Many political science majors earned academic credit during 2012–2013 by serving as unpaid interns in a wide range of fascinating agencies and political offices.

During the fall semester, junior political science major Jillian Swisher served as an intern at the Philadelphia election watchdog agency The Committee of Seventy. Swisher had to stay up to date on the then in-flux Pennsylvania Voter ID law as she answered telephone calls from prospective Philadelphia voters and provided advice about voter registration, polling locations, and more. During her internship, Swisher met both Joe Scarborough and Mika Brzezinski of MSNBC when they spoke at a Committee of Seventy fundraiser, worked at the Committee of Seventy table at the Pennsylvania Conference for Women at the Philadelphia Convention Center, and appeared in a news clip on the work being done by The Committee of Seventy that was photographed and released by Al Jazeera. Swisher said she believes “one of the most rewarding responsibilities” was organizing and training more than 100 high school volunteers as well as volunteers from Pepper Hamilton, LLP, who all served on Election Day. In Swisher’s words, “They trusted me to organize volunteers. … I met many great people along the way and had a truly meaningful and wonderful experience.”

Sophomore Brian Caputo interned with the Republican City Committee in Philadelphia during the Presidential Election of 2012. He served as Director of College Recruitment and Grassroots Initiatives for Philadelphia County, recruiting and training college volunteers. On Election Day, Caputo directed GOTV (Get-Out-The-Vote) efforts in the wards in Northeast Philadelphia. Caputo said, “I was able to network with officials throughout the state and have aspirations to continue to do this sort of work.”

Senior Amanda Spano spent both the fall and spring semesters as the Public Engagement Intern, a plum position, at the National Constitution Center on Independence Mall in Philadelphia. She conducted research on national political figures and the books they were speaking about, including former Vice President Albert Gore and Supreme Court Associate Justice Sonia Sotomayor. Spano helped plan the promotions for the (Continued on Page 2)
book signings and welcomed speakers and the guests. She said, “I really enjoy working at the NCC! It is a great experience; I am able to meet many successful people and work in an incredible environment.”

Junior Joseph Metzinger may have held the most unique internship position this year when he served with the Philadelphia Bomb Disposal Unit. He learned about the various homemade explosives the unit frequently encounters in its daily activities and how the unit members interact with their state and federal counterparts. He learned safety procedures, as well as the use of robotics and helicopters in this dangerous work. Metzinger said, “I thoroughly enjoyed my experience. It was excellent exposure to an important and elite field of law enforcement.”

Metzinger, who plans a career in local law enforcement and previously interned with the Abington Police Department, will certainly have an eye-catching résumé.

In addition, four additional political science majors were awarded James A. Finnegar Public Service Internships for the summer of 2012. Sophomore Matthew Howell worked in the Pittsburgh office of Pennsylvania State Sen. Jay Costa as the budget battles in Harrisburg were in full swing. Sophomore Katherine McBeth worked in and observed the state criminal system in the Judicial Chambers of Judge Chris Wogan, ’72, of the Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas. McBeth, who plans on law school following graduation, certainly got a great head start from her work with Wogan, a political science graduate.

Theresa Glinski and Steve Johnston spent their internships with Philadelphia law firms Marks O’Neil O’Brien & Courtney and Gallagher & Rowan, respectively. Glinski “wrote medical and deposition summaries and letters to insurance carriers” and was invited to attend case management conferences and one mediation. Marks, O’Brien was so pleased with her work that she remained employed part time by the firm during her senior year.

THE VIEW FROM THE CHAIR

Now well into 2013, there is much good news to report from the Political Science Department. At this stage in the admission process for the academic year 2013–2014, the department anticipates the incoming class in the fall of 2013 should contain about 30 political science majors. This will be the largest number of majors in recent memory and puts us well on our way to the target of 140 to 150 majors set by the department in 2007.

This growth is the result of a concentrated effort by the faculty as well as a self-marketing effort utilizing current majors to target their former high schools and our new, revamped, and expanded Political Science Department Web site. To to www.lasalle.edu/politicalscience to see us today. Under the tab for Alumni, you can read testimonials from alums graduating between 1970 and 2010.

The department will undergo a comprehensive review and evaluation of its program, faculty, courses, and outcomes during the 2013–2014 academic year, including a detailed self-study followed by external reviewers visiting the campus and interviewing faculty and students. As part of this evaluation, we invite all our alumni who would like to submit additional “alumni testimonials” expressing what you believe you gained from the department during your time at La Salle to send your statements to us. We will place those comments on the Web site and make them available to the reviewers. Please send the comments directly to me at dillonm@lasalle.edu.

Especially for those who have not been back on campus for a while, La Salle is a bigger, new, and vibrant place; please take advantage of our Alumni-Senior Reception on Friday evening, April 26, from 6 to 9 p.m. This year, the reception will be held in the beautiful, open, first-floor atrium of the rebuilt Holroyd Hall. Yes, there will be wine, beer, soda, and sandwiches, but the real sustenance of the evening is speaking with our current students as they embark upon their careers and with the faculty you once knew in class. We look forward to seeing each of you once again; please let me know if you plan to attend by e-mailing dillonm@lasalle.edu.
La Salle University is expanding its study abroad programs. As a faculty member, I had the pleasure of teaching American college students in a summer program in my hometown of Lisbon, Portugal, and of taking La Salle students on a travel/study trip to Turkey. As a professor of comparative politics, I find myself reflecting frequently on the broader perspectives that informed travel can offer.

This happened to me recently in Japan, an advanced industrialized country like the U.S. In the context of ongoing American debates about transportation infrastructure, global warming, and energy policy, it was fascinating to experience how Japan approached these issues. The highway system in Japan is a marvel of engineering, as advanced tunnels and bridge design make it easy to drive through the highly mountainous terrain. These roads are in extraordinarily good shape, but, to an American observer, seem relatively underused. This is due in part to the high tolls (and gas prices) that discourage unnecessary road trips and that encourage people to take trains where possible.

Once off the efficient, ultra-modern highways, the traveler in rural Japan is surprised to find an ingenious solution to the dispersed small plots of land that make up traditional farming communities. Here, narrow rural lanes meet their match in the equally tight streets of traditional villages. The transportation puzzle this poses has been solved by a bevy of economical mini-cars and mini-trucks that can navigate these small roads. The mini-cars are also well-suited to the increasingly elderly population of rural Japan and have their own distinct licensing system. They are not allowed on the highway system, as they are too slow and too light to be safe. And they are not designed to cover large distances.

Navigating Japanese roads made tangible the multiple ways in which countries can adapt their transportation systems to fit different forms of land use and ownership, with big implications for energy use, environmental impacts, and the quality of life in villages experiencing population aging.

**FACULTY NOTES**

Professor Mary Ellen Balchunis served as a Pennsylvania delegate to the Democratic National Convention, held in Charlotte, N.C., from Sept. 2 to 6, 2012. As the convention nominated President Barack Obama and Vice President Joe Biden, Balchunis kept in touch with her classes at La Salle via Skype.


On Saturday, Jan. 16, La Salle University sponsored the Third Annual Blue and Gold High School Mock Trial Tournament. At 8:30 in the morning, more than 350 students from 30 teams, with coaches, parents, and siblings, walked onto La Salle’s campus to be welcomed by School of Arts and Sciences Dean Thomas Keagy in a standing-room-only Dan Rodden Theatre. The day was filled with three rounds of trial competition on a hypothetical case of a construction crane collapse in an urban setting.

Long before the high school students and their parents stepped onto campus, the members of La Salle University’s Mock Trial Association were busy with preparations. Invitations had to be issued, funding acquired, judges contacted, ballots printed, trophies purchased, and lunches arranged. In the final days before the tournament, 15 rooms in Olney Hall, from the first through the third floor, were turned into mock court rooms, with judges’ benches, counsel tables, and seating for witnesses, timers, and spectators, as well as judges’ rooms and a tabulation room.

Every round of competition was scored by two judges, some La Salle faculty, some La Salle legal or judicial alums, including current law school students, and some simply friends of La Salle in the legal community. Forty-one judges in all volunteered their time at the tournament. Following the first two rounds, the teams were power ranked, with top scores facing top scores. All of the judges commented on the skill, poise, and maturity of the high school advocates, while the high school coaches and parents commented on the polish, friendliness, and professionalism of our La Salle students in producing such an amazing event.

Following an awards ceremony back in the Dan Rodden Theatre after three rounds, where the best advocate and best witness awards were presented, at 6:30 p.m. the top two teams based upon the four rounds of competition met in the finals—Roman Catholic High School faced off against Holy Ghost Prep.

But the day was far from over for La Salle’s Mock Trial Association members, who immediately turned to cleaning up and moving tables, chairs, and desks so that every classroom in Olney Hall was in pristine condition for Monday morning and the beginning of classes for the second semester. From the time the first invitation went out in July of 2012, the La Salle University Mock Trial students invested hundreds and hundreds of hours in this event.

While the Mock Trial Association at La Salle is not solely composed of political science majors, from its inception, political science majors have been and continue to be its backbone. This year, President Theresa Glinski, a senior political science and English major, and High School Tournament Director Steven Johnston, a junior political science and history major, deserve special thanks and mention, as do Katherine McBeth and Jonathan Gardner, who worked diligently throughout the tournament day.

At the collegiate level, this was a transitional year for the La Salle Mock Trial Team. After six seniors led La Salle’s team to its first appearance in the Opening Round National Championship Series last year, this year’s team had only one senior. As a result, many freshmen and sophomores gained a great deal of important experience in the collegiate tournaments at the Coast Guard Academy, Penn State, University of Pennsylvania, Drexel, and the Mid-Atlantic Regional Tournament, where La Salle competed against, among others, national powers like Harvard, Yale, Virginia, American, and more. All of this experience bodes well for La Salle’s Mock Trial Team over the next three years.