bank used by top employers looking for top students, networking events with high-profile business executives and a leg up on graduate school admissions. RWU currently enrolls 49 students in the organization.

The 4-foot, 100-pound key was made possible by a generous donation from Chapel Building Corporation, located in East Providence. The base for the bronze key was designed and built by the University's Facilities Management department.



Despite a movement encouraging him to run, Lou Dobbs did not announce a third-party presidential candidacy.

Civil Discourse: CNN's Lou Dobbs Discusses Elections, Immigration

After tremendous anticipation, CNN's Lou Dobbs—who postponed his appearance at RWU after a tonsillectomy—visited Roger Williams in late January as part of the Civil Discourse lecture series. In front of a gym full of students, faculty, staff and local community members, Mr. Dobbs spoke candidly on hot-button political issues including the 2008 presidential race, immigration and free trade with China.

And the Bush administration, of course, a popular target: “We are confronted by many challenges, but the greatest challenge of all is the fact that the American people are not being represented in our nation's capitol,” he said.

Mr. Dobbs expressed his frustration with the leading presidential candidates and how issues of race and gender have dominated the campaign trail at the expense of crucial topics such as the Iraq War, illegal immigration and the economy. “We have learned that Barack Obama is a black man,” he said. “And we've learned that Hillary Clinton is a woman.”

During a 45-minute session following his presentation, Mr. Dobbs fielded engaging questions on the issues he frequently discusses on “Lou Dobbs Tonight,” particularly immigration. He reiterated his position: “I maintain you cannot control immigration if you do not secure your borders and your ports...” he said. “Illegal immigration is wrong—it is deleterious to the interest of the people and the nation.”



RWU President Roy J. Nirschel, Board of Trustees Chairman Richard L. Bready and Civil Discourse speaker Lou Dobbs.

Does he think that a viable third-party presidential candidate is out there? Mr. Dobbs said he didn't know, but as for the current candidates, “If this is the best we can do, then we're in a hell of a lot of trouble.”

Following the lecture, RWU students, faculty and staff convened at the School of Law to continue a conversation on immigration and the other political issues on which Mr. Dobbs spoke.



The students evaluated and selected the models at Belcourt Castle and transported them to RWU for restoration.

Seniors Resurrect Historic Models, Produce Exhibition with Local Flair

For 24 undergraduates at Roger Williams University, the winter intersession offered the chance to take on a unique, hands-on project that resulted in a stunning visual display in the School of Architecture, Art and Historic Preservation's gallery space.

The project? To bring back to life 20 intricate models designed and constructed by renowned Newport hobbyist Merrall E. Holt in the 1960s and '70s. The models were loaned to RWU by Harle Tinney of Newport's Belcourt Castle, who purchased them from Mr. Holt starting in the 1970s. They were last displayed publicly in 1987.

In the senior seminar, taught by Associate Professor Rebecca Leuchak, students from various academic disciplines worked jointly to restore the models and plan and publicize the exhibition. The students consulted local historians and experts in the areas of conservation treatments and exhibition design and say the experience helped them understand the significance of the pieces and instilled a great respect for the creator.

"The craftsmanship and detail of these models is unbelievable and unlike anything I, or most people, have seen before," said senior criminal justice major Mark Haddigan. "It's really an honor for Mrs. Tinney to let us work on them and show them."

The exhibition, titled "A Model Passion," includes detailed structures such as a 6-foot-high 13th century French Gothic cathedral, Portsmouth's windmill and Newport's Belcourt Castle. It's already drawn tremendous interest from the public, and it will remain open through the rest of February.

Restoration work included everything from cleaning and dusting to rebuilding broken sections of the structures.



Representing opposite perspectives in a debate on the Supreme Court, Nan Aron and Ron Cass led law students in an engaging discussion.

Chief Justice Visit Highlights 'Supreme Semester' at Law School

On Feb. 12, nearly 200 School of Law students enjoyed a private audience with Chief Justice of the United States John G. Roberts, as part of an extraordinary "Supreme Semester" that will also include events with Supreme Court justices Antonin Scalia and Samuel Alito, Jr.

Chief Justice Roberts cheerfully fielded student questions for about an hour, and later in the day swore in 111 new members of the federal bar in Rhode Island—43 of them Roger Williams law graduates.

The Supreme Semester began last month with a debate on "How Conservative Should the Supreme Court Be?" featuring Nan Aron, president of the liberal Alliance for Justice, and conservative Ronald Cass, dean emeritus of Boston University School of Law.

Upcoming events include:

- Justice Scalia's visit to RWU on April 7;
- a lecture by Anthony Lewis, two-time Pulitzer Prize-winning author of Supreme Court-themed books and articles, on March 19;
- two dozen RWU law honor students meet with Justice Alito on April 14;
- a Thurgood Marshall Lecture by UCLA law professor Devon Carbado on April 15;
- and a keynote Commencement address by Linda Greenhouse, Pulitzer Prize-winning Supreme Court correspondent for The New York Times, on May 16.

Biology, Chemistry Departments Land Funds for Interdisciplinary Research Projects

In early February, Roger Williams University learned that it had been selected as one of just 14 institutions in the country to earn an award from the Merck/AAAS Undergraduate Science Research Program.

Sponsored by the Merck Institute for Science Education and the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the program awarded Roger Williams a three-year, \$60,000 grant to enhance science education in biology and chemistry through interdisciplinary student research.

The RWU initiative encompasses three research projects, each led by two faculty members (one from biology, one from chemistry). Four students will participate in summer research projects each year, and students will present findings at a research symposium and regional or national meetings.

Topics range in scale from ion to ecosystem. Faculty members who developed the proposal and will oversee the research include Loren Byrne, Avelina Espinosa and Kerri Warren from biology and Stephen O'Shea and Daniel von Riesen from chemistry.



Hawk's Nest Lounge Space Gets Student-Friendly Makeover

Have you noticed students rocking out with a plastic guitar in the Hawk's Nest lately? Then you've probably seen the makeover that's transformed the space into a more user-friendly hangout for students.

"With the NAB being demolished for the brand new academic building, we wanted to begin the transition for students to start coming to the Recreation Center as the hub of late-night entertainment," said Josh Hiscock, associate director of Student Programs and Leadership. "I think of it being a Starbucks type of place—comfy and loungy."

Students can lounge on sofas in front of three 46-inch plasma HDTVs and play games such as Guitar Hero III on the Nest's Xbox 360. Students can bring in their own video games and systems and hook them up to the televisions' built-in gaming inputs. Or, of course, watch DVDs or television.

Facilities Management painted the walls and added a raised coffee bar to the space in addition to new seating, re-felted pool tables and a foosball table. Soon, additional lounge-style furniture will replace older furniture and an awning will be added to the space.

In early March, Student Programs and Leadership will hold a formal grand opening to dedicate the new space. "It came out so wonderfully," Mr. Hiscock said. "It seems that people are taking a liking to it."

RWU Athletics 'Thinks Pink' for Breast Cancer Awareness

More than 200 members of the Roger Williams and Bristol communities gathered in the Recreation Center on Feb. 9 to help the Hawks participate in "Think Pink Day" during the women's basketball game. A second-year initiative of the Women's Basketball Coaches Association, Think Pink brought together more than 900 colleges and universities in an effort to promote breast cancer awareness.

With the Hawks coaches wearing pink, the players sporting pink headbands and even the referees using pink whistles, the women's basketball program promoted the campaign in force.

"[Breast cancer] hits very close to home," said Coach Tracey Hathaway-James, whose mother passed away after battling the disease. "Think Pink is an event that I'll continue to support fully."

Many attendees supported the cause by wearing pink, and a pink-clad softball team distributed pink carnations at the door. The event was also informative—Simply Wellness offered information on cancer prevention—and charitable, with funds raised for the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation.

While the Hawks may not have come out on top in the game (they fell to the University of New England 66-50), the event itself was viewed as a great success: "Between the student-athletes, the cheerleaders and the staff, there was a ton of energy," Athletics Director George Kolb said.