The **Boom** Was Real, **Until It Wasn’t**

A Sudden Decrease in the Marginal Efficiency of Capital

By Gregory P. Nowell
A Message from the Dean

In Praise of Intellectual Diversity

Everyone knows what diversity means when the word is used in an organizational context. We usually think of this diversity of personnel in terms of gender, race, ethnicity and other personal attributes. In higher education, it is also important to have intellectual diversity—varies in disciplinary perspectives, the methods used by investigators when they do research, and the substantive areas of specialization such as economics, history, political science, sociology and psychology, to name a few. For a public affairs school, diversity is very important and I am proud to say that at Rockefeller College of Public Affairs and Policy, intellectual diversity is one of our hallmarks. This is exemplified by the local to global reach of our faculty and the course offerings in our six degree programs. Student interests are similarly broad and span local government, state government and intergovernmental relations, and public policies including trade, health, education and homeland and international security. Meanwhile at the College, students and faculty in the field of political theory study and write about timeless issues that confront the body politic.

This issue of the Rockefeller College of Public Affairs & Policy News Magazine highlights our intellectual diversity. The local to global graphic featured at the center of the magazine shows you the breadth of research activity that goes on at the College, and you have to admit that it is truly impressive. Where else can you find studies of traffic safety, gender disparities, social movements in Southeast Asia, trade policy, international sanctions, and terrorist networks, plus a fresh look at the philosopher John Locke, all under one roof? (Well, actually there are several roofs since Rockefeller College is spread out all over the city of Albany.) The brief articles and profiles further showcase the heterodoxy of the College from inquiry into the politics of food, to procedural justice in public personnel systems, to the politics of gender. Yes, we still pay much attention to events in state government and our students, faculty and research centers are engaged in projects that are especially germane to the challenges confronting state and local governments in the United States, and New York in particular. The Rockefeller Institute of Government— the latest addition to the College—continuously receives praise and recognition for its nonpartisan, high-quality analyses of state and local fiscal trends across the country. So, enjoy the new look of our newsletter, but most of all, enjoy the diversity of ideas. As always, I welcome your comments. You can reach me at jstraussman@albany.edu.

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Reopening Locke: Rockefeller College Scholar Takes a Fresh Look at the Great Political Thinker

Hundreds of years of scholarship on John Locke, the brilliant 17th century English thinker who profoundly influenced the American founding fathers, have solidly established the conventional wisdom on the man and his work. Nevertheless, new insights into the philosopher are being offered by Torrey Shanks, assistant professor of political science.

An icon of the Age of Enlightenment, John Locke is responsible for such cherished concepts as role of law, government by consent, and natural rights. Shanks’s fresh look at Locke yields a new interpretation of the social contract and reveals the philosopher not only as a master of reasoned political and social thought, but also as a skillful rhetorician who engaged the political imagination of the people. “One of the things I like about studying Locke,” explains Shanks, “is that over the last three centuries many people have written about him. He is such a shared area of conversation. I’m trying to introduce a less familiar version of somebody who’s taken for granted.”

Professor Shanks is currently working on a book that builds on the doctoral dissertation she completed at Northwestern University, Political Imagination and Thought of John Locke. Shanks holds that Locke understood that significant political change relied not just on new theory, but also on the ability of the people to imagine themselves anew, as citizens with rights, living equally under the law, and under a government of limited authority. She suggests that to affect this change in psyche, Locke, using rhetoric and satire, presented ideas to different audiences by weaving together diverse traditions of thought and integrating them into a new political self-understanding — enabling subjects to imagine themselves living with rights under law. Professor Shanks says a Locke who uses language and political argument familiar to ordinary people “in interesting and innovative ways.”

She also acknowledges “two faces of Locke” — celebrator of liberty yet proponent of authority, wealth, and property rights. For Shanks, this dichotomy reflects the different audiences Locke wished to reach. “Locke can be associated with some of the best and worst in American political culture, so that certainly speaks to his influence,” she notes.

“Examining his texts is about ‘critical inheritance,’” meaning these ideas we’ve inherited from Locke are influential; we need to question them. I’m arguing that there’s something new and better to find in these deeply familiar ideas.”

Torrey Shanks hopes to complete her manuscript by year’s end, but her work on Locke will continue. Next, she’ll focus on Locke’s arguments for religious toleration. She’s also eager to dive into the work of other great writers and philosophers of the early modern period. “I’m excited to find important elements of political imagination in Locke, but I think there are richer texts out there that I want to explore.”

With his new spring offering, The Politics, Economics, and History of Food, Rockefeller College Political Science Professor David Rousseau has found a way to whet undergraduate appetites for debate about important food-related public policy.

“Everything about food is political,” asserts Rousseau. “How we define organic is political. What the food pyramid looks like is political. People’s purchases have political implications. When they buy fair trade, that’s a political statement. I just thought it would resonate more with students if we talked about these topics over dinner.”

Among other issues the professor serves up for consideration during the 12-week course are: sustainable agriculture, genetically modified foods, obesity, commodity prices, and food labeling. “Hopefully, the meal is an anchor that will help students remember this material for a long time and a web to help them see how all these things are connected,” he added.

Helping to make the news stronger is a unique collaboration between academia and the culinary arts. In preparation for the course, the international relations expert joined forces with the University at Albany’s dining services provider, Chartwells, to plan menus related to policy areas — regional, national, and global — covered in the syllabus. Each week, Chef Ryan Poole was tasked with preparing a meal that inspired discussion on the issue at hand. Students were introduced to foods from all over the world including Ethiopia’s national dish, a spicy chicken concoction called Doro Wat; Platillo Moros y Cristiano or Cuban rice and beans; Aloo Keema, a meat and potato curry from India; Bacaloa, or salt cod from the Basque region; and winter corn chowder and corn, zucchini labelled “Polite American specialities.” Chartwells’ Chef Ryan Poole has a million things to do but he made time to participate. I’d love to have the chef there every week making dinner right in class,” remarked Rousseau.

“Everything about food is political. How we define organic is political. What the food pyramid looks like is political. People’s purchases have political implications. When they buy fair trade, that’s a political statement. I just thought it would resonate more with students if we talked about these topics over dinner.” — David Rousseau

David Rousseau uses a hands-on learning approach that divides the class into groups or “dining tables” to achieve his primary objective — teaching students about argumentation. Working in groups, students research policy issues and begin to develop debating skills that they’ll be required to call upon when their team goes head-to-head with another during one of Rousseau’s scheduled in-class debates. The Patroon Room dining area in the UAlbany Campus Center becomes a makeshift classroom for the semester where students gather to enjoy a bite, test their knowledge, hear from guest speakers, and practice their powers of persuasion with fellow dining table members.

“We don’t tell them which side of the debate they’re going to argue until the toss of the coin when they come in,” explains Rousseau. “It forces them to be able to argue both sides and then come to a conclusion. It’s active learning through students teaching other students. I push them pretty hard. They don’t want to let their teammates down.”

Professor Rousseau admits the class is “very demanding,” and incorporates elements that “make people uncomfortable.” Still all, scores on student evaluations have been high. “The course is fascinating to me because I am writing my honors thesis on a food policy issue,” said Becky Puritz, one of 21 undergraduates who signed up to take the initial spring 2010 offering at The Politics, Economics, and History of Food. “I definitely think the communal dinners added in my enjoyment of the class and in my relationship with my teammates. It feels informal, like having dinner with my friends.”

David Rousseau is optimistic that his outside-the-box approach will benefit students in the long run. “My hope is that five years from now they can make an argument about something important in their life or for their community. They’re not going to remember what the food pyramid is five or six months from now, or five years from now, but if you teach them how to critically think, how to collect information, how to make a choice, you’ve achieved an important goal.”
In 1936, Keynes attributed economic crises to “a sudden decrease in the marginal efficiency of capital.” This sentence is at the heart of the current recession, so let us untangle its current relevance.

Today’s financial wizards made a simple choice to chase an increasing volume of fees by making loans to people with less money and questionable credit histories. In doing so, they created a boom just before they created a bust.

Finance is organized on a mass production basis, like McDonald’s. If I put 99 cents into making a hamburger and sell it for $1, the common wisdom is that I have made a 1 percent profit. But if I roll 99 cents into a bun and meat to sell tomorrow, and sell it again, and do that all year, I make one penny 365 times. My annual rate of profit on 99 cents tied up in hamburger meat and buns is therefore 365 pennies or slightly more than 365 percent.

The same point applies to finance. If I set up a credit card operation, I pay merchants 98 cents on every dollar they bill me for customer transactions. I collect from my cardholders the full amount and net 2 cents on every dollar. That is roughly a 24 percent rate of return on the capital I use to finance merchant transactions. In the housing market, if I advance $200,000 against the purchase of a house, I collect $10,000 in fees, and sell the mortgage to investors. I get my $200,000 back, and next week, repeat the operation. In 52 weeks, I earn $520,000 in fees on $200,000 in capital, or nominally 260 percent annual return — though we are abstracting out many costs.

These examples suffice to show that modern consumer finance is essentially the same as modern fast food: profit depends hugely on volume, and markups that seem small measured against the value of a single transaction become large over the course of a year.

By Gregory P. Nowell

Gregory Nowell is an associate professor of political science at Rockefeller College of Public Affairs & Policy. His areas of specialization include international relations and international political economy. Professor Nowell is the author of Mercantile States and the World Oil Cartel (Cornell University Press, 1994).

The Boom Was Real, Until It Wasn’t

If we keep our sense of the economy static, we see that more risk was being assumed because banks were lending to people who were intrinsically less disposed to pay and, in many cases, tricked into commitments they did not understand. That is our common sense of the crisis, and calls for regulation are meant to correct that tendency. But the economy is interactive, not static. Lending, even to people who prove ultimately to be bad risks, increases their spending. This is a real boost in the income of everyone in the economy. It leads to real jobs, and having jobs lifts more people into creditworthy status.

Speculative pressure on prices means that people who are solvent under static (“all else held equal”) economic assumptions become insolvent as food, fuel, and other prices rise faster than incomes. This has an impact on the default rate that was not foreseen in the hand waving models. Alarmed investors ceased to buy from banks the bundled mortgages they were grabbing up a year earlier. In addition, the defaults caused losses on the books of the banks and related institutions. As the finance industry tried to cover its losses, it drew down funds used to lend to other sectors of the economy. New car loans, student loans, ordinary credit card operations and business loans were slowed or halted to patch up the holes in the mortgage portfolio. Unemployment rose broadly and sharply in the economy.

Pushing For More Customers

How do we maintain sales volume in finance? We can put people into exotic mortgages that force them to refinance in a few years. That guarantees a new stream of fees. Also, we have to find ways to bring new people into the market because, try as they might, consumers can’t get into the mood for a new house as quickly as they can get into the mood for their next meal — so banks need new customers.

The financial industry sought customers of lower income and (not always the same thing) lower creditworthiness. And, it had to convince investors that these higher risk loans were worth buying. Borrowers were airily assured they could lose nothing so long as home values rose. Hand waving and statistical modeling assured investors, who bought these mortgages in bundles worth billions, that default rates were statistically certain to stay within predicted values.

Everyone knows some customers won’t pay their loans. But the predicted rates of default proved wrong, and the high volume finance business model crashed.

In 1936, Keynes attributed economic crises to “a sudden decrease in the marginal efficiency of capital.” This sentence is at the heart of the current recession, so let us untangle its current relevance. Today’s financial wizards made a simple choice to chase an increasing volume of fees by making loans to people with less money and questionable credit histories. In doing so, they created a boom just before they created a bust.
People who were already under pressure due to rising commodity prices (gasoline and food) are now also out of work, and they too have become candidates for loan defaults. Sectors which have nothing to do with housing are in retreat. Detroit was already suffocating from high fuel prices when the cutoff of new car lending rolled over the automakers like an avalanche.

Walking Off The Cliff

So “a sudden decrease in the marginal efficiency of capital” happens this way: the first 10 million loans are conservative. The second 10 million loans are a bit riskier but are based on business sense. The third 10 million loans are made with an expert’s eye to managing known risks. The fourth 10 million loans might work out if “current conditions prevail.” The banks move through these tiers of creditworthiness because they are eager to keep up the high volumes that are their life blood. But current conditions don’t prevail, and the predicted rate of loss on loans is swamped by the actual rate of loss. Investors panic, which compounds losses even further. The system adjusts by choking off new loans; unemployment is the immediate consequence and rockets the loan default rate higher. Bankers were making money with their first 10 million loans, and their second, and their third. But they discovered, in the fourth, that they had walked off a cliff with a mob of like-minded cartoon characters. So long as all agree that all is well, they walk on air. When they look down, they all fall, and everything they do to prevent the fall makes them fall faster.

Income Inequality: The Weakness That Banking Regulation Will Not Cure

Now I certainly will not discourage banking regulation as one cure to the marginal-efficiency-of-capital cliff. But such regulation, by slowing down lending, also slows down real economic growth, and buys stability with higher unemployment. I am not one who believes that higher permanent rates of unemployment are a good trade-off for boom-bust cycles—nor was Keynes. The real issue underlying the housing bust is that a suburban finance model that works fairly well for the 20 percent of the country which takes home 50 percent of the aggregate income, does not work well—and even becomes brutally exploitative—when the need for more business drives lenders into the 80 percent of the country that divides the remaining 50 percent of the income.

We can run a speculative economy in housing among the well-off, but the less well-off need better quality of life and financial security more than they need to be lured into, then evicted from, McMansions. Income-appropriate housing strategies and stabilizing family incomes against catastrophic losses (unemployment, medical) would make the financial lives of the less well-off not only more secure, but more predictable. That means a business and lending environment with less risk and less opportunity for speculative predation.

Capital’s marginal efficiency—its ability to generate profit—is linked to the volume of sales, and sales are determined by the size of the market. The size of the market is determined by the distribution of income. The current crisis reveals the social character of income and investment. Although public anger focuses on individual bankers and their bonuses, the social structure of income inequality, and the irrational investment decisions that result, could stand greater scrutiny. Secure communities require stable sources of finance for housing, but they also need stable sources of employment, protection from medical catastrophe, and some protection from the predation of commodity speculation. The financial crisis makes plain that our society is critically weak in all these domains. And that is why we remain vulnerable to a “sudden decrease in the marginal efficiency of capital.”
"Where else can you find studies of traffic safety, gender disparities, social movements in Southeast Asia, trade policy, international sanctions, and terrorist networks, plus a fresh look at the philosopher John Locke, all under one roof?"
— Dean Jeffrey D. Straussman

For more information on Rockefeller College’s local to global research, turn to page 12.
All the projects I'm working on right now tie together under the idea of building trust in public organizations. I’m also interested in civil service reform efforts that, I think, help change the rules within which government employees are managed. At both the federal and state levels, there has been a lot of reform over the past decade. These reforms are impacting traits in the workplace, not necessarily in a positive way. My current project on civil service reform is looking at the Securities and Exchange Commission. Over the last eight to 10 years, they’ve been given authority to redesign their personnel system, in the middle of all these financial sector crises. They’ve been implementing changes. Some of them have not worked out so well. Employees unionized in the middle of the changes. The unions filed complaints about the performance appraisal system. The agency lost and they had to redesign their system. For now, I’m trying to deal with what actually happened during the reforms.

Q: What are you working on now?

A: All the projects I’m working on really tie together under the idea of building trust in public organizations. I’m also interested in civil service reform efforts that, I think, help change the rules within which government employees are managed. At both the federal and state levels, there has been a lot of reform over the past decade. These reforms are impacting traits in the workplace, not necessarily in a positive way. My current project on civil service reform is looking at the Securities and Exchange Commission. Over the last eight to 10 years, they’ve been given authority to redesign their personnel system, in the middle of all these financial sector crises. They’ve been implementing changes. Some of them have not worked out so well. Employees unionized in the middle of the changes. The unions filed complaints about the performance appraisal system. The agency lost and they had to redesign their system. For now, I’m trying to deal with what actually happened during the reforms.

Q: What other projects do you have in the pipeline?

A: I’m starting a new project examining the link between performance appraisal systems, perceptions of fairness, and organizational performance. I recently acquired a dataset on federal performance appraisal systems, which have been dramatically reformed in many agencies over the last decade, and I’m using more federal employee survey data. Appraisals are important tools for holding government employees accountable, and managers often have a very difficult time doing them—i.e., they invest any time at all. However, we know very little about the content of the systems and how appraisals impact other important outcomes. Everyone claims that if we hold civil servants more accountable, all the problems of government will be fixed. I question that argument, but until now we had no data to make an effective case.

A third project focuses on labor relations more broadly. Going back to the civil service reform efforts, when Homeland Security was created and when the Department of Defense was given its personnel flexibilities, they were both given broad authority to change the labor relations rules. Both reform efforts have failed, and the laws giving them authority to redesign their personnel systems have been revoked. The argument was that unions got in the way of management, but there’s no systematic evidence to document that. It’s all anecdotal. It’s all political rhetoric. My interest is to do systematic research on labor management to understand if unions impact performance and how.

Q: Why is this research important?

A: There are a lot of really exciting personnel management issues out there that really only 10 or 15 people would care about. But I really think that issues of fairness and trust are issues everybody can relate to. We all want to be treated fairly by our supervisors. We all want to be in a work environment where we trust our colleagues and we trust our supervisors. That makes us more effective employees. That makes us feel valued. That’s why I chose this topic. We can have a structured way to talk about these issues.

Q: Does working at Rockefeller College offer you any special advantages in terms of your research?

A: Part of the challenge in the field of public administration broadly, is that personnel management as a field of study is neglected and gets short shrift. There are very few people who actually focus their research on personnel issues entirely as opposed to broader management questions. One reason I’ve been happy here is because research on personnel issues is valued. Focusing on personnel is particularly valued. Being in Albany creates a unique opportunity to do this because we have the state agencies and union leadership all together here and they are eager for help because they have a lot of challenges and are not sure how to narrow them down. I’ve been slowly building that network and it’s already bearing fruit.
The Scholarly Mr. Zimmerman
A Look Back at a Long and Distinguished Career

The quiet and well-dressed gentleman of Rockefeller College is at once a local legend and an enigmatic figure. With his northern New England accent and dignified bearing, Joseph Zimmerman, professor of political science, is recognized for his work ethic, his longevity at Rockefeller College, the red ink spilled over generations of student papers, and for his encyclopedic knowledge of federalism and intergovernmental matters. But few of those who can readily share such observations about Professor Zimmerman are aware of the scholarly achievements he has earned over a long and distinguished career.

Professor Zimmerman has garnered national recognition for his thoughtful studies of both popular and esoteric topics in federalism, and for his consistently high level of scholarly productivity. Reviews of his work reference Zimmerman’s status among scholars of federalism. For his volume Congressional Preemption, one reviewer remarked, “Zimmerman is without a doubt among the leading scholars of federalism. He provides no less than a brilliant insight into a ‘hidden’ development of federalism...” Another individual concluded her review by noting that “Congressional Preemption should be high on the reading lists of any serious federalist or regulatory policy scholar.” The communities of political science and public administration scholars clearly share such sentiments. In 1997, Zimmerman was awarded the Donald C. Stone Award for Outstanding Academician from the American Society for Public Administration, and in 1999 he received the American Political Science Association Award for Distinguished Federalism Scholar. Zimmerman is in illustrious company, sharing the Stone Award with academic notables that include Del Wright, Daniel Elazar, Martha Derthick, Thomas Dye, and Robert Agranoff.

Such recognition has not lead Zimmerman to slow the pace of his productivity. Since 2001, Zimmerman has published 12 volumes ranging from state-local relations, interstate cooperation, congressional preemption, and interstate disputes, to alternative models for electing the president. While his colleagues appreciate his productivity, they are more likely to comment on the value of everyday interactions with him. Speaking of Zimmerman’s command of his subject matter, one colleague remarked, “Joe has a consummate knowledge of New York State politics and has been an invaluable resource to his colleagues, many of whom were new to the state, the East Coast, and to the issues.” Zimmerman’s recall of institutional activity was also noted. “I was always impressed by Joe’s institutional knowledge,” observed a colleague. “As the department has included younger and younger faculty, he has become an invaluable resource. There is not a person here who has a greater institutional memory.” A former doctoral student agreed and observed, “No other individual on the faculty or staff can match the institutional memory he possesses. He can personally recount the hiring of every faculty member currently serving in the department. And this memory is not merely a function of his physical presence, but of his active participation in the life of the College and in his respect and love for people.”

Professor Zimmerman can be equally proud of the loyalty he has engendered among Rockefeller College graduates who earned their degrees under his tutelage. “Mr. Zimmerman,” as he introduces himself, or Joe Z, as his doctoral students fondly refer to him, displayed “an unending commitment to training the next generation of scholars,” wrote Jordan Wisly, PhD graduate of Rockefeller College, and Brian Nickerson, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at Iona College, and a former doctoral student, in a joint statement. The pair added, “Every available to students he mentioned, [Professor Zimmerman] nurtured their progress through a combination of access, personal connection, scholarly insight, and uniquely swift response to their writing submissions. In contrast, many graduate students waited months for faculty review of their research. For Joe Z’s students, the difficulty was keeping up with him.”

This fall, as the venerable Mr. Zimmerman conducts his classes and collects research papers to read in preparation for his next book, he will continue to add new pages to his legacy. Carry on, Joe Z.

Q. Which accomplishments were particularly satisfying?
A. Joe mentioned a range of career highlights for which he is justifiably proud. These include his scholarly recognition by both the American Political Science Association and the American Society for Public Administration, being cited in numerous Supreme Court decisions (one as recently as June 2010), and his public service achievements. In particular, Mr. Zimmerman noted three accomplishments: helping officials in Massachusetts develop strategies that led to development of the electronic highway toll system, being named Director of the Massachusetts Atomic Energy Commission, and being hired by New York State as a traffic consultant in New York City through the purchase (from the military) of the airspace that now houses Stewart International Airport.
Rockefeller College Welcomes New Faculty

Yvonne D. Harrison has joined Rockefeller College at Public Affairs & Policy as assistant professor of public administration. Dr. Harrison comes to Rockefeller from the Center for Nonprofit and Social Enterprise Management at Seattle University, in Seattle, Washington where she supervised the capstone research project and taught courses in nonprofit governance and information management in government and nonprofit organizations.

“A number of factors led to my decision to come to Rockefeller College,” said Harrison. “Chief among them,” she added, “was the opportunity to work with nonprofit scholar Judith Saidel.”

Professor Harrison has conducted three international research investigations into the role and impact of states at nonprofit boards of directors as well as two national research studies exploring the impact of information and communications technology (ICT) on the management of volunteer resources in Canada’s nonprofit sector. Her research interests include modernization (from technological, global and organizational development perspectives), nonprofit leadership and effectiveness, and strategic partnerships and alliances. In addition to maintaining an ambitious research agenda, Professor Harrison is teaching public management at Rockefeller this fall.

Rockefeller College Faculty members Scott Barclay (at left), Holly Jarman (center); and Julie Novkov (right).
Research Center News

Rockefeller College’s research centers, institutes, and partners conduct state-of-the-art research and policy analysis, improve the knowledge and skills of employees in public and nonprofit agencies through professional development, and work with government at all levels in the United States and abroad to enhance their ability to govern effectively.

SUNY Center for International Development (SUNY/CID)

The SUNY Center for International Development (SUNY/CID) recently launched a major project on constituency development funds (CDFs) by offering a series of workshops on the topic for academics and international practitioners. In July, Research Professor Mark Baskin traveled to the UK to present a paper on CDFs at the Ninth Workshop of Parliamentary Scholars and Parliamentarians. This past September, SUNY/CID organized a roundtable on CDFs at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association. Also in September, at the 56th Annual Conference of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association in Nairobi, Kenya, Professor Baskin led a workshop on the role of parliamentarians in facilitating grassroots projects.

In the aftermath of the January 12, 2010 earthquake in Haiti, SUNY/CID’s project team displayed courage and resourcefulness in assisting in the rescue efforts and supporting the nation’s subsequent efforts to rebuild. Since 2006, CID has been working in Haiti to provide technical assistance to Parliament in order to develop the skills and capacity of its members and staff, and to strengthen the broader community. The CID team supported several crucial activities aimed at helping the Parliament connect with citizens in the wake of the earthquake.

Haiti’s Parliament (below and to the right) shows the devastating effects of the January 12, 2010 earthquake.

Center for Women in Government & Civil Society (CWGCS)

The Center for Women in Government & Civil Society (CWGCS) launched its newest initiative, the Women’s Leadership Academy (WLA), on November 30, 2010 with State University of New York Chancellor Nancy Zimpher as host. WLA programming includes the Fellowship on Women & Public Policy, an intensive, semester-long leadership development program for graduate and post-graduate level students pursuing careers in public policy, and NEW™ Leadership New York, a week-long undergraduate leadership development program designed to encourage women to run for elected office.

Professional Development Program (PDP)

A number of projects developed by the Professional Development Program (PDP) were honored with awards this year. The “Tobacco Recovery Resource Enhance (T.R.E.) Hub,” and “Preventing Shaken Baby Syndrome,” an online course, received APEX Awards of Excellence for Education and Training in the Electronic and Video Publications category. PDP also received a bronze award for a suite of online modules created for the “Tobacco Interventions Project” in the category of best practice in distance learning programming from the United States Distance Learning Association (USDLA).

The Project on Violent Conflict (PVC)

In partnership with the University of Arizona and the Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), the Project on Violent Conflict (PVC) has been awarded a grant from the Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA). The grant is titled “New Analytic Methods for the Exploitation of Open-Source Structured Databases to Enhance Situational Awareness for Effective Counter-WMD Strategies.” Last January, the PVC team traveled to the International Center for the Study of Terrorism (ICST) at Penn State for continued work on “Bomb to Bombsite,” a study of the Provisional Irish Republican Army’s use of improvised explosive devices. In summer, the PVC staff presented their article “Truthful Combinations: Studying the Structure of Terrorist Networks” at the First International Conference on Cross-Cultural Decision-Making in Miami.

Sunset at Quarry Park

NYS Executive Honored by Rockefeller College

Executive Deputy Comptroller Mark P. Patterson of the Office of State and Local Government Accountability in the Office of the State Comptroller was honored by the Rockefeller College of Public Affairs & Policy and PDP during a Distinguished Public Service Awards Ceremony at Page Hall on Tuesday, April 20, 2010.

The event, hosted by University at Albany President George M. Philip, honors individuals who have dedicated their careers to serving the people of New York. Lieutenant Governor Richard Ravitch, recognized during the ceremony by the University for his outstanding accomplishments, delivered the keynote address.

Describing Mark Patterson’s service to his community as “truly extensive,” Dean Jeffrey D. Stassinopoulos presented the deputy comptroller with the distinguished service award mediation on behalf of the College. The son of former U.S. Representative Edward “Ned” Patterson, Mr. Patterson recalled how his family had always placed great importance on helping the community. “I believe, despite what we hear today, that the spirit of public service is alive and well,” he noted. “I want to thank the University at Albany for maintaining this important tradition of celebrating public service, and Rockefeller College for considering me as a nominee. I am inspired by the award.”

Mark Patterson was appointed Executive Deputy Comptroller for the Office of State and Local Government Accountability on May 7, 2007. He previously served as the Deputy Comptroller for Local Government Services and Economic Development and as Mayor of Troy, New York from 1996 through 2003. He worked at the Nassau County Chamber of the Association for 10 years, including 12 years as its director, and served as vice-president of the City of Troy’s school board, president of Vanderheyden Hall, vice-chair of the Nassau County Regional Chamber of Commerce, chairperson of the Holland Mohawk Heritage Area Commission and president of the New York State Association of Community and Residential Agencies. Mark Patterson was a trustee and faculty member of Nassau Institute of Technology in New York, New York, and has served on several community boards, including the Center for Economic Growth and the New York State Commission for Economic Opportunity.

The Burton Lecture is named for John E. Burton, who served as New York’s budget director under Governor Thomas E. Dewey from 1943 to 1950. Burton, who was credited with modernizing the state’s budget process, was a key member of the special committee that recommended the creation of the State University of New York System.
Rockefeller-MPAs Named Presidential Management Fellows

Two members of the Class of 2010 have been named Presidential Management Fellows by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM). After receiving their MPAs this past May, Carmen Brick of New York City and Courtney Asker of Utica journeyed to Washington, D.C. to accept the prestigious title of Presidential Management Fellow and begin their careers in government service.

"The coursework at Rockefeller College has been particularly useful in helping me gain this fellowship," said Brick, who has been tapped by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to be a financial analyst. "Also, being in a center of government, as you are while studying at Rockefeller College, provides a lot of opportunities for internships. I worked at Public Financial Management, a consulting firm run by a former New York State budget director and I listened at the New York State Assembly. There's a wide range of opportunities here at Rockefeller," added Brick.

"You're on a career path as a fellow and you have a target position that they're training you for so it's a little bit more of a mentorship," explained Courtney Asker. "Instead of just starting in an entry-level job, you get more built-in benefits and support. It's a way to start a career. I'll be in the Strategic Planning Office for the Asia and Middle East Bureaus of the U.S. Agency for International Development working towards becoming a financial management specialist.

When reminded that fewer than 10 percent of this year's applicants were selected as Presidential Management Fellows, Courtney Asker was quick to give much of the credit to her alma mater. "Rockefeller College prepared us well," she replied.

Building a Better Intelligence Analyst

Michael Landon-Murray hopes the work he's doing will help make the world a little more secure.

Midway through his doctoral studies in public administration and policy, Michael Landon-Murray is preparing to conduct research on how American colleges and universities have trained intelligence analysts over the last 25 to 30 years. "Being introduced to many new disciplines and fields has enhanced my overall understanding of the discipline while at Rockefeller made me realize there may be areas of knowledge an analyst needs to be strong in that are missing from educational programs currently available to those professionals," said Landon-Murray.

His academic background supports his endeavor, he received his undergraduate degree from the University at Buffalo in political science with a focus in international relations and his master's from the University of Pittsburgh in public and international affairs with a concentration in security and intelligence studies.

"There has been much study on intelligence analysis in general, focusing on the more immediate causes of intelligence failures. My work has a somewhat different focus and will pose questions we have an obligation to examine such as: what are we putting inside analysts' heads and what tools do they need to bring to their work?" Mike sees a potential to reorient academic research by asking he can propose practical ways to incorporate more fields of study into the training. He plans to research current programs, examine curricular structure and content, and interview department leadership and professors, and other key stakeholders. Landon-Murray also aspires to study intelligence education back to the pre-Cold War period, examining program changes over the decades. "Pondering the enormous influence of the Cold War and 9/11 on policy and intelligence requirements, Landon-Murray observes that "we have new issues, we have new targets, we need new approaches." His goal is to start a scholarly dialogue about the kind of education that will produce intelligence analysts who have all the tools they need to do their jobs well.

Michael Landon-Murray's research dovetails nicely with the efforts of Rockefeller College's highly regarded Homeland Security Studies program. He looks forward to working with Professors Karl Reithermayer and Victor Asal, co-founders of the Project on Violent Conflict (PVC). Landon-Murray credits his mentor, Assistant Dean Sydney Cresswell, with helping him to focus his doctoral work and providing him with opportunities to do what he loves—marry the academic with the practical, which in this case may just make this a safer world.

Student News

MPA student Bridget Baker recently completed an internship at the NYS Assembly working for Professor Helen Delissios.

Matthew Burns is in his final semester of the MPA program specializing in homeland security studies. Since November, Matthew has been serving through AmeriCorps as the liaison for New York State Volunteer Organizations Active in Disaster (NYS VOAD) at the NYS Emergency Management Office.

Kathy Dopp, a PhD student in political science, presented three papers at conferences: "Checking Election Outcome Accuracy: Post-Election Auditing Procedures" and "The Interplay of Constituent Makeup and Electoral Methods on Legislative Representation for Minority and Majority Groups" at the Midwest Political Science Association (MPSA), April 2010; and "Checking Election Outcome Accuracy: Post-Election Audit Sampling" at the Southern Political Science Association (SPSA), January 2010.

MPA student Taewoo Nam presented a paper titled "Whither Digital Equality? An Empirical Study of the Democratic Divide" at the 43rd Annual Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences (HICSS) in Poipu, Kauai, Hawaii. Taewoo was a member of the Center for Technology in Government program. He looks forward to working with faculty and other key stakeholders, and other key stakeholders.

Public policy analysis and management (APAM) Research Conference in Boston this past November "The Effect of Massachusetts Health Care Reform on Emergency Department Use" (authored with Stephen Weinberg) and "To lease or Not to Lease. That is the Infrastructure Question" (authored with Robert Purtil and James Fossitt). Rockefeller MPA student Jayson Kratoville recently completed an overseas internship in Athens, Greece for the U.S. Department of State. MPA student Angela R. Laurie-Gumnick presented her research on "Social Networks, Fiscal Stress, and Cooperative Governance: Exploring Municipal Shared Services and Cost-Saving Opportunities in New York State" at a poster session at the American Society for Public Administration's (ASPAS) Annual Conference in San Jose, California.

In January 2010, doctoral student Kate Gargiulo; Ryan Ashe meets with United States Ambassador to Kenya Michael E. Ranneberger; Jayson Kratoville sightseeing during his internship in Athens; and doctoral student Niyousha Hosseinichimeh presented her research on "Social Networks, Fiscal Stress, and Cooperative Governance: Exploring Municipal Shared Services and Cost-Saving Opportunities in New York State" at a poster session at the American Society for Public Administration's (ASPAS) Annual Conference in San Jose, California.
If you ever doubted that a graduate program can launch a career and make you astute about professional achievement, just ask Martha Gagné. Martha, a federal employee in the Senior Executive Service and Assistant Deputy Director in the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), Office of Demand Reduction, completed her MPA at Rockefeller College in 1991 and then embarked on a career with an enviable trajectory. Along the way, Martha learned valuable lessons about the skills, experiences, and choices that keep a career in motion.

According to Martha, her success began with her coursework at Rockefeller College and continued with a fellowship with the New York State Division of the Budget (DOB). The master’s program coursework got her into DOB and taught her critical thinking skills and the value of finding career mentors. On graduating, Martha’s work as a budget analyst in charge of higher education portfolio at DOB gave her new analytic tools and a strong platform from which to move into a federal position. The federal government, Martha observed, considers New York a cutting-edge state, and “federal officials find it invaluable to hire individuals with state experience precisely because it is so difficult to know the impact of policy and implementation decision on states.”

After just one year at DOB, Martha was selected for a position with the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) in Washington. Her portfolio at OMB was considered a cross-cutting type, evaluating the effectiveness of the array of programs focused on drug control and treatment. Finding the work in drug policy matters to be important and professionally satisfying, Martha made her business to learn how to move into more central policy and management positions in government. “I found that often you have to leave federal government in order to move up in it,” Gagné stated. Her mentors understood that the federal government selects individuals for senior policy positions that have the seasoning afforded by multi-sectoral and cross-cultural experience. Senior officials need to know how to work effectively across boundaries, cultures, and organizations.

With this advice in mind, after three years, Martha left her position in OMB and moved into the nonprofit side of drug addiction matters, taking a position with Phoenix House, the nation’s largest nonprofit provider of alcohol and drug addiction treatment. Here Martha learned another formative lesson, the importance of understanding who you are serving and what it feels like to be the client receiving the services. The orientation program for Phoenix House employees begins with an unvarnished, two-day stint in a drug treatment program, and the experience provided her with vivid insights about the human process and the service provider’s responsibilities.

After becoming Director of the American Council for Drug Education within the Phoenix House organization, Martha moved to an international position as Deputy Director of the Drug Abuse Resistance Education Program (D.A.R.E.) in their European offices, where she focused on the demand reduction aspect of drug control efforts. Three years later in 2001, Martha returned to federal service and ran a substantive initiative out of the White House drug policy office’s anti-drug media campaign. Martha is rightfully proud of having helped lead the effort that created the largest publicly funded social marketing media campaign. The National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign. The effort produced the Anti-Drug brand, which has brand recognition comparable to that of Coca-Cola® and Pepsi®. In 2006, Martha entered the Senior Executive Service (SES), the arm of government that represents continuity in the event of a disaster, sudden changes, and administrative transitions.

Though it may seem that having reached her current position Martha has achieved all of her career goals, this is not the case. Martha has an ongoing agenda which, providentially, includes a role as an advisor to Rockefeller College, ensuring that generations of students will benefit from her wisdom and experience.

Alumni News & Notes

Michael Christakis, MA ’03, PhD ’05 currently assistant vice president for the Division of Student Success at the University of Albany, has been elected to the Board of Directors of the State Academy for Public Administration. Rockefeller alumna Opalina Eglene, PhD ’07 awarded the forthcoming publication of her dissertation, Banking on Sterling: Britain’s Independence from the Euro Zone. Dr. Eglene is a member of the faculty of Middlebury College.

Formerly a consultant to the Town of Rye, NY, John D. Goodwin, MPA ’09 accepted a position with the Village of Scarsdale this past spring.

Russell Hasson, PhD ’10 has joined the John Glenn School of Public Affairs at Ohio State University as assistant professor. His research primarily focuses on the role of work climate on employees’ work motivation, commitment and performance in government and nonprofit organizations.

In his third year as a manager in the Health Analytics Department at Excellus BlueCross/Blue Shield in Syracuse, Christopher Kidder, MPA ’05 has been working on developing predictive analytics for his company in the wake of the recent health reform legislation.

Congratulations to Rockefeller alumni Soohee Kim, PhD ’98 and David Von Slyke, PhD ’99. Soohee and David, both associate professors at Syracuse University’s Maxwell School, were each honored recently for their contributions to the field of public administration. Soohee is this year’s recipient of the Julia B. Henderson Award given by the American Society for Public Administration (ASPA) to a woman who has demonstrated her commitment to international public administration. David, whose research interests include public-private partnerships, government contracting, and strategic management, was elected as a fellow of the National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA).

Michael A. Cinella, PhD ’97 is the author of Pharmacok: Plato, Drug Culture, and Identity in Ancient Athens, recently published by Lexington Books. Dr. Cinella is an instructor of political theory at Empire State College’s Center for Distance Learning.

Anna Raup-Kovovsky, MPA ’10 is putting her newly acquired degree to good work in her research with the team at the Center for Technology in Government.

UNC Asheville recently welcomed new faculty member Micheal Stratton, MPA ’03, PhD ’06 to the department of management and accountability. In June, while receiving the New
Stay Connected

Now there’s a convenient way to update your contact info and share your news with fellow alums. Rockefeller College’s Office of Career & Alumni Programs invites you to take advantage of a new online form that makes staying in touch quick and easy. Have a new job? Recently been promoted? Maybe you’ve just received an award or published an article or book. Weddings, babies, new address, interesting travels? We’d love to hear what you’re up to.

At Rockefeller, we’re very proud of our alumni and rely on them to help make our special events and programming meaningful for students. “It’s important for alumni to stay involved with the College as mentors or volunteers, as it provides a legacy for current and prospective students,” explains Jennifer Williams, director of internships and career programs. The College needs alums to participate as guest speakers at career workshops and networking events; share news about job or internship opportunities; and serve as the point of contact for students interested in learning more about careers in public affairs through an informational interview. Our new online form makes it easy to choose the volunteer or mentoring opportunity that’s right for you.

Stay connected by visiting Rockefeller College at www.albany.edu/rockefeller/career.shtml.

Snapshots

Rockefeller College Dean Jeffrey D. Straussman (center) moderates UAlbany’s World Within Reach Speaker Series debate between Governor Howard Dean (left) and Karl Rove (right) on April 8 at the SEFCU Arena.

In spring, public policy and management graduating seniors had the opportunity to present budget briefings at the Rockefeller Institute of Government for an audience that included New York State officials. (From left) Ron Greenberg, first deputy budget director, New York State Division of the Budget; Mike Laccetti, director of fiscal studies, NYS Senate; and Roman Hedges, former deputy secretary for the NYS Assembly Ways and Means Committee, assess students’ presentations.

WCNY TV & FM news director Susan Arbetter welcomes Professors Victor Asal (center) and Karl Rethemeyer (right) to The Capital Pressroom radio program.

BGC Securities Senior VP and General Counsel Michael Lampert, BA ’73 (upper left), delivers the keynote at Rockefeller College’s undergraduate recognition ceremony. Deputy Director of the NYS Conference of Mayors, Barbara VanEpps (upper right) addresses the Class of 2010 during the College’s graduate recognition ceremony. (At right) Rockefeller College undergraduates celebrate on Commencement Day, May 16, 2010. Pictured from left are Benjamin Spear, Trisha Hahn, Jayson Kratoville, Catherine Callahan, and Cynthia Mellen.