

President's Update



NEWS FROM PRESIDENT NIRSCHEL

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GSB DISTINGUISHED LECTURER...

Beyond the Colloquium: Extending the RWU Commitment to Intellectual Freedom

A few weeks ago, Roger Williams University had the unique opportunity to host a compelling lineup of guests to consider closely the challenges of protecting and advancing intellectual freedom in the Middle East. The two-day colloquium, many months in the making, brought together a range of speakers including a former U.S. Marine captain who works now for Al-Jazeera International; the chairman of CNBC Arabiya; a rescued academic scholar; a spokesperson for the U.S. State Department; and a number of other journalists, students, academics and experts.

The result was an engaging conversation that turned the event into a resounding success. The speakers, panels, intellect and attitude—as well as the turnout from faculty, staff, students and others—were a great reflection of what this University has become and is becoming.

The conversation, however, shouldn't end here. I concluded the colloquium by announcing a University-wide commitment to work for the release of Kareem Amer, one of the most prominent victims of free-speech persecution in recent news. Mr. Amer, an Egyptian blogger and critic of elements of political, religious and cultural life in Egypt, was sentenced this February to four years in prison for insulting Islam and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak.

What can we do? Well, I started by drafting a letter, respectful in tone, to President Mubarak. I think we should advocate for Kareem's release by corresponding with the Egyptian authorities, lobbying our own government officials to take action and working with International PEN and other human rights organizations to call attention to his situation.

After all, we need to deal not just with the theory of freedom of expression, but with the reality of each writer, teacher, scholar and—for today's world—blogger. My hope is that once he's released from prison, Kareem will join us at Roger Williams as a continuing student and our first blogger in residence.

To all of you who pitched in on the collaborative effort to host this colloquium, your work is greatly appreciated. And for those of you across campus who I know will make every effort to assist us on our mission to free Kareem, I thank you in advance.

Ray J. Nirschel, Ph.D.



President Nirschel and Al-Jazeera's Josh Rushing.



Dunkin' CEO Shares Marketing Secrets with GSB Students

Jon Luther, the man behind the Dunkin' brand, visited Roger Williams in April as a part of the Gabelli School of Business Distinguished Leader Lecture Series. Mr. Luther, chairman and CEO of the company that owns Dunkin' Donuts and Baskin-Robbins, discussed the brands' ongoing success in a conversation titled "Brand Transformation: Staying Relevant in Today's Competitive Marketplace."

"His presentation was very interesting especially for international students like me who do not have Dunkin' Donuts in their home country," said Mélanie Vuillaume, an RWU business student from France. "He [Mr. Luther] presented the values and products of his company and enabled me to understand the basics of how Dunkin' Donuts runs its business."

Addressing an audience of nearly 120 people, Mr. Luther explained how to create value-based leadership, a concept based on honesty, integrity, responsibility, humility, fairness, respectfulness and transparency.

"I heard several positive comments from students stating that this was a great presentation," said Maling Ebrahimpour, dean of the Gabelli School of Business. "They really understood how some of the topics they learned in the classroom have been applied in the real world."



Sophomore Tosses First Perfect Baseball Game in RWU History

Sophomore Dan Roberge etched his name into the history books on March 30 after pitching the first perfect game in Roger Williams University history in a 1-0 win over the Wentworth Institute of Technology.

“It was an amazing feeling, but it was definitely a team effort,” said Mr. Roberge, who is from Oakdale, Conn. “There were big plays at shortstop, second base, all over the field.”

He faced the minimum 21 batters and had a full count only three times in the game—one of which came in the seventh and final inning against Wentworth’s leadoff batter. Despite flirting with danger, Mr. Roberge was able to get him to fly out to right field.

The next batter popped up a 2-2 pitch to second base, setting up the final out. After getting ahead in the count, Mr. Roberge coaxed the final out, a short grounder to shortstop. His Hawks teammates mobbed him at the mound, cheering and celebrating his historic performance.

“It’s a once in a lifetime thing,” said Head Baseball Coach Derek Carlson. “Nobody on the team has ever seen a perfect game, and it’s just a special thing.”

Mr. Roberge joins an exclusive club, becoming only the 14th player in NCAA Division III history to throw a perfect game. On top of that, he and the team are currently enjoying one of the best seasons in school history, having clinched the regular season TCCC title.



President Nirschel provides pedal power to make a fruit smoothie at the Earth Day festival.

President Nirschel Commits to Creating a Climate-Neutral Campus

As the sun beamed down on the University’s Earth Day festival in D’Angelo Commons, President Nirschel inked his name on a pledge that commits the University to go even greener. The document, the American College & University Presidents Climate Commitment, provides a framework for higher education institutions to go climate neutral.

“Fellow earthlings, every day is Earth Day,” President Nirschel said prior to signing the commitment. “So I hope the spirit of Earth Day is a spirit that people have yesterday, today and continue going forward—because this is the only planet we have!”

More than 515 college and university presidents nationwide have signed the commitment, which pledges to eliminate greenhouse gas emissions on campuses over time. The push for RWU’s participation was spearheaded by RWU’s Students for Renewable Energy and Environmental Preservation.

Sophomore biology major Leanne Farrell, president of SREEP, opened the ceremony with a passionate speech calling for environmental activism from RWU students: “And so I leave you with a choice,” she said. “You can either choose to live your life passively, or you can rise to the challenges placed before you. For the sake of future generations, please make your voices heard.”

Senior Chelsea FitzSimons-Diaz (left) and sophomore Leanne Farrell, both members of Students for Renewable Energy and Environmental Preservation, watch President Nirschel sign the commitment.





Panelist Allan Goodman from the Institute for International Education (left) and Al-Jazeera's Josh Rushing (right).

Experts, Advocates Discuss Intellectual Freedom in the Middle East

For two days in April, Roger Williams University played host to an impressive lineup of international experts, advocates for intellectual freedom, free-speech victims and controversial news media leaders who convened as part of a colloquium titled "Intellectual Freedom in the Middle East: Perspectives and Opportunities."

Highlights of the thought-provoking conversation included a keynote presentation by controversial Al-Jazeera International correspondent Josh Rushing, who defended his decision to work for the network as part of his mission to help bridge the cultural divide between the West and the Middle East.

The next day, CNBC Arabiya Chairman Zafar Siddiqi said that despite restrictions on intellectual and media freedoms in the Middle East, there is cause for optimism. He pointed to the need for greater intercultural understanding, a theme upon which many of the panelists and presenters touched. In his concluding remarks, President Nirschel noted that feeling of optimism: "Despite the fact that we're talking about a part of the planet with major challenges to intellectual freedom, I've heard a tremendous amount of optimism voiced about the human spirit."

As the forum came to a close, President Nirschel announced an institutional effort to assist Kareem Amer, an imprisoned Egyptian blogger and a victim of free-speech persecution (see President's Letter in this issue for detail). He also unveiled plans to expand RWU's relationship with the University of the Middle East Project through a collaborative arts initiative that will bring high school instructors from Israel, Palestine and elsewhere in the Middle East to RWU's campus, and unveiled the masthead for a new "blogazine" that will address issues of reason, respect and civil discourse in a global context.

Iraqi scholar Qussay Al-Attabi (left) and CNBC Chairman Zafar Siddiqi (right), keynote speaker on Day 2.



Senior Becomes Second Fulbright Recipient in School History

Last year, RWU student Adrienne LaFrance received an e-mail announcing that she had won a coveted study abroad award that would send her to Germany. Five days later, a second e-mail arrived: Sorry, it said, but wrong notice. She did *not*, in fact, win the award.

So when Ms. LaFrance received an e-mail in April declaring her recipient of the prestigious Fulbright award, she contained her enthusiasm until she received the Fulbright Program's official award letter in the mail.

"I'm absolutely going to frame it and put it on my wall forever," said Ms. LaFrance, who will graduate in May with a bachelor's degree in foreign languages. "I never would have imagined I would ever get it. It's kind of the biggest thing that's ever going to happen to me besides getting married!"

Ms. LaFrance will travel to Germany to conduct research at the University of Leipzig—an epicenter for classical studies—on her Fulbright proposal, "Resuscitation vs. Recitation: The Effects of Teaching Latin as a Living Language."

Anthony Hollingsworth, associate professor of foreign languages at RWU, guided Ms. LaFrance through the Fulbright application process, as he'd done with alumnus Jason Pedicone, a 2004 Fulbright recipient.

"After Jason won, I thought it may have been just luck for the department and for Roger Williams," said Professor Hollingsworth, also a previous Fulbright recipient. "With Adrienne receiving a Fulbright, it really shows that our students are becoming more and more competitive."

RWU Named One of Top 127 Schools For Community Service

Clearly, the Roger Williams commitment to community service is making an impact beyond the confines of campus. This spring, the Corporation for National and Community Service named RWU to the President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll for the University's exemplary service efforts. Roger Williams was recognized "with distinction," one of just 127 schools in the nation to achieve this listing.

At its annual Service Recognition reception in April, the Feinstein Center for Service Learning and Community Engagement honored nearly 80 individuals and groups who have contributed to those exemplary efforts. Outstanding Achievement recipients were:

- For service learning: Maling Ebrahimpour, dean of the Gabelli School of Business, and the students of last fall's Project Management course, for which students renovated a home in Bristol;

- For civic engagement: sophomore communications major Amy Torregrossa for her work as northeast regional outreach coordinator of STAND, a student anti-genocide coalition;

- For community service: sophomore communications major Stephanie Oleson and junior architecture major Kristy Lyons, co-chairs of the 2007 Mr. RWU program, which raised more than \$12,000 for the Children's Miracle Network.

"These community service recognitions are proof points that service at RWU is part of our culture," said Feinstein Center Director K.C. Ferrara. "It is not only what we do, it is who we are."

UNIVERSITY CALENDAR

MAY 16

Commencement, School of Law

MAY 17

Commencement, Main University

RWU Funds Lobby Construction at Rogers Free Library

Earlier this semester, Roger Williams announced a donation of \$75,000 to help fund the continuing renovation of Rogers Free Library. The gift to the town of Bristol, which operates the public library, will cover the cost to build a new main lobby in its historic downtown building.

"Roger Williams is actively engaged in supporting Bristol-based philanthropies and projects as well as providing access to cultural and intellectual events on our own campus," President Nirschel said. "Because of the importance we place on libraries and being a good neighbor, we're pleased to make this commitment to Bristol's free public library."

The revamped building will feature nearly 22,000 square feet of new space along with a complete renovation of 6000 square feet of existing space. New furniture and computer equipment will allow the town to offer a state-of-the-art library for residents. Construction is scheduled for completion later this summer.



Library Director Joan Prescott (left) gave President Nirschel a tour of the construction site early this spring. The revamped Hope Street library will open this fall.



RWU Students Earn Top Honors at National and Regional Competitions

Two teams of engineering, construction management and architecture students scooped up top honors at national and regional engineering competitions this spring.

At the Associated Schools of Construction National Student Competition—a competition that included teams from the nation's top universities—an RWU team placed third in the Design-Build division. Led by Professor Fred Gould, the Design-Build team—as well as RWU's Heavy Highway team—competed at the ASC national competition after both teams captured first place in the Northeastern regional competition.

At the Zone I American Society for Engineering Education Conference, a group of five senior engineering students won first place for their poster presentation titled, "Optimization of a Floating Upweller System." The competition included 63 student entries, the majority of which were from master's and doctoral students. The team, led by Professor Linda Riley, received a plaque and a \$500 check for first prize.

"Our students take a backseat to no one," said Robert Potter, dean of the School of Engineering, Computing and Construction Management. "In the [ASC] competition, probably 75 percent or more were the huge schools, the Ohio States... the massive programs. Our students go out there, and we inevitably do well. And I think that speaks to the quality of Roger Williams University's educational experience."