

## Winter/Spring 2017 Newsletter

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#### Information

##### 1) Message from Section President

*Sherri L. Wallace, University of Louisville*

Dear Colleagues:

Happy New Year! I pray that 2016 was productive and successful for each of you. As we gear up for the 2017 Teaching & Learning

Conference in Long Beach, CA (February 10-12), I greet you on behalf of the Political Science Education Section Executive Committee:

Sherri L. Wallace, **President** (2015-2017)  
University of Louisville  
Email: [sherri.wallace@louisville.edu](mailto:sherri.wallace@louisville.edu)

Patrick McKinlay, **Vice-Chair | Secretary** (2015-2017)  
Morningside College  
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Joseph Roberts, **Treasurer** (2016-2019)  
Affiliation: Roger Williams University  
Email: [jroberts@rw.edu](mailto:jroberts@rw.edu)

Bobbi Gentry, **Editor of  
The Political Science Educator**  
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Terry Gilmour, At-Large Member (2015-2017)  
Midland College  
Email: [tgilmour@midland.edu](mailto:tgilmour@midland.edu)

Boris Ricks (2017-2019)  
California State University, Northridge  
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Michael Rogers (2017-2019)  
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Email: [mrogers6@atu.edu](mailto:mrogers6@atu.edu)

Thomas Ringenberg (2017-2019)  
Rockhurst University  
Email: [Thomas.Ringenberg@rockhurst.edu](mailto:Thomas.Ringenberg@rockhurst.edu)

**2017 APSA Annual Meeting Section Program Chairs:**

Joseph Roberts, Roger Williams University  
Terry Gilmour, Midland College

We warmly welcome our new officers recently elected in 2016: Elizabeth Bennion, Boris Ricks, Thomas Ringenberg and Michael Rogers, as we gratefully acknowledge the years of dedicated service of our immediate past officers: Victor Asal (State University of New York at Albany), Chad Raymond (Salve Regina University) and immediate past-president, Renée Van Vechten (University of Redlands).

At the business meeting, the section approved revisions to the Bylaws and we officially greeted Victor Asal as the new lead editor of the Journal of Political Science Education (JPSE) with some long-time section members, who will comprise the new editorial board. We're excited about this transition as JPSE becomes an APSA journal.

Also, with our stable membership and growth, the executive committee decided to suspend our 2016 new/renewed membership campaign, but not before awarding \$50 Amazon Gift Cards to our final randomly-selected winners. Congratulations to all!



Jarrod Kelly  
**New Member**  
Dept. of Political Science  
University of Pittsburgh

No Picture

Randall Lee Pomeroy  
**New Member**  
Kalamazoo Valley  
Community College



Amy Atchison  
**Renewed Membership**  
Dept. of Political Science  
Valparaiso University



Kirsten L. Taylor  
**Renewed Membership**  
Dept. of Political Science  
Berry College

Even before their tedious, yet vital work begins, we extend our hearty thanks to Joseph Roberts and Terry Gilmour for serving as our section program chairs for the 2017 Annual Meeting to be held in San Francisco, CA (August 31-September 3). This year's theme is "The Quest for Legitimacy: Actors, Audiences and Aspirations." We hope that you submitted a proposal and plan to attend the meeting to support our section.

Finally, our award committees are in place and ready to receive (self) nominations/submissions for our **2017 Awards**. Below are the committee chairs and committee members who will receive your (self) nominations/submissions **DUE by APRIL 1, 2017:**

*The Craig L. Brians Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Research and Mentorship*

**Chair: Thomas Ringenberg**  
(Thomas.Ringenberg@rockhurst.edu)  
Committee Members: J. Carlos Huerta (Texas A&M Corpus Christi) and Karen Hult (Virginia Tech University)

*The Best APSA Conference Paper Award*

**Chair: Michael Rogers** (mrogers6@atu.edu)  
Committee Members: Ellen Claes (University of Leuven) and J. Cherie Strachan (Western Michigan University)

*The Lifetime Achievement Award*

**Chair: Elizabeth Bennion** (ebennion@isub.edu)  
Committee Members: Executive Committee

*The Distinguished Service Award*

**Chair: Boris Ricks** (boris.ricks@csun.edu)  
Committee Members: Executive Committee

In hindsight, 2016 was a pretty smooth year for our section, and we enthusiastically look forward to 2017. As always, we welcome your active comments and suggestions at any time.

Wishing you much success,



Sherri L. Wallace, President

### **The Teacher-Scholar Column**

#### ***Undergraduate Research Assistants and Scholarly Productivity***

*Elizabeth A. Bennion, Indiana University South Bend, [ebennion@iusb.edu](mailto:ebennion@iusb.edu)*

One of the responsibilities of our lives as teacher-scholars is to teach students how to be scholars. Research papers, methodology courses, and intensive writing courses can all help students to develop their reading, writing, and research skills. Requiring students to read, summarize, analyze, criticize, and synthesize academic journal articles in courses across the curriculum is another way to develop essential skills while teaching them about the discipline. **Employing undergraduate research assistants is a less utilized, but particularly valuable, way to mentor students in the area of scholarship.** The benefits are tremendous. Carefully selected undergraduate students can increase research productivity for the faculty member, while preparing students for future work in the academy and beyond. Students can manage databases, conduct literature reviews, draft sections of a research paper, and edit book chapters. My research assistant, Xander Laughlin, has done all of this and more. Without his help, my scholarly output would be drastically reduced as I balance my research time with a heavy teaching and service load. Importantly, this arrangement has proven to be mutually beneficial, as Xander describes in his essay printed on page 3.

I encourage all faculty members to consider working with undergraduate research assistants. Students can sign up for an

independent research course or be hired as hourly or work-study students. Faculty should have specific projects in mind, assign specific weekly tasks, set specific hours, and plan to check in with the student every week. Ideally, faculty should select a student, like Xander, who is detail-oriented, responsible, and self-motivated. A student who works quickly and efficiently, asks for additional tasks upon completion, and seeks opportunities for co-authorship is ideal. Some tasks may be more difficult to delegate than others. An undergraduate student cannot be expected to do the work for you – or to work without active feedback and mentoring. Sometimes the faculty mentor may find it difficult to keep up with a diligent task-oriented student! Still, the time invested is repaid many times over in increased productivity. Co-authorship and mentorship offer many rewards for both faculty and students. It's a winning combination – well worth a try!

### **Featured Essays**

#### ***From the Student: The Value of an Undergraduate Research Assistantship***

*Xander E. Laughlin, Indiana University, Bloomington IN, [xelaughl@umail.iu.edu](mailto:xelaughl@umail.iu.edu)*

When I began my undergraduate career, a political science faculty member at my university selected me to serve as her research assistant. While research assistantships benefit the professor by giving her a “helping hand” in her research, it also benefits the student. My experience in this position has been valuable in two key respects, each discussed in turn. First, it has presented a challenging learning opportunity through which I have grown not only academically but professionally; and second, it has opened doors to internships and other competitive opportunities. Indeed, because of my positive experience, I often recommend that my friends and peers seek out similar opportunities.

As I would find out, a research assistantship, coupled with a full-time academic schedule, would be demanding, yet rewarding. An

obvious reward has been the further development of my critical thinking skills. One assignment required me to review literature from multiple academic journals. Another required me to review manuscripts on a related topic for a forthcoming edited volume. Commenting on forthcoming publications from scholars in the field helped me to think more critically about their content. I read over recommendations given to authors by my supervisor and other scholars of civic engagement, and they first helped me to see what kind of questions I *wasn't* asking. My relatively passive reading habits—which did not lend themselves particularly well to rigorous inquiry—slowly transformed into a more nuanced approach. I witnessed questions I had never bothered to ask arise in my mind: *What* does the author mean by *this*? Wait, but is the present finding not at odds with previous research on the subject? *How* does this research fit into the body of literature and what is its broader contribution? In short, the process of reading ceased to be a passive act in which I failed to recognize the intimate relationship between previous and new knowledge. Instead it became a dynamic process in which I learned to look at information with a critical eye.

Another skill that I further developed was organization. Throughout my research assistant experience, I was responsible for organizing and keeping track of vast amounts of data for multiple projects with different deadlines. I tracked new participants, IRB approval forms, administrative permissions, campus contacts, email communications, and more for a multi-campus research survey. Meanwhile, I tracked course titles, classroom activities, learning objectives, learning outcomes, and assessment data for several review essays on civic education. I also conducted my own multi-campus research project on voter ID compliance with state voter ID laws. Whether helping to administer a survey on campuses across the country, conducting a systematic review of different approaches to civic education, or conducting a review of Indiana college campuses' compliance with state voter ID laws, the work required attention to details

and careful documentation. At first, it was a lot to take in; after all, I had never been responsible for keeping track of so much data with the added necessity of accuracy. With time, however, I learned to balance the demands of multiple projects and their deadlines.

Perhaps one of the most important parts of this experience has been skill transfer. In other classes, and indeed outside of them as well, I am able to apply these skills to enrich my understanding of what I am learning or the information presented to me. Whether a class lecture, an academic article, or a piece of news, I am persistently questioning with skepticism and critically examining new information.

Yet another benefit from this experience has been greater access to other competitive opportunities. Impressed by this experience in particular, and my commitment to experiential learning overall, professors and others have offered me significant opportunities for which I am grateful. For example, an economics professor offered me an undergraduate instructor (UGI) position while a different professor offered me a peer-assisted student learning (PASS) position. Both would require me to lead a discussion section where students could seek clarification on concepts and ask general questions. An academic publisher affiliated with the university offered me yet another opportunity. It would require me to serve as an editor for a forthcoming book. I have also been very lucky to receive scholarships, at least in part due to my experience as a research assistant. Each of these opportunities for additional experience and funding will further my knowledge and skill-set moving forward.

My supervisor has made it clear that my work has helped her to achieve her professional goals. With this essay, I seek to emphasize that the benefit was mutual. I strongly encourage professors to consider working with undergraduate research assistants. Whether for credit or for pay, the value of the experience is

difficult to measure. The benefits are extensive and far-reaching.

### Using a Work Attitude Survey to Examine Student Motivation

Chad Kinsella, Ball State University, [cjkinsella@bsu.edu](mailto:cjkinsella@bsu.edu)

## Announcements

Archived issues of *The Political Science Educator* can be found here: <http://community.apsanet.org/TeachingCivicEngagement/additionalteachingresources/new-item>

Please send any article submissions or announcements for future newsletters to Bobbi Gentry at [bgentry@bridgewater.edu](mailto:bgentry@bridgewater.edu). Submission deadlines are **May 15** for the **Summer/Fall newsletter**, and **December 15** for the **Winter/Spring newsletter**. Contributions may be as brief as 200 – 500 hundred words, but should not exceed approximately 1000 words, and should use APSA citation style. Please include "**PS Educator submission**" in the subject line of your email. Thank you!

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Bobbi Gentry, Newsletter Editor