Notes from the Chair

It would be an understatement to declare that 2020 has been an unusual year; nonetheless, as I write this note for our department newsletter, that is the thought that remains at the forefront of my mind.

We, of course, were not prepared to shift suddenly to online teaching last spring as a pandemic loomed and the campus closed, yet mutual demonstrations and expressions of grace abounded, as we and our students continued together in our vocations of teaching and learning. Several of my students chose to write papers on pandemics as nontraditional security threats and on economic policy responses to the pandemic, seeing the contemporary relevance of their studies with unusual clarity.

After a summer of preparation, we returned to a campus that looked and felt different. Traditional classrooms were rearranged and other, large spaces were used as classrooms. Fewer people than usual were on campus at any given hours; meetings and office hour conversations were almost always virtual. We welcomed an incoming class of students hidden by masks (except when online) and hindered by consular offices that were not open to issue student visas.

We also found that the study of politics remains incredibly interesting. With our students, we thought deeply about issues such as racial inequality, political mobilization, federalism, populism, executive authority, economic stimulus, nuclear nonproliferation, and great power politics.

As we look forward to the new year, we eagerly await a return to a more normal campus and a more normal sort of student interaction. We also anticipate significant changes, not only as a consequence of the pandemic, but also resulting from Calvin's ongoing transition to a university. The latter changes include the introduction of a new core curriculum, revised departmental curricula and programs, and a departmental relocation to Hiemenga Hall (adjacent to faculty colleagues in economics, sociology, philosophy, history, and world languages).

Pondering such things befits this season of Advent, a time of longing and hope, of uncertainty and expectation. It is not surprising, amidst such present uncertainty, that the university community seemed especially moved by this year's (remote and socially distanced) performance of Handel's Messiah. The opening words of the tenor (from Isaiah 40), “Comfort, comfort ye my people …” have resonated with me as I grade papers, prepare exams, and plan for next semester – at the close of a most unusual year.

- Joel Westra
The Henry Institute Semester in Washington D.C. program marked its 20th year this spring with an extremely unusual student experience, as COVID-19 settled in around the U.S. With 17 participants living and interning in Washington, the University was forced to make a decision about the off-campus program and determined the most prudent course to be ending Calvin’s formal sponsorship off-site, while encouraging students to complete their internships and the two classes taken during the semester remotely.

All the participants were able to pivot to remote internship work, with three moving from their original employer to instead conduct research online for the Congressional Management Foundation, exploring Congressional and state policies and decisions regarding the pandemic to form the basis of “best practices” for dealing with COVID-19.

In mid-March, eight students returned to their homes and nine remained living at Greystone House in D.C., sheltering in place for the final six weeks of the semester. The lowered number of students in the house made physical distancing easier, and those who stayed in the city felt that they were able to form a strong community atmosphere that was a positive part of the semester, with their interactions and support for each other enhancing their learning and life experience.

Professor Doug Koopman, who directed the Semester program, taught the two remaining classes online after mid-March. The Faith and Public Life course focused on applying early semester on-site experiences to concepts of pluralism and civic responsibility and also considered lessons learned as they lived together in Washington D.C. The second course, The President and Congress, continued remotely with few changes to the design or content of the class.

“Calvin’s D.C. semester offers an exceptional introduction to the daily life of a working professional in the nation’s capital,” said Carson Ellis. “While in D.C. I was introduced to Calvin’s strong alumni network along with the chance to meet experts in my field of interest. The positive experience with Calvin’s Program kept me from wanting to leave, and making the decision to finish the semester out on-site, rather than returning home. It also fueled my hope to one day work in Washington.”

“While I’m sorry the students weren’t able to experience an entire typical semester in D.C., they adjusted very well to uncertainty and change,” noted Ellen Hekman, the Program Coordinator. “I’m very proud of the resilience and flexibility they showed in the face of difficult issues.”

Claire Murashima reported that “Even though the semester did not go as planned, I still had a great experience. Professor Koopman was able to help several of us find another internship to complete our hours. Quarantine with our group was actually one of the highlights of my time in D.C. We started playing board games, doing watercolors, and baking together as a house. Even though we were unable to leave our house for the most part, I consider myself lucky to be able to spend the first part of quarantine with some of my best friends, who I had only met a few months before.”

In REFLECTIONS FROM THE 2020 SEMESTER IN WASHINGTON D.C.

Transitioning Online

The transition to online learning has posed many questions for universities, students, and teachers; it has also stretched our professors in ways they did not know were possible.

Professor Doug Koopman likens the change to learning how to water ski for the first time. He says, “I have to concentrate all the time on every little thing, because nothing is natural or a habit of mind or body. I can do it, and externally it looks adequate but probably moderately awkward. I did eventually get to be a pretty good water skier after many falls, embarrassments, and passage of time.” Professor Koopman noted that he is more open with students about his shortcomings in the area of technology, and he is more willing to ask for student advice.

Professor Tracy Kuperus said, “I feel spoiled in that I’m teaching two upper level courses this FALL. In both classes, I’ve encountered eager students who have communicated and participated well, with the students’ engagement helping to minimize the challenges.”

She noted that the technological learning curve was imposing, but once she got used to the changes, it has become easier.

Professor Kuperus, along with the rest of the Political Science Department faculty, has been holding remote office hours. She takes it a step further by “incorporating remote asynchronous learnings and holding remote office hours specifically with [the online learners] every two weeks. I ask them to participate during the scheduled class time by sending responses to posed questions ahead of time.”

Still, it is safe to say that all our professors miss being in the classroom. “I’m looking forward to regular in-person learning – nothing beats it,” said Professor Kuperus. “I’ve really missed not being able to move around the classroom and seeing the creative group learning that can happen in the live setting.” She also mentioned that she cannot wait to get rid of the masks as well!

SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS 2020-2021

We would like to congratulate the following students who received Department of Political Science scholarships for this academic year:

**Peace and Justice Scholarship**
Hadassa A. Ribeiro Da Costa

**Johan & Wilma Westra Scholarship**
Alaina Kwiatkowski

**The Charles Strikwerda Scholarship**
Elizabeth Kang

**Dr. Bernard Zylstra, S.J.D, Memorial Scholarship**
Jihoon Hong & Lauren Baas

**Dr. James Penning Scholarship**
Ester Lagerwey

**Honororable John Feikens Memorial Pre-Law Scholarship**
Adelaide Nyando

**Jacob & Rena Van Dellen Scholarship**
Jeff VanderPloeg

**Paul Henry Semester in Washington D.C. Scholarship**
Juan Hernandez Arias

**Ronald Buikema Memorial Scholarship**
N. Henry Terpstra
Anu Teodorescu interned in John Lewis’s Washington D.C. office during this spring’s 2020 Semester in Washington D.C. Program and offers these thoughts on her time working for the Congressman:

"Just inside the door of the late Congressman John Lewis' personal office hung a painting. Unlike the black and white photographs it was displayed beside, this picture was a simple one, though it captured a sentiment no less important than the snapshots of historic figures and nameless individuals frozen in their fight for freedom. Painted in primary colors, the picture showed a young black boy reading aloud from a book that he held in his hands. At his feet stood a row of chickens, looking up at him in earnest, mesmerized.

I spent much of my time interning in Congressman Lewis' office looking at this picture; I spent more time feeling like one of those chickens. Not because I felt helpless or afraid or wildly out of my league as one might imagine a Calvin student interning for such a man would feel, but rather because each time he came into the office—which was not often after his December 29 cancer diagnosis—I was mesmerized by his presence, his energy, his voice. I found myself soaking up every word and idea, internalizing as much as I possibly could in the brief moments I got to spend with him.

The conviction with which he spoke on issues of inequality, the humility he emanated even as a 17-term congressman, the history he helped shape—all of it was indicative of his inherent eloquence, sincerity, and resolve. One of my first internship projects involved sifting through and organizing short video clips of his time on the Ways & Means Committee. Likely a project too tedious and time-consuming for his staffers, I considered the task both fascinating and informative; listening to him deliver speeches, question witnesses, and voice his beliefs on everything from maternal mortality to IRS tax code was a task I thoroughly enjoyed.

I spent a large portion of my time speaking with constituents from Georgia’s Fifth Congressional District. I worked on various projects for staffers, researching everything from parking reform to issues affecting women in poverty. I opened thousands of letters from people all over the country and the world, each one expressing their love and admiration for the Congressman. I prepared his binders for Ways & Means hearings and laid out his newspapers. I attended briefings, and I wrote memos for staffers and letters to constituents. I helped draft their love and admiration for the Congressman. I prepared his binders for Ways & Means hearings and laid out his newspapers. I attended briefings, and I wrote memos for staffers and letters to constituents. I helped draft their love and admiration for the Congressman. I prepared his binders for Ways & Means hearings and laid out his newspapers. I attended briefings, and I wrote memos for staffers and letters to constituents. I helped draft their love and admiration for the Congressman. I prepared his binders for Ways & Means hearings and laid out his newspapers. I attended briefings, and I wrote memos for staffers and letters to constituents. I helped draft their love and admiration for the Congressman. I prepared his binders for Ways & Means hearings and laid out his newspapers. I attended briefings, and I wrote memos for staffers and letters to constituents. I helped draft their love and admiration for the Congressman. I prepared his binders for Ways & Means hearings and laid out his newspapers. I attended briefings, and I wrote memos for staffer

In honor of his 80th birthday, our office threw a surprise party. I was one of the many who wished him happiness and health that day, but even so, I felt a deep and genuine connection with a man who spent every day of his life preaching love and working to see it reflected in the laws of our country. While it was surreal to be surrounded by so many influential members of Congress, it was also bittersweet, as it turned out to be the last chance I’d ever have to speak with Congressman Lewis.

The awe never went away, and even now, months after the end of my internship and just a few weeks after his

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As our Calvin Political Science majors know, there are many career fields open to Political Science majors as they demonstrate their dedication to a smoothly functioning public sector.

**Fields where Calvin Political Science and International Relations graduates are employed:**

Not all Political Science graduates find themselves in Washington D.C. In the past several years, only about 9% of our political science majors have gone on to work in governmental public and international affairs. Jobs in this area may include federal government jobs, both in Washington D.C. and remote, in the U.S. army, with a U.S. embassy, in the FBI, within U.S. trade, and at state and local governments.

In previous years, we have seen 30% of political science graduates go into the business side of the discipline. Jobs in the business sector include administration, planning, policy development, and even being part of a corporate business executive team.

Fifteen percent of Calvin graduates with a political science degree find careers in academic research and teaching, including alumni who are government and politics teachers for high schoolers, writing or editing textbooks, developing curriculum, and teaching at a college level.

A combined total of 28% of political science graduates have their first jobs in nonprofit organizations, Christian ministries, journalism, or other related fields. They work as representatives, producers, publishers, journalists, directors, and even policy makers.

While a significant number of graduates move to a job right out of college, about 18% of political science graduates go on to law school or graduate school. With a law degree, graduates become judge advocates, lawyers, attorneys, or judicial clerks.

Remembering John Lewis continued from page 4

passing, I reread the words he wrote in *Walking With the Wind: A Memoir of the Movement* and feel like a chicken all over again.

“I preached to my birds just about every night. I would get them all into the henhouse, settle them onto their roosts, and then stand in the doorway and speak to them, reciting pieces of the Bible, the same verses I memorized for Sunday school. They would sit very quietly, some slightly moving their heads back and forth, mesmerized, I guess, by the sound of my voice. I could imagine that they were my congregation. And me, I was a preacher.”