

# ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

## POLITICAL SCIENCE

### *Greetings!*



Growing numbers of Political Science majors and minors at Providence College are choosing to study and work abroad, both during and after college. This edition of the *Alumni Newsletter* spotlights five graduates of the Department who have successfully integrated an international focus into their studies, careers, and community service endeavors. Although several of these alumni studied abroad during their undergraduate years, a few of them, like Mary Kate Nevin and Brian St. Sauveur, did not go abroad for any length of time until after graduating from PC. All of them, however, credit their experiences as PSC majors for nurturing an interest in foreign study, work, and travel, and for giving them the analytic tools and knowledge to have a successful experience overseas. Specific courses like Model OAS and Chinese Politics, as well as individual faculty, inspired them to broaden their horizons and helped them realize what was possible. As a professor in this department whose own teaching and research has an international focus, it has been very rewarding to see our students grasp that one's education, career, and public service activities need not be limited by nation-state boundaries.

Fittingly, all of the research and much of the writing and editing of this newsletter were carried out by senior Amanda Schaefer, who studied in Spain during the spring of her junior year. Like many of the alumni profiled here, her experiences abroad and in the Department have inspired Amanda to consider a career with an international focus.

**Dr. Susan McCarthy, Professor**

Amanda M. Schaefer '14, Writer/Editor



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## Benjamin Cabana, *Class of 2010*

According to Ben Cabana, '10, the Political Science Department at PC has had a lasting influence on him both as a student and as an individual. Ben says he developed an interest in history, government, and politics long before enrolling at PC. Majoring in political science allowed him to pursue those interests intellectually; at the same time, the professors in the Department nurtured in him a sense of civic duty and a passion for public service. Department faculty and many of the courses he took helped transform a career ambition — to work in government or some other form of public service — into a true passion. Ben's experiences at PC also whetted his appetite for further study about politics, government, and public affairs more broadly. In May of 2013, he graduated with a Master's degree in public policy from George Mason University.

Ben also credits his experience abroad for shaping the person he is today. During the fall semester of his junior year in 2008, he studied in Paris, France. Ben minored in French along with majoring in Political Science, and the semester in Paris significantly improved his command of the French language. Studying abroad also allowed Ben to learn more about himself and gain perspective on his home country, in a way that might not have been possible had he



not chosen to study overseas. After returning from his semester in Paris, and having discovered the value of studying and living in a foreign culture, Ben secured a work-study position at PC's Center for International Studies, where he advised other students considering similar programs. In addition



to expanding his cultural knowledge, Ben's experience abroad has inspired him to possibly seek a career in foreign policy in the future.

After graduating in 2010, Benjamin moved to Washington D.C. to pursue his Master's at George Mason. Shortly after his arrival in D.C., Ben obtained an internship at an international development firm. As part of this internship, Ben worked on a project monitoring and evaluating U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) activities in Pakistan. After four months of interning, Ben was hired by the Department of Homeland Security/FEMA, where he's been working for two years.

Ben's political science major and international study experiences propelled him into a career that he believes truly suits him. He feels extremely fortunate to have a job he genuinely loves. As he puts it, "it is much easier to wake-up each morning when you truly enjoy and believe in the work you do." He is truly grateful to the professors in the Political Science Department and his fellow Friars for helping him find his way to a promising and satisfying career.

## Cara Bragg, *Class of 2009*

For Cara Bragg, '09, the Political Science Department fostered an interest in international affairs that she has pursued in her post-college career and service activities. Cara believes that her instructors and political science courses instilled in her a commitment to service, as well as a desire to experience the world from new perspectives. These influences informed her decisions to study abroad in Paris during her junior year, and to join the Peace Corps after graduation, which took her to the former Soviet republic of Georgia. These international experiences and her political science degree profoundly shaped her career path. Today, Cara works in Washington D.C. for the Institute of International Finance, a job that has taken her around the globe.

One of the courses that crystallized Cara's fascination with international politics was Model Organization of American States (MOAS), then taught by *Emeritus* Professor Bob Trudeau. Model OAS is a simulation exercise similar to Model UN. The course entails a great deal of work outside the classroom, and culminates in a week-long trip to Washington D.C. where students participate in a mock OAS meeting. The members of the MOAS class constitute a delegation from one of the nation-states of the Americas, and spend much of the semester learning about that country's interests, concerns, and policies. As part of this process students draft resolutions for the specific country they are assigned to represent. At the MOAS simulation, students propose these resolutions and debate them with other "diplomats" from the Americas, i.e. other university MOAS delegations, some of whom travel to D.C. from Central and Latin America. For Cara, participating in MOAS helped develop her skills in negotiation, team-work, and problem-solving, and added to her desire to pursue a career in international affairs.

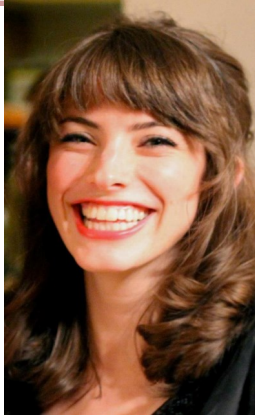
Cara's extracurricular activities at PC reflected her interest in international politics. As



a student, Cara dedicated a great deal of time and energy to the College's Amnesty International chapter. As a member of this organization, she learned about pressing human rights issues and sought to raise awareness of these important issues on campus. Amnesty International taught Cara the value of being vigilant in international events and standing up for her beliefs.

During the spring of her junior year, Cara, like Ben Cabana, studied in Paris, France. This was her first experience being immersed in a foreign culture and language environment for any length of time. Cara describes her time in France as a "life-changing experience that whetted [her] appetite for life in another country." That semester abroad inspired her to expand her horizons and pursue further foreign travel. After graduating PC in 2009, Cara joined the Peace Corps and was sent to the country of Georgia as an English Education Volunteer. Cara stresses that her work in Georgia gave her an unparalleled cross-cultural experience through exposure to the plethora of Georgian traditions. After her Peace Corps stint in Georgia concluded, Cara traveled to Turkey, Greece, the United Arab Emirates, and Thailand.

**(Continued on back page)**



## Mary Kate Nevin, *Class of 2009*

For many students, studying abroad as an undergraduate is a stepping stone to an internationally-focused career. For others, their first major experience abroad comes after graduation. This is the case for Mary Kate Nevin, '09. As Mary Kate sees it, the education she received in the Political Science Department gave her the tools and inspiration to pursue a career combining writing and editing with global policy and advocacy work. Since graduating from PC, Mary Kate has earned a Master's degree from the London School of Economics, and she now works for General Electric in a position that has taken her as far afield as Lagos, Nigeria. Mary Kate believes that the analytic skills and education in international affairs provided by the Political Science Department have helped make her career choices and achievements possible.

Although she was a dedicated Poli Sci major, Mary Kate actually entered PC undeclared. As an undeclared student she took a variety of courses in different disciplines, and soon discovered a love for political science from the first few courses she took with the Department. She found that the discipline of political science channeled her varied interests in global issues, philosophy, and economics. Mary Kate took advantage of the compelling programs offered by the department, such as the Washington Semester Program. She contends that this program gave her a unique opportunity to learn about international organizations "from the inside" and reinforced her desire to pursue a career related to foreign policy. Mary Kate says that the ideas and values

her professors emphasized have stuck with her post-graduation. From Dr. Mark Hyde's Empirical Analysis course she learned to value precision in language – for instance, to use the word "confirm" rather than "prove" when discussing empirical facts. Dr. Hyde also stressed the importance of providing evidence for one's arguments. As Mary Kate puts it, quoting Dr. Hyde, she does not want to be "just another person with an opinion" by lacking data for her claims. Mary Kate also benefited from former adjunct professor John Carroll's strictness in requiring students to give impeccable oral presentations. The skills she learned in his course have helped make her a conscious orator, aware of her audience and the power of language. She expresses gratitude also for the extensive personal attention and mentoring she received thanks to the Department's small classes and professors' accessibility. She credits Professor Doug Blum for his tremendous help supervising her senior honors thesis; Dr. Blum, she says, encouraged her to explore what truly interested her and go beyond her intellectual "comfort zone."

Mary Kate's participation in a plethora of clubs and organizations as an undergraduate contributed to her well-rounded education. Two extracurricular activities that affected her greatly were *The Cowl* and her volunteer work in the Chad Brown community. Mary Kate was a copy editor, writer, assistant editor, and editor of the World section for *The Cowl*. She thoroughly enjoyed taking complex issues like the financial crisis of 2008-2009 and making them relevant and comprehensible to her fellow Friars. Her service in the Chad Brown neighborhood transformed what was originally a requirement for a Public and Community Service Studies course into a passion for volunteering. Mary Kate holds that her volunteer experiences heightened her desire to make a social impact. **(Continued next page)**



## Nevin (continued)

It was during her senior year that Mary Kate made up her mind to pursue an advanced degree in international political economy, and to do so in an international setting. First, however, she spent one year interning in various media-related positions. She interned at a quarterly international affairs journal in New York City, and later at a major sports website, assisting with product development. In 2010, Mary Kate moved to London to pursue a Master's in international political economy at the London School of Economics. While in graduate school Mary Kate sought out additional internships as a way of gaining new perspectives and experience. These internships included one at a policy journal in London, and another back in New York City with the United Nations. Studying in London further augmented Mary Kate's interest in an international career. Many LSE students hail from countries other than the UK, and her classmates offered a diversity of ideas and perspectives both in and outside of classes.

Mary Kate believes her extensive experience interning in international policy and media-related positions, along with her Master's degree from the LSE, were crucial in helping her secure her current position with General Electric, where she works in their Communications Leadership Development Program (CLDP). The CLDP is a rotational training program that moves employees around the country and the globe to different GE offices before giving them a permanent position. Her first location was Washington, D.C., where she focused on public affairs regarding communications and trade policy. According to Mary Kate, seeing policy issues "through the eyes of a major multinational has been an amazing learning experience, and was actually one of the main reasons [she] took the job." Recently, Mary Kate has been based in Lagos, Nigeria working on GE's sustainability and community social responsibility strategies for Af-



rica. Adjusting to a culture so radically different from "Western Civilization," not to mention the chaos of Lagos, Nigeria's largest city, has been both challenging and rewarding. Her acceptance of this challenge shows how much she has taken to heart Dr. Blum's encouragement to step beyond her "comfort zone." She truly values learning about the many aspects of Nigerian culture and experiencing firsthand the warmth and generosity of the people.

Mary Kate wishes to pass along a quote she feels offers useful advice for anyone thinking about traveling and working abroad. "Seek first to understand, and then to be understood" (Stephen Covey, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*). As Mary Kate sees it, "we must be humble and accepting when encountering people of different cultures."



## Danielle (Hennessey) Willemín, *Class of 2010*

The day after graduating with a major in political science, Danielle (Hennessey) Willemín jumped into the world of politics. Specifically, she began working as campaign manager for Josh Cutler, then a candidate for State Representative in Massachusetts. That position led to Danielle being hired by Rep. William Keating, a member of Massachusetts's Congressional delegation, to work as a district manager. In that position, Danielle assisted with constituent casework on a variety of issues. In March 2013, Danielle moved to New York City shortly before marrying fellow Friar, Michael Willemín, '08. Currently, she works as an auditor for the New York City Campaign Finance Board (CFB). Her job involves analyzing the financial records of candidates for city offices to ensure compliance with city campaign finance laws. Candidates who participate in the Campaign Finance Program, a program administered by the CFB, are eligible to receive public matching funds. This aspect of the program is specifically designed to reduce the influence of "Big Money" and encourage competitive campaigns based on smaller donations from constituents.

Danielle points to her work experience in local, state, and federal government as evidence that the Political Science Department at Providence College has greatly influenced her professional life. She attributes her preparedness for the challenges in jobs in all areas of government to her well-rounded education and the positive interactions with Department faculty. Danielle feels that each of her professors in the Political Science Department helped guide her in all aspects of her education both before and after graduation. She asserts that she still relies heavily upon the analytic skills and love for politics nurtured by courses "from Intro to Politics with Dr. McCarthy, to Empirical Political Analysis and Public Program Evaluation with Dr. Hyde, to American Public Policy with Dr. Hudson."

During the spring of her junior year Danielle



had the great fortune to spend a semester studying in Galway, Ireland. There she attended the National University of Ireland, where she took courses on European Union policy, political theory, and a seminar called Ethnicity, Nationalism and the State. Danielle feels that her experience abroad confirmed her desire to pursue a career in politics and public service, though not one on the front lines as a holder of public office. Her time in Ireland permitted her to look at politics from a different viewpoint due to the unique perspectives offered by professors and classmates from different countries. Furthermore, studying abroad was a personal journey for Danielle, as she has family roots that can be traced back to Ireland. While studying in the country of her ancestors, she was able to visit the house where her grandfather was born and meet members of her extended family for the first time. Danielle made lasting personal connections with these family members that would have not been possible had she not studied abroad in Ireland.

Now that she has entered the workforce, Danielle sees her study abroad experience in Galway in a new light, and with even greater appreciation. As she explains, "few of us will have the time to take five months off to travel the world at any other point in our lives." Danielle looks forward to someday returning to the beautiful and welcoming country that is Ireland.





## Brian St. Sauveur, *Class of 2006*

A growing number of students and alumni of PC seeking international experience are turning their attention to Asia. Brian St. Sauveur, '06, exemplifies this trend. Brian graduated from PC in 2006 and currently works as an energy consultant. Upon graduation, Brian, along with a group of other Political Science alums, headed east – to Inner Mongolia, a province of China. Specifically, Brian moved to the city of Tongliao to teach English at a middle school. In making this move, Brian was motivated to learn Chinese and deepen his understanding of Chinese culture, since he already had an idea about the sort of international career he hoped to pursue.

Several of the members of the Political Science faculty at PC sparked Brian's desire for greater knowledge of, and a career in, international relations. He credits retired Professor Bob Trudeau for convincing him to declare political science as his major, as opposed to the business major Brian originally intended to pursue. Brian had long believed that a business major would be more "practical" in helping him to secure a career after college. However, he soon discovered that the subject matter of political science was more interesting and compelling. Dr. Doug Blum's courses on international politics opened his eyes to the often chaotic but fascinating world of global politics. Dr. Susan McCarthy's Chinese Politics course further refined his interests by focusing Brian's attention on the history and contemporary realities of China's political and economic system.

While teaching English in Tongliao, Brian decided that one year in China was not enough. After that year was up he moved to the southwestern city of Kunming to continue studying Chinese. Kunming is the capital of Yunnan Prov-

ince, and is where Dr. McCarthy has conducted much of her research on Chinese ethnic and religious minorities. In fact, that same year Dr. McCarthy was in China on sabbatical, and she and Brian met for coffee in one of Kunming's many cafés. In Kunming, Brian enrolled in Mandarin classes, hoping to increase his fluency. He understood that learning the language of a country is essential to understanding its society and culture. He also knew that the ability to speak Mandarin is more important than ever for anyone seeking a career in international business or politics. During his two years of living and studying in China, Brian also took the opportunity to travel to Nepal, Cambodia and Thailand.

Upon returning to the US, Brian enrolled in UC San Diego's School of International Relations & Pacific Studies, a program focused specifically on the Pacific region. After receiving his Master's degree, Brian worked in government consulting in Washington, D.C. This experience introduced Brian to the energy industry and to the firm PFC Energy, a global consulting firm specializing in the oil and gas industry (recently acquired by IHS), where he now works. At his job Brian analyzes global short-term oil markets, the China-specific oil market, and China's energy sector more broadly. His job has enabled him to return to China several times on business trips.

Brian feels that his experiences abroad made him a very desirable candidate for graduate schools and for jobs requiring knowledge of China's political system and culture. Brian St. Sauveur illustrates perfectly the benefits of immersing oneself in a culture distinct from and foreign to our own.



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**(Bragg, continued from p. 3)**

After returning to the United States, Cara moved to Washington D.C. and secured a position at the Institute of International Finance (IIF), where she currently works. IIF is a global association of financial institutions which aims to support the financial industry in managing risks. At the IIF, Cara is helping to develop best practices and standards for the financial industry, and advocating regulatory policies to promote global financial stability. Working at the IIF has given her further opportunities to travel internationally—her job has sent her to places like Tokyo and Paris, where she has helped manage logistics for large conferences in the fields of economics, finance, and global regulation.

Cara has another great accomplishment under her belt—in March 2013 she completed her first marathon. Congratulations, Cara!



## **Department News**

### ***New Faculty***

The Political Science Department welcomes our newest faculty member, Professor Gizem Zencirci. Dr. Zencirci, a native of Turkey, received her Ph.D. from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, where she specialized in comparative politics and political theory, with an emphasis on nationalism, gender, religious politics, and the politics of charity. Dr. Zencirci is excited to be teaching in the liberal arts environment of Providence College. She is also happy to be living in a city known for its great variety of terrific restaurants.



### ***2013-2014 Forand Research Scholars***

Six members of the Class of 2014 are recipients of the Forand Research Scholarship, a Political Science Department scholarship that encourages independent research on issues of policy relevance to Rhode Island and Southern New England. The program awards a stipend of \$1000 and up to \$500 in research reimbursement funds to recipients. The scholarship program was established thanks to a generous donation by the family of the late Rep. Aime Forand, who represented the state of Rhode Island for many years in Congress. Awardees undertake a research project in a public policy area of their own choosing, one that will contribute to community improvement in the region. Current Research Scholars and projects are:

Sam Conley-Elgee: Internet Access and Educational Policy in Rhode Island  
Lauren Evans: Industrial Decline and Civic Identity in Rhode Island  
Kerry Fleming: Community Health and Obesity  
Kathleen O'Hanlon: Rhode Island Pension Reform  
Justin Serafin: The Politics of Gun Control  
Nicholas Wallace: Health and Wellness Policy