From the Dean

Why are we “taking this class?” is a question our faculty advisors hear occasionally from students fulfilling their core requirements by taking a class outside of their major. The students’ concern: How will the class help me find a job?

This concern reflects a broad cultural anxiety in a time that is redefining challenges and opportunities for all of us. As the national level, higher education is asking, “Should universities provide education for personal growth or for economic progress?” A recent front-page article in the Chronicle of Higher Education questioned whether the worth of a college degree should be measured by the starting salaries of graduates.

In these strained economic times, many universities are turning to a market-driven, corporate model, focusing on the jobs graduates accept and the extent to which they are meeting global market forces. At the same time, employers are concerned about global awareness, critical thinking and communication skills possessed by the graduates they hire, demanding better and broader preparation.

In our College, we see these two educational goals as complementary. I believe, as do many of my fellow colleagues, that a liberal education is essential to producing critical thinkers and globally responsible individuals. The lofty ideals of a liberal education require concrete action, and CLAES is making progress in multiple ways.

Our GLASS (General Liberal Arts and Sciences Studies) program helps undecided students explore all their academic options, offering them, through academic support and guidance, a clear path to the right major.

The College is constantly expanding its internship opportunities and shadowing experiences, and encourages the inclusion of service-learning programs. We also have expanded our study abroad programs and introduced such initiatives as the College’s first online program, a R.N./B.S.N. degree in collaboration with the College of Continuing Studies.

Finally, as always, we continue to celebrate the successes of our alumni, faculty and current students.

Undecided? Great Choice!

Rider’s innovative GLASS program allows undecided freshmen to explore their interests before choosing a major.

Being undecided at Rider is now one of the best decisions that students at the University can make. The new General Liberal Arts and Sciences Studies program, or GLASS, provides a structured approach for first-year undecided students to explore academic options in the Liberal Arts and Sciences.

“We believe that many 18-year-olds are better served by curiosity than by certainty,” said Dr. Jonathan Millen, associate dean of the CLAES. “After all, how many of us could have predicted our career paths during our first year of college? And how many freshmen appreciate the full array of choices that are available to them?”

GLASS students benefit from initiatives that guide them toward a thoughtful course of study. With the help of peer mentors and specialized seminars with linked advisors, the GLASS program provides these undecided students a foundation for personal discovery.

The most innovative aspect of GLASS is the Classroom Visitatation Program (CVP), a system that allows students to visit more than 100 class sections across the curriculum where they can investigate prospective majors and minors in specific areas of interest. The CVP experience affords students a firsthand look at the questions being asked and the approaches taken to answering them in various disciplines.

The GLASS-STEM program, which focuses specifically on the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics disciplines, pairs qualified and interested students in the right science and math courses from the start. Students benefit from a one-week residential “boot camp” organized by science faculty the week before the start of classes, which allows them to connect with each other and explore their scholastic options.

Eric McGann ’16 is still investigating majors, but his research has him leaning toward a major in Biochemistry.

“I like lab a lot more than I thought I would,” explained McGann, who hopes to serve as a mentor this summer for the class of 2017. “Working with other students to solve problems is fun for me and I get great guidance from my professor.”

Kristy Grimeen ’13, a current GLASS mentor, explained that GLASS provides undecided students with a good way to learn about interests and associated career opportunities while effectively navigating the course selection process.

“GLASS helps you concentrate on finding your passions,” she said. “It forms up your choices and prevents lost time and effort in classes pursuing a major you change because it is not what you really want to do.”

While GLASS students are excited about having the time for unsupervised exploration of themselves and their futures, the program also provides them a “place to call home” academically speaking.

“The GLASS program was the deciding factor for me to come to Rider. When I found out about the program, it was like a light bulb went on,” Rebecca Smith ’15 said. “I felt that even though I didn’t know what I wanted to do, I had a place to belong – at Rider.”

For more information about GLASS, please go to www.rider.edu/GLASS
A Clear View to Commencement

For the once-undecided Kristy Grinere ’13, choosing a major became clear once she looked through GLASS.

Like most freshmen at universities all over the United States, Kristy Grinere ’13 was excited about becoming a college student. The Long Island resident was particularly enthused to enroll at Rider, which offered the “small-school atmosphere” that strongly appealed to her.

Another aspect that drew Grinere to Lawrenceville was the wide variety of academic programs from which to pick. In her case, it was vitally important. You see, Kristy Grinere, freshman, had absolutely no idea what major to choose.

“It was actually kind of scary, to be honest,” recalled Grinere, now a senior Journalism major. “It seemed like everyone else had a really good idea of what they wanted to do, and I had none.”

Grinere enrolled in Compass, a forerunner to the current GLASS program, which offers undeclared and undecided students a variety of initiatives, through academic support and guidance, to help choose a major that is right for them. Through the program, she was encouraged to voice classes across a range of disciplines in search of the field that would pique her intellectual curiosity.

“For most of my freshman year, I took my basic core classes,” she said, explaining that if nothing else, she was at least fulfilling the requirements for a degree — in whatever major she might choose. Before long, Grinere found herself in an expository writing class, and the spark had been ignited.

“I was doing a lot of creative writing for the first time, and I really connected with it,” recalled Grinere, who quickly gravitated toward the Journalism program. “Once I figured out what I wanted to do, it all changed.”

Grinere’s success in the Compass program made her an ideal candidate to serve as a student mentor for the GLASS pilot program during her sophomore year.

GLASS mentor Kristy Grinere ’13 discovered the joy of writing through the program. She is now the opinion editor for The Aerie News.

“It was a really great experience for me, so I was glad to help out,” she said.

In her role as a GLASS mentor, Grinere is matched up with a student prior to the start of the mentor’s freshman year. The mentor — incoming students who have yet to declare a major — enjoy all the benefits of the GLASS program, but also from the more unstructured, one-on-one peer advisement Grinere provides.

“It’s cool to get connected to students, who I know have the same worries I had,” said Grinere, who has mentored three GLASS participants so far. “It also reminds me of the help I got from the program.”

While the possibilities of the program are clear, they are particularly evident every Friday in the pages of The Rider News, the University’s award-winning student newspaper. There, Grinere excels in the often difficult position of articulating the publication’s editorial voice as its opinion editor.

Grinere, who will graduate in May, is ready to hit the job market, and “has been applying like crazy” for work in a variety of media outlets.

“It’d like to work in editorial, because I really do have that passion for writing,” said Grinere, noting that she also carries a minor in Multimedia and Web Design. Her dream job? “I would love to work for Rolling Stone!”

No matter which direction she chooses, Grinere knows the road ahead is clearer when viewed through GLASS.

Shadows Earn Shades of Experience

The one-credit Shadow Experience course pairs students with Rider alumni from a variety of professional fields for a unique, mutually beneficial mentoring experience.

While some Rider students opt to recharge their batteries during winter and summer breaks, many of their peers are getting a firsthand look at the everyday lives of the working professionals who preceded them on the Lawrenceville campus.

Through The Shadow Experience, a one-credit course offered during the JTerm in January, as well as in Summer Session, current students partner with successful alumni and community business leaders in the field to take a first-hand look “behind the scenes” in order to experience a selected industry in an observational way. Offered by the College of Liberal Arts, Education, and Sciences, the elective course is open to students from all majors.

The Shadow Experience emerged from discussions between Dr. Jonathan Milvian, associate dean, and Terri Marriott ’03, M.A. ’09, director of Student Programs for the Schools of Liberal Arts and Sciences, who wanted to create a program that connects student learning in the classroom to the professional environment.

Students select a professional to “shadow” from a list of participating Rider alumni across a range of fields. They are required to take a three-hour online pre-experience seminar, log 20 to 25 hours of shadowing, keep a journal and attend a three-hour post-experience seminar. In return, the students benefit from meaningful mentoring relationships, connect classroom curriculum to applied practice, explore career possibilities and observe the daily realities of the professional environment.

“We wanted the students to develop a real mentor relationship,” Marriott explained. “That will provide them with an opportunity to network professionally and have an additional avenue for career exploration and development.”

At the same time, participating alumni become engaged in the education of current students while strengthening their connection to the Rider community — something Milvian says many alumni actively sought.

“We’re responding to their feedback, finding more ways for them to give back,” he explained.

Brandon Weinberg ’97, a unit sales manager for Bankers Life and Casualty Company of Mount Laurel, N.J., who bonded Kristy Lopez ’13, said his desire to help stemmed from his own student experience.

“I had an internship during my junior year with a financial advisor, and that experience actually made me decide to make this my career,” said Weinberg, who earned a bachelor’s degree in Finance. “I honestly don’t think I’d be doing this now if not for what I learned them.”

Though Weinberg is careful to differentiate between The Shadow Experience and an internship, he says the key element of both is for the student to absorb the business culture and expectations of the workplace.

“We gave Kristy a little piece of everything we do, including attendance at training and management meetings,” Weinberg said. “She was with me for a few appointments, so to see what it’s like to work with customers. The larger picture is for them to see if it’s the kind of job they would want.”

As much as Craig Romanek ’94 enjoyed showing Brian Stahn ’13 the advertising business during The Shadow Experience, he says the most rewarding aspect of the program may have been helping Stahn develop a greater understanding of himself.

Romanek, an associate partner and managing director for CDM Princeton, a health care advertising agency, said he included Stahn in one particular office-wide assignment.

“The question for everyone was, ‘What is your brand?’ I wanted to know, ‘What makes you different, what makes you stand out in the crowd?’” explained Romanek, who also serves as a member of the CLAES’ Liberal Arts Advisory Board. “Everyone had 10 minutes to make a presentation on their own personal brand, and he did a very nice job.”

The assignment, Romanek said, works to the company’s benefit, but also helps the individual develop a clearer sense of professional identity.

“It helps you in the workforce, helping to explain what makes you different, what is your purpose,” he said. “I know one thing Brian wrote about (in his journal of the experience) was that he really learned a good deal about the business, but he learned more about himself.”

• Dr. Patricia Mista, dean of the College of Liberal Arts, Education, and Sciences, was elected to the Board of Directors of the Council of Colleges of Arts & Sciences. Mista was one of four deans elected to the CCAS Board.

• Dr. Anne Law, professor and chair of the Department of Psychology, was named an ACE Fellow for the 2013-14 academic year.

• The award-winning documentary film, Children of Terror, co-produced by Dr. Shawn Kildea, assistant professor of Communication and Journalism, and Gina Grosso ’12, aired on NJTV in February.

• The NBA’s Jason Thompson ’08, who earned his degree in Communication, got a chance to live his dream during his original career ambition when he guest-anchored the sports report for Now11 at 6 for KXTV of Sacramento, the market’s local ABC affiliate. Thompson helped write, edit and produce the entire 6 p.m. sportscast.

• The Rio and Television major, Milivan Prieto ’15 is sharing her study-abroad adventures from Barcelona, Spain, in her blog, Milivan Goes Abroad. Prieto will reflect on the Spanish culture through April 26.

• Dr. Heather Casey, assistant professor of Teacher Education, will co-chair the 2013 Adolescent Literacy Institute in collaboration with the 2012-2013 International Reading Association’s Adolescent Literacy Task Force.