Alumni Help Liberal Arts Move Forward

Involved Rider alumni are helping drive the Liberal Arts side of the CLAES in the right direction with advocacy and advice.

The Liberal Arts Advisory Board (LAAB) may still be in its infancy—meeting once a semester for the last two years—but the 15-member alumni group is helping the School of Liberal Arts and Sciences to move into the future with enrollment, public relations and student development initiatives.

While co-chairs Sylvia Veitia ’88, ’90 and Linda Feinberg ’71 have been transitioning into their leadership roles, Dr. Jonathan Millen, associate dean of Liberal Arts and Sciences, has served as the de facto Board chair.

The two women have been “instrumental every step of the way in launching the LAAB initiative,” Millen said. Veitia is head of Citibank Customer Experience, North American Division. Feinberg, an assignment judge of the Superior Court of New Jersey, Mercer Vicinage, retired in 2012 and is affiliated with the law firm of Szaferman, Lakind, Blumstein and Blader in Lawrenceville.

The Advisory Board is helping to recruit the best students and has hosted four Leadership Forums—broad-based conversations with students about Liberal Arts majors and job opportunities. They also personally meet with students to talk about what they’re passionate about and job opportunities. The next board initiative will be to examine skill sets that are in demand in today’s workplace and consider recommendations to the Dean and Associate Dean. “Ninety-nine percent of the Liberal Arts curriculum is on target,” said Veitia, “but if we can get ahead of the wave on this, our students will have added value in the marketplace.”

Feinberg, who joined the Advisory Board because she “got an excellent education at Rider,” speaks with groups of students about law school and the kinds of legal careers that are available. Because growing internships are also on the LAAB to-do list, she is committed to finding professionals and community leaders who can provide internship experiences and serve as mentors. Feinberg recalls Board members spending a day last spring with 10 students who were doing “amazing things in their internships” and getting the sense that they exciting opportunities ahead.

This fall, advisory board members have been invited to attend faculty lectures so they can meet and reconnect with professors. The next board initiative will be to examine skill sets that are in demand in today’s workplace and consider recommendations to the Dean and Associate Dean. “Ninety-nine percent of the Liberal Arts curriculum is on target,” said Veitia, “but if we can get ahead of the wave on this, our students will have added value in the marketplace.”

(Dean) Patricia Morris and Jonathan Millen have been wonderful leaders, inspiring and empowering us in areas where I never thought we would have an opportunity to make a difference,” Veitia added. “Kudos to them for trusting us to go down that path!”

With the goal of realizing a just and sustainable world, an education for the 21st century must speak to multiple dimensions of a human being: intellectual, emotional, aesthetic, ethical, spiritual, and somatic. Valuing the mutually beneficial relationship between intellectual rigor and contemplative practice is both ethically sound and a good business decision for the academy. A liberal education transfers ordinary knowledge into wisdom and cultivates compassion and service to others and the Earth, preparing students to change the world for the better.

A liberal education is about personal and intellectual growth, about finding new dimensions of understanding, and about gaining knowledge and skills. It is about learning and exploring, intellectual and professional development, and that means pursuing a fulfilling career later in life. The “soft” skills and cultural lessons are at the core values of a liberal education. Employers want people who can write, who can intuit what others are thinking, and who can learn from others. These are primordial skills in this global world based more and more in social relationships.

The current public policy arena is dangerously mistaken that the study of liberal arts is unrelated to preparation for the workforce. In many states, such as Florida and North Carolina, governors are challenging universities to increase tuition in students in the liberal arts, or eliminate programs that are not “useful” for a career. Congress is also attacking not only the humanities, but now the social sciences as well. The National Science Foundation is now forbidden to spend federal funds in social science studies. This movement to eliminate the liberal arts, in my opinion, would have the effect of destroying the educational practices that are central to preparing students to change the world for the better.

The Letter of the Law: Literature, Justice and the Other, - Peter Lang Publisher. 2013.


Dr. Dawn Kilda was awarded a prestigious fellowship by the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences which included a week-long seminar in Los Angeles. His film Children of Tooth won 1st place in the Professional division of the National Broadcasting Society annual conference, March 2013, Washington, D.C.


Dr. David Dewberry and Jonathan Millen received SSCA Top Paper award in Political Communication.

Dr. Joel Feldman is a member of the Council of Colleges of Arts and Sciences, a national organization for deans.

Dr. Patricia Morris was awarded a prestigious fellowship by the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences which included a week-long seminar in Los Angeles. His film Children of Tooth won first place in the Professional division of the National Broadcasting Society annual conference, March 2013, Washington, D.C.


Please, let me hear from you, either by e-mail, phone, or in person. I value CLAES brings to our students.

Faculty Achievements

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A Strategic Plan for Success

Rider’s new Master of Business Communication program has students leveraging communication strategies and the fundamentals of business for success in the marketplace.

From thinking and writing strategically to crisis communication and integrating current communication technologies, students in the new Master of Business Communication program, or M.A.B.C., are learning to leverage communication strategies and the fundamentals of business for success in the marketplace.

With 28 students enrolled, the graduate program has had a healthy start, according to Dr. Jonathan Milen, associate dean of Liberal Arts and Sciences. “Geared toward working adults, the program is a creative collaboration of the Department of Communication and Journalism and the College of Business that meets the needs of today’s businessperson,” Milen said.

The degree, earned through the Department of Communication and Journalism, is relevant to almost any career. Current students are working in public relations, public affairs, IT and human resources.

Rider’s accessibility to New York City and Philadelphia, the convenience of evening classes while working full time, and the opportunity to develop higher-level communication and leadership skills that can be applied at the office are appealing to prospective students.

“Our studies have revealed that those hiring in all areas of business are looking for effective communicators,” explained Dr. Pamela Brown, chair of the Department of Communication and Journalism. “The message from executives is clear: They can teach employees to do the job but they can’t teach them how to be strong communicators.”

The M.A.B.C. addresses that need with a heavy emphasis on visual, oral and written communication skills; a requirement for completing two M.B.A. courses; and instruction in gathering, analyzing and using data in a way that is valuable in any business. In the curriculum’s capstone course, which combines research and on-site interactions with selected businesses in the region, students apply what they’ve learned in class and develop fresh ideas to enhance corporate communications.

“We recognized that there was not a communication program in the area with a true business component,” Brown said. “So, we’ve set a goal to develop a reputation for offering a high-quality degree in business communications. It’s the combination of scholarly research and theory and the real-world application of that material that brings value to the master’s program.”

Last summer, Brown turned real-world news issues faced by professionals on the job into exercises in her Legal and Ethical Issues for Professional Communicators class. “The students applied theory and research to tackle the problems that massive media coverage of bad passenger experiences created for the cruise industry,” she explained.

Michelle Buckman ’08 of Hammonton, N.J., who earned a B.A. in journalism and now works in the marketing/communications field, chose the program because she felt the communications/business combination would be “a desirable master’s degree for the career advancement I was seeking.”

David Pastalk ’13 of Bloomington, N.J., who will complete the program in the spring, believes that the advanced degree will set him apart from the competition.

“I have become more well-rounded in communications,” Pastalk explained. “And the business component has added to the depth of my knowledge, both certain to benefit me in my career.”

New Major Tilts the Scales in Favor of Rider Students

Rider’s new B.A. in Criminal Justice prepares students for careers or advanced study in a variety of fields.

The classroom doors have barely opened for one of Rider’s newest degree programs and already 36 students have declared themselves Criminal Justice majors. “Law and Justice, one of the most popular minor programs at Rider,” said Dr. Ava Baron, director of the Law and Justice Program, “now houses the new undergraduate major. So it’s not surprising that student interest would be so strong in its first semester.”

The criminal justice major was under consideration by Rider faculty and administrators for some time. “Our faculty wanted to be sure the major would provide students with practical knowledge about crime and the criminal justice system that was firmly grounded in the liberal arts,” Baron said. “With that goal in mind, new courses have been added to the curriculum enabling us to create a new major that is both distinguished in terms of quality and distinctive in the ways it combines theoretical analysis and skills development with practice and application.”

The B.A. in Criminal Justice prepares students for careers or advanced study in such fields as corrections, court services, homeland security, juvenile justice, law, law enforcement, rehabilitation services, and victim advocacy. “We do this by providing a variety of opportunities to develop critical and analytic thinking skills and the ability to understand data analysis in today’s world,” Baron explained.

“This is an exciting major with great growth potential,” said Dr. Victor Thompson, assistant professor of Sociology, who expects the major’s enrollment to more than double over the next five years.

Ethics, Methods of Sociological Research, Introduction to Forensics, and Politics of Law and Order are some of the 13 courses being offered through the degree program.

Its multidisciplinary curriculum and faculty expertise in criminal justice, law, sociology, ethics, psychology, and business forensics makes the degree distinctive from others of its kind.

“As the new major finds its footing, students are benefiting from shared knowledge across disciplines,” Thompson said.

Criminal Justice Practice will introduce students to the broad range of occupations involved in implementing criminal justice. “When questions are answered, such as how are these professions related to each other, and how have criminal justice occupations been affected by changes in society, technology, and reorganization of criminal justice agencies since 9/11?” said Baron. “Students will begin to develop a grounded understanding of the criminal justice system.”

Geographically, Rider is ideally situated to provide students with internships and mentoring experiences. State agencies are nearby and our faculty has contacts and networks within state and municipal agencies. Internship opportunities established by the Law and Justice Program are also available to Criminal Justice majors. Students could find themselves working on family and criminal court issues, domestic violence, and Megan’s Law cases and more through placements in prosecutors, state and municipal offices, such as New Jersey’s Superior Court, State Police Forensic Lab, Juvenile Justice Commission and Department of Corrections.

It is our hope,” said Baron, “that Rider students graduating with this degree will be the next leaders in the criminal justice field.”