Greetings from the Chair:

Dear Friends of the NIU Political Science Department:

Let me start off with a straightforward proposition. In the summer of 2017, Political Science at NIU is alive and very well! I often worry that media reports about NIU create the impression that our institution is about to implode. No evidence of that from my vantage point! In political science we continue to offer first class educational opportunities and turn out a body of students who are primed to make positive contributions in a whole host of professional endeavors. Among our Spring 2017 graduates, we have Theo Poole who is now enrolled in a joint JD/MBA program at John Marshall Law School and Robert Morris University. Christopher Adams has secured a full-time staff position in Representative Bill Foster’s Aurora office and Ibrahim Baig has landed a position with Sound Vision a nonprofit multimedia company, while he weighs graduate school options. These are just three of our most recent success stories.

The size of our faculty is growing again! We will add two very promising international relations scholars in the fall. Be sure to read their brief biographies in the pages that follow. Our existing faculty continue to impress with their research, teaching, and service to NIU students and the broader community. I would like to note a few faculty achievements. Dr. Andrea Radasanu continues to receive external support for the Tocqueville Forum, which will now be home to an interdisciplinary peer-reviewed undergraduate journal. Dr. April Clark placed dozens of students, this past year, in meaningful internships, while producing four new peer-reviewed publications. Our newest faculty colleague, Dr. Ches Thurber, was selected to participate in NIU’s Principal Investigator Academy and was chosen to represent NIU at the annual Council on Foreign Relations Educators Workshop in New York City in April. Dr. Artemus Ward is hosting, “An Evening with Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg” at the Auditorium Theatre of Roosevelt University in Chicago this fall. Dr. Kheang Un has recently signed a contract with Cambridge University Press to produce a book on Cambodian politics. This is just some of the ways our Political Science faculty are making a difference.

Please read on to learn about the success of our many student clubs and the university’s stellar Mock Trial team, coached by Political Science professor Dr. Mitch Pickerill. In the fall of 2017, the Department of Political Science and the NIU Law School will co-sponsor a Mock Trial invitational tournament and universities from around the Midwest will be bringing their A-teams to compete in the first annual “Huskie Cup”. This event will provide a boost to local hotels and restaurants as Mock Trial teams from approximately 20 different universities converge on DeKalb. The Department is always striving to make our alumni proud and the Huskie Cup Invitational is just one in a long line of extra-curricular opportunities the department has sponsored to add value to your affiliation with the NIU Political Science Department.
In the Spotlight:

First Annual Department Open House

The Department’s Meet the Faculty event, from previous years, was reframed as an Open House in spring of 2017. The event was used to introduce students to all of the extracurricular opportunities sponsored by the Department of Political Science. Each of the Department’s affiliated student clubs was given an opportunity to advertise their program to the undergraduates assembled. The sign-in sheet for this event had 103 names, but there was a larger number in attendance. We were able to use donations made by friends and alumni of the Department to pay for a catered meal.

The event recognized two groups of high achieving students. The first was our Super Sophomores. These are second-year political science majors that meet a specific grade point average (GPA) requirement. We suspect many of these individuals will be among the next group of student leaders in the Department.

We also recognized four Department Honor students, two who graduated with Department honors in spring 2017. These individuals maintain a 3.70 GPA and satisfy a whole host of other curricular requirements including taking a graduate-level seminar.

The Open House was scheduled to run from 5-7 p.m. but by 8 p.m. there were still a couple dozen students hanging out with each other and the faculty members who stuck around. The event had the desired effect of getting more students involved in our affiliated clubs. Each club provides exceptional professional development and networking opportunities for any student with the ambition to get on the team!

Toqueville Forum

The Toqueville Forum, through which we provide enriched curricular and co-curricular programming on issues relating to American democracy, had a successful 2016-17. Our two fellows did great work, and had rewarding experiences. Lincoln Fellow Shadrick Mead wrote a probing paper on veterans’ benefits and party politics, and Madison Fellow Brennen Dziadon looked into the link between commerce and international peace. Ten students participated in the Forum’s special seminar “Is Democracy Just,” and we welcomed two towering figures in American government to speak to our students: Dr. Seth Masket (University of Denver) and Dr. Jerry Wright (Indiana University).

We also started a new and exciting venture. We are working towards launching Compass: An Undergraduate Journal of American Political Ideas this fall. This publication aims to provide a serious and interdisciplinary scholarly outlet for undergraduate students around the world who are interested in exploring and writing about current American political issues understood in the broad contexts of political philosophy, history, literature and culture.
Student Career Success Initiatives

Students continued to take advantage of the Department’s student career readiness programs. Twenty-four students participated in the Political Science Mentorship Program in the fall of 2016. In this program, students are matched up with alumni, mentors, and community leaders, including some local elected officials. In many instances, students were given a chance to shadow their mentors on the job. The department also held, for the third consecutive year, a Professional Development Seminar in the fall of 2016. Eighteen students interacted with NIU professionals from Human Resources and Career Services and were coached on interviewing skills and resume writing. Other seminar guest speakers instructed students on law school admissions, graduate school admissions, and careers in state and local government. Fifteen students joined Professors Scot Schraufnagel and Matt Streb on the annual D.C. Spring Break trip in the spring of 2017. Students visited NIU alumni in their D.C. offices and took advantage of a variety of networking opportunities. The students also had the opportunity to visit the sights. Four students, including three political science majors, were granted the opportunity to intern in Washington D.C. during the summer of 2016. Ala Dynak interned in the office of Rep. Randy Hultgren; Caleb Tomaszewski was an intern in Rep. Adam Kinzinger’s office; Luke Arrington served in Rep. Robin Kelly’s office; and Marc Hooks served in Rep. Tammy Duckworth’s office. Each of these students gained considerable experience on the Hill and began to position themselves for careers in politics.
Club News:

Model United Nations

The NIU Model United Nations Team attended two conferences in 2016-2017. In November, the club represented the Republic of Indonesia at the American Model United Nations (AMUN) conference in Chicago. Delegates negotiated and passed resolutions on topics ranging from the international arms trade and land mines to global health and the safety of journalists. And in a historical recreation of the 1973 Arab-Israeli war, the NIU team got to play the role of Indonesia on the UN Security Council. The team won a Position Paper Award for a series of policy briefs the students wrote articulating Indonesia’s stances on issues before the United Nations.

In April, the team attended the University of Chicago Model United Nations conference. At this event, rather than represent a country at the contemporary United Nations, students participated in a series of historical crisis simulations. Students took on roles including the Secretary of Labor in Richard Nixon’s Cabinet, a medieval Italian Cardinal aspiring to the papacy, and the feared Chicago gangster Joseph “Teets” Battaglia. The students not only deepened their historical knowledge, but developed their public speaking, negotiation, and debate skills. This coming fall, the team will be returning to the AMUN conference to represent Somalia.

Political Science Student Advisory Committee

The Political Science Student Advisory Committee (POLS-SAC) was active again in 2016-17. This group of student leaders acts as a liaison between the department’s faculty and undergraduate students. The committee serves as a mechanism for program evaluation and improvement. Moreover, POLS-SAC members help organize and administer special events such as the Department’s Open House and other university and college recruitment events. They serve as role models for other students both in and outside the classroom. We are pleased to recognize last year’s student leaders in the department of Political Science.

Pre-Law Honors Society

The NIU Pre-Law Honors Society is a student organization designed to promote career readiness for potential law students and others interested in a legal profession. This past year the group hosted a series of speakers including Hayden Trepeck, CEO of How I Compare (a website dedicated to assisting pre-law students); Anna Sacco-Miller, Illinois State’s Attorney for Lee County; Professor Yolanda King, NIU Law, an intellectual property attorney; and Jeff Schmidt, Director of Personal Trust at Fifth-Third Bank. The group also sponsored an event which consisted of a panel of professors who had received a Juris Doctorate before going on to earn a PhD degree. Included on the panel was Dr. Brendon Swedlow, from Political Science, who serves as faculty advisor to the group and Dr. Eric Mogren from the NIU History Department.
Mock Trial

In just the program’s fifth year, NIU’s mock trial team earned its second consecutive bid to the American Mock Trial Association’s (AMTA) National Championship Tournament (NCT). The team posted a second-place finish at the regional stage and ranked in the top six at the Opening Round Championship Series (ORCS) to secure back-to-back national tournament appearances. The team went 6-2 at ORCS—with wins over Northwestern, Wheaton College and the University of Arizona to earn one of 48 spots in the national tournament (out of more than 650 teams). The national tournament was held in Los Angeles, CA from April 21-23. NIU was joined by the University of Chicago and the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign as the only state schools to reach the tournament.

Despite being relatively new, NIU’s team regularly competes against top-notch schools from around the country. The team hit a big milestone in spring 2016 when it qualified for the NCT for the first time. 2017 was expected to be a rebuilding year after the graduation of team leaders meant a number of first and second year students would play important roles on this year’s roster.

“This season has been mind-blowing,” NIU 2017 Mock Trial President and team Co-Captain Kaitlyn Harper said. “Last year we were the underdogs. This year, I was expecting to be in the same position. I don’t think we’re in that position anymore.” That’s because of solid successes in several invitational tournaments in the fall. Professor Mitch Pickerill, who founded the team, admits to being a bit of a proud parent talking about the team’s growth. He notes, “I’m excited for them, they are committed and work really hard. Mock Trial requires the same dedication and commitment that college athletics require.”

Team members learn public speaking skills, teamwork, and a lot about the law along the way. Pickerill, who holds a J.D. from Indiana University, notes the students go through the equivalent of three law school classes early in the season before heading into competition.

The team’s dedication led to individual awards for Harper and many of her teammates. For instance, Andrea Alcantar and Jeong-Mee Mok-Morrison earned witness awards during the regional tournament. Angelica Lebron won an Outstanding Witness award at ORCS. Kaitlyn Harper, a junior political science major from Minooka, won Outstanding Attorney Awards at both regionals and ORCS. In fact, over the course of the 2016-17 season, Harper snagged 11 Outstanding Attorney awards to lead the nation in that category. Harper credits her team for her personal growth. “I know I’ve learned from them.” She notes, she maintains her focus on team goals. That attitude undoubtedly explains why the NIU team has won numerous “Spirit of AMTA” good sportsmanship awards, which are judged by tournament opponents. “We got to put NIU on the map,” Harper said. Added Pickerill, “I’m proud of them, and I want them to have pride in the institution.”

At the national tournament this year NIU finished 4-8 on all the ballots, which is a significant improvement over the previous year. Particularly, NIU beat two teams head-to-head—Brown University and the University of Kansas, 2-1 each. NIU was later swept (0-3 each) by Yale University and Emory University. Importantly, at the national tournament, this year, NIU won another coveted Spirit of AMTA Award for good sportsmanship.

This fall, NIU will host the inaugural Huskie Cup Mock Trial Invitational Tournament on October 28-29. The tournament will take place, primarily, at the NIU Law School and in Altgeld Hall. We are looking for attorneys and others with appropriate backgrounds, such as non-practicing J.D.s and second or third year law students with mock trial experience, to serve as judges for the invitational. Attorneys do not need to be trial attorneys and volunteers can judge as many (or as few) rounds as they would like. Please consider volunteering as a judge to help make the Huskie Cup a resounding success. For additional information about the Huskie Cup invitational, please contact the Head Coach of the NIU Mock Trial Program, Dr. Mitch Pickerill (pick@niu.edu).

Fun fact: Closing ceremonies for the 2017 national tournament were held in a ballroom in the old Biltmore Hotel in Los Angeles where the Academy Awards were once held. Our students were on the same stage where Clark Gable received an Oscar!
**Model Illinois Government (MIG)**

NIU delegates stepped up big at MIG 2017, capturing the award for Outstanding Small Delegation, while club President **Tim Kirsininkas** was elected Lieutenant Governor for the 2017-18 simulation.

In early March, 12 NIU students along with students from across the state were able to experience what it is like to serve as Illinois representatives and senators for a weekend. The simulated legislative session allowed each student to experience committee debate on actual legislation, as well as hold legislative sessions in the actual chambers of the Illinois House and Senate.

Out of the 12 delegates representing NIU, 10 were elected to serve in some form of leadership role, which helped NIU capture the award for Outstanding Small Delegation.

Sophomore **Aileen Garcia** commented: “MIG is such a unique experience, it’s difficult to explain what it’s like being there. I met some amazing people who have broadened my horizons. I have a greater appreciation for the work our politicians do for us after seeing what it’s like to do their jobs.”

This is the second year in a row that an NIU student has captured a spot on the statewide MIG Executive Board. Last year **David Jones** served as MIG Chief Justice. This year **Tim Kirsininkas** is serving as Lieutenant Governor.

**Department Transitions:**

**Streb Takes New Position at NIU**

**Matt Streb** is replacing Associate Vice President Mike Mann, in the NIU President’s office, who retired after serving as the Board of Trustees liaison and state legislative liaison. Matt will also do strategic projects in the role of chief of staff for Acting President Lisa Freeman. Matt’s move was official on June 1, but his tenure in the Department of Political Science continues with full retreat rights. [Read more.]

**New Faculty Profiles**

We are proud to announce the additions of Professor **Aarie Glas** (Ph.D., University of Toronto) and Professor **Colin Kuehl** (Ph.D., University of California, Santa Barbara) as assistant professors in Fall 2017.

**Professor Glas** is an international relations scholar with teaching and research interests in regional security governance, with particular foci on the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), international relations theory, and interpretive and qualitative research methods. Professor Glas will be a faculty associate in the Center for Southeast Asian Studies. His research focus on Southeast Asia and ASEAN will work well for our many graduate students who come from that region of the world.

**Professor Kuehl** is an international relations scholar with teaching and research interests in environmental politics, global governance, pro-environmental behavior and environmental sustainability. Professor Kuehl will be a faculty associate in the Institute for the Study of the Environment, Sustainability, and Energy.

With the addition of Glas and Kuehl the Department will be able to offer courses and emphasis in international relations at the graduate level.

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Department Commencement and Awards Ceremony:

The annual commencement and awards ceremony was held on Saturday, May 13 in the Boutell Memorial Concert Hall.

The following undergraduate students were recognized:

- **Dean’s Award**: Shadrick Mead
- **Departmental Honors**: Ala Dynak, Brennon Dziadon
- **Wilkinson Memorial Award**: Shadrick Mead, Christine Wang
- **Peters Scholarship**: Ala Dynak, Erin Hernandez, Lark Lewis
- **Undergraduate Paper Award**: Christine Wang, Benjamin Staub, Ayesha Feroz, Daniel Alarcon, Shadrick Mead
- **Congressional Internship Scholars**: Brennon Dziadon

Additionally, seven students became members of Pi Sigma Alpha, the Political Science National Honor Society. Twenty students were recognized as Students of Distinction with cumulative GPA scores of 3.5 and over and 24 students were recognized as Political Science Scholars with cumulative GPA scores of 3.0 to 3.49.

Graduate Program News:

This past year three M.A. students and five Ph.D. students successfully navigated degree completion and have been added to our already illustrious group of graduate student alumni. Alyssa Morren, Kaitlyn Gradecki, and Michael Sweeney completed the Master’s degree in the past year and Eileen Setti (summer 2016), Jill Dunlap (fall 2016), Haala Hweio (fall 2016), Thomas Rhoden (spring 2017), and Li-Yin Liu (spring 2017) completed the doctoral program. Happily, all five PhD students are working in professions that make use of their educational experiences at NIU. Eileen Setti is the Director of Community Education at Methodist College, Haala Hweio is a part-time instructor at Dominican University, Jill Dunlap is Director for Equity, Inclusion, and Violence Prevention at the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, Thomas Rhoden is a proposal writer and researcher at CARE International, and Li-Yin Liu will work for the Department of Public Administration at NIU as a full-time instructor in the coming academic year.

Other graduate students won significant awards in the past year.

Two Political Science graduate students were honored with the 2016-2017 Outstanding Graduate Student Award bestowed by the Graduate School at NIU. Ricky Rivard was recognized at the M.A. level and Thomas Rhoden was recognized at the Ph.D. level.

Afrimadona won the Martin David Dubin Memorial Scholarship for academic merit.

Martin Claar won the Department’s Outstanding Graduate Instructor Award.

Kate Paton won both the Gerald S. Maryanov Award as an outstanding graduate student and a Morton J. Frisch student travel fellowship.

Iqra Anugrah won one of the university’s highly competitive Dissertation Completion Fellowships.

Testriono won an International Foundation for Electoral System Hybl Fellowship to conduct original research at their Washington DC headquarters during the summer of 2017. He also won a Russell Smith travel scholarship to help him with
the costs associated with conducting field work in Southeast Asia.

In all, we are proud of the continued success of our graduate programs, which turn out students ready to make major contributions to the communities where we live and work.

Alumni News:

The successes of our alumni are extraordinary and obviously too numerous to mention. What we would like to do here is simply highlight the success of some recent graduates to show our older alumni that we are still turning out successful graduates; but also, to reveal to our current students what is possible with a degree in Political Science from NIU. The three individuals listed below were proactive in creating opportunities for themselves during and immediately after receiving their bachelor’s degree. Each of the individuals graduated in the past six years and is making us very proud.

Lauren Stott (Class of 2011)
Ms. Stott enrolled in Masters of Public Administration program at NIU immediately following graduation. She is a former editor and storyteller for Shaw Media, the Chicago Tribune, and the Northern Star. Today, Lauren is a management analyst for the City of DeKalb. As a part of the city’s executive team she is instrumental in the development of the city’s annual budget and leads initiatives that involve every department within the city’s organizational structure.

Gary Timmons Jr. (Class of 2012)
Mr. Timmons earned an internship in Representative Bill Foster’s (IL-11) office while still enrolled at NIU. Since that time he has progressed from deputy canvas director, to a legislative aide and staff assistant, to become a fulltime legislative aide. Recently, Gary was promoted to the position of legislative assistant and handles Congressman Foster’s national security, transportation and labor portfolios.

Tyler Carolan (Class of 2013)
Mr. Carolan has been working at Charles Koch Institute since beginning as an intern in their Washington DC offices in September of 2013. After the internship, Tyler was employed by the Institute fulltime and given additional responsibilities for improving the professional talent development capabilities of the organization. Today, Tyler performs program evaluation and works to identify new opportunities for the Institute, to make an impact on the issues they are most passionate about. He has held the title of program coordinator since October of 2015.

Political Science Advisory Council News:

The Department’s Advisory Council met twice in the past year to strategize and council the chair and other Department leaders on how to best handle the volatile state budget climate and how to create additional opportunities for our students given limited resources. Members of the Political Science Advisory Council are Gregory Brady, John Brandon, Krista Edwards, Dr. Jason Joseph, Hon. Robin Kelly, Dr. Clark Neher, Christopher Nelson, Carlos Ortiz, David Rasmussen, Dr. Jim Scott and Jeffrey Yordon.

Among the developments approved by the Council was a reorientation of the Department’s student recruitment and retention efforts toward support for student clubs, which are closely affiliated with the Department of Political Science. For instance, we now have full-time tenure-track faculty assigned as advisors to all of the affiliated clubs and faculty are working more closely with student club leaders on their own recruitment efforts. Because club membership is open to all students, in good academic standing, it is seen as an opportunity to create professional development opportunities for a larger number of students. In this past year each of the affiliated club members attended events where our students gained considerable external validation and recognition (see the section in the newsletter on Club News).

The Advisory Council has continued to support other professional development opportunities for Political Science students. Our mentorship program will run for the third consecutive year with support from Council members and the 1-credit Professional Development Seminar will again be offered this fall. Both the mentorship program and the seminar were adopted as the result of Council member suggestions. The Council has pledged support for the recruitment of lawyers to serve as judges at the inaugural Huskie Cup, a Mock Trial invitational, which the Department is co-hosting on the DeKalb campus at the end of October.

Rasmussen Receives the Daniel Wit Service Award

David Rasmussen was this year’s recipient of the Daniel Wit Service Award. The award, named after the Department’s founder and first chair, recognizes an individual who has made an extraordinary contribution to the success of the Department of Political Science, the advancement of its educational mission, and the development of its programs. Dave retired in 2008 after a 48 year career in business. He completed his undergraduate work at Saint Ambrose University and his graduate work at Northern Illinois University. He enjoys giving back to the community and the University.

Mr. Rasmussen was an inaugural member of the Department’s Advisory Council and continues to serve in this capacity. His
commitment to the Department of Political Science and our students has been unwavering. Dave was instrumental in the inauguration of several professional development initiatives currently sponsored by the Department. Importantly, he plays a leading role in promoting our successful undergraduate student mentorship program. The Department is grateful for his support and applauds this well-deserved recognition.

A Big Thank You to Our Alumni and Friends!

The faculty, staff, and students of the Department of Political Science wish to thank alumni and friends for their generous support of our programs. Please know that many of our awards, engaged learning opportunities, and student-centered activities, which bring real life and value to the Department, simply would not be possible without the financial assistance of contributors like you. We are not a resource-rich department or university. Thus, words cannot adequately express how much we appreciate your kind contribution.

We ask you to please continue to remember us in the future. If you would like to make a difference in the lives of students in the Department of Political Science today you may give online or by phone at 1-877-GIV-2-NIU (1-877-448-2648). Thank you again.

If you are not a member of the NIU Alumni Association, please consider joining. Further details can be found at http://myniu.com/membership/.

Foundation Contributors June 2016 — June 2017:

We are proud to list the alumni and friends who made gifts to the department during the specified period. These donors are an important part of our continued success.

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