Penning Appointed Director of CSR

The current political science department Chair, Professor James Penning, has been appointed to be Director of the Calvin Center for Social Research.

The Center for Social Research (CSR) is one of the oldest of several institutes and centers at Calvin. The CSR has three purposes: To promote social science at Calvin, to assist the broader community, and to serve the CRC and Calvin College. These goals are accomplished in a number of ways, including funding faculty research, conducting studies for the church and community, and teaching Calvin students social research methods.

Professor Penning will be starting a part time seven-sevenths position in June, so he will still be teaching for the department. His daily tasks will consist of promoting the CSR and its services, setting priorities, building community contacts and finding speakers, along with other administrative work. He will be working with one Assistant Director, one student supervisor, and approximately twenty student employees.

“He’s got a good background,” says Professor Corwin Smidt, “He’ll do a fine job as director.”

Along with a new director, the Center has a new space across Burton Street in the recently renovated Raybrook Building, also known as the ‘institute building’, suite 103B. Professor Penning is looking forward to Political Science Department visitors in his new office, so stop by and say hello. For more information about the Center for Social Research visit http://www.calvin.edu/admin/csr/.

Department Hosts Career Day

Wednesday, April 23rd, was career day for the Political Science department. It was a day where alumni and students could come together to share experiences, contacts, and God’s work in their lives.

Six Calvin alumni, who have a degree in political science in common and careers across the spectrum, were the heart of the event.

- Virginia Parish Beard, Ph. D., Assistant Professor of political science at Hope College.
- Matt VandeBunte, news reporter for the Grand Rapids Press.
- Pam Hoekwater, Attorney with Legal Aid of West Michigan.
- Mark Lemoine, System Director of Government Affairs at Spectrum Health.
- Chad Goote, Associate Political Director at All Children Matter.
- Keith Van Beek, Deputy Administrator for the City of Kentwood.

Phase one of Career day was recorded on camera interview between an alum and a student volunteer from Pi Sigma Alpha. These videos will be available in the department library for future students curious about career paths in political science.

Phase two was an opportunity for interested students to ask questions about their findings, careers, and thoughts about what they did.

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Smidt and a group of students from a variety of academic disciplines will be living and studying in Budapest. With training in comparative politics and fascinated by Hungary and the Reformed influences there, Smidt will be teaching a course on Hungary's politics and its neighbors, focusing on the transition from communist bloc to the European Union. Students will spend their time studying Eastern European culture at a University in Budapest and traveling both in program excursions and on their own. Students will also be taking basic Hungarian language, which, according to Smidt, a non-speaker, is one of the hardest languages to learn due to its obscure origins.

Both Smidt and his wife will be taking the trip. Smidt is looking forward to experiencing international politics first hand and to the relationships he expects to build with his students. He will be sad to be so far away from all the action of the upcoming presidential election, but is also interested to see how a U.S. election looks and is viewed from abroad.

Patterson will be leading a group of students to Accra, Ghana, next fall. She is going with her husband and her two children, a second grader and a four year old. She applied for Ghana because she is interested in African politics, and she was a good match for the program due to her Peace Corps placement and dissertation research in Senegal, from which she has visited Accra, the Ghanaian capital.

The students, many of whom are international development majors, but who also include history, sociology, English, and others, will be studying at the university in Accra as well as taking group excursions that will cover a variety of experiences from slave castles on the coast to an ecological visit to the Volta region to the “Odwira” festival north of Accra.

Patterson is looking forward to seeing her children interact in a foreign culture with Ghanaians as well as the deeper relationships with students. And even though it might sound good compared to Grand Rapids winter, she is not looking forward to the constant ninety degree weather.

The political science professors have been at it again: Calvin political science professors Corwin Smidt, James Penning, Doug Koopman, along with Grand Valley Professor Kevin den Dulk, and Henry Institute’s Steve Monsma have authored *Pews, Prayers, and Participation: Religion and Civic Responsibility in America*.

Scheduled to be published later this year by Georgetown University Press, *Pews, Prayers, and Participation* explores the relationship between religious life and civic activity. Based on patterns of attendance at public worship services and frequency of private prayer, the book examines the way in which one is religious (i.e., whether one exhibits a diminished, a privatized, a public, or an integrated form of religious expression) and how it affects the likelihood of being active in voluntary associations, leading a meeting, being politically informed, volunteering, and making charitable contributions.

The book addresses whether those who exhibit a highly privatized religious life (high levels of private prayer coupled with low levels of public worship attendance) largely withdraw from public life more generally, and the answer is that they do. On the other hand, those who exhibit high levels of attendance at public worship as well as high levels of private prayer life (the integrated form of religious expression) are the most active in public life.

—Book continued on page 3
Although Sarah Berg graduated from Calvin with a political science and French degree just two years ago, she has had plenty of interesting and impressive experiences.

Sarah is currently working in Washington, D.C. for a management firm called Keel Point, where families can receive advice on investment, estate planning, mentoring, and Sarah’s favorite: philanthropy. In her spare time, Sarah has gotten together with some friends to start a foundation for disenfranchised youth in East Africa and D.C. The foundation will support projects that encourage relationships with youth for the future. “Having an intentional relationship is one of the most important catalysts for changing young lives,” Sarah says. More information about the project can be found at youthkeepitreal.org.

Sarah’s journey to her current position is full of experiences. She was born in Columbus, OH, but was raised in Naperville, IL. Because of her father’s work in nuclear energy, Sarah’s family moved to London for a year when Sarah was 10. At the American School there Sarah was influenced by the serious diversity of her classmates.

Sarah decided the foreign service was for her when she was 12 and living in Atlanta, GA. During high school Sarah found a deep interest in giving, and surprised many of her classmates by choosing Calvin College.

A political science and French double major made perfect sense for a future ambassador, and Sarah optimized her education with both. She spent a semester in France, and a summer and a semester in Washington, D.C., and still found a little time to take a few history classes just for fun.

In D.C. Sarah worked for a student leadership organization where she was eager to put her education and faith into action.

Just before graduation, Sarah realized that the foreign service wasn’t what she was looking for. So jobless and missing the direction she had always had, Sarah returned home to Atlanta. But before long Sarah began working for the Governor of Georgia doing statistical analysis, a skill she strongly recommends. She was able to travel across the state to meet people and to plan technical conferences.

Although Sarah enjoyed the work in Georgia, she wanted to work in D.C., so she left Atlanta and began working where she is today.

Sarah loves her work, and even though she’s done so much already, she recognizes that it is not simply what you do that’s important, but, in her words, “It’s your relationships in life that are most important.”

While each of the authors’ analysis of 15 surveys taken over the past 20 years, they found that the way in which one is religious serves as an strong contributing factor to civic life, frequently being the most important factor, but generally ranking within the top three factors (once one takes into account other factors such as one’s level of education, one’s level of family income, gender, race, marital status, age, as well as one’s religious tradition).

While each of the authors drafted different chapters of the volume that focused on civic behavior, civic skills, and civic virtue, Professor Smidt served as the primary author in order to give the volume a “single voice.”

This project was funded by a grant from the Bradley Foundation to the Paul Henry Institute to explore the issue of how religion fosters civic responsibility. While this book is not due to be printed until early this fall, the Henry Institute has received another grant to conduct a national survey this spring that will expand their analysis of this topic.
Although both the international relations major and Professor Joel Westra are relatively new at Calvin College, they have both been making changes, namely, the introduction of a new course to be taught in the fall, Pols 304, International Peace and Security. 304 will be required for international relations majors and will take the place of one of the elective requirements.

“It was a needed addition,” said department chair Professor Penning. It is a standard course in most political science departments.

Professor Westra was mainly responsible for implementing the course, although the entire department had a part to play. Already last fall the course was brought up in department meetings. Westra submitted a proposal first to the department and then to the educational policy committee. There the course was refined and added to by both Professor Westra and Professor Patterson, and now Westra will be teaching it in the fall.

“I’m excited about this,” said Westra. This course will allow further courses to be taught on peace and security, an area which is currently only covered by a terrorism class. 304 will be a much more general, non-policy class. Westra is interested to see what kinds of new thesis papers and ideas students will present. He believes the course will be useful to students in general, but also will give specific context for economics and development studies. He says, “Students have been asking about it.”

The Calvin College Paul Henry semester in D.C. students have once again been busy working at their internships and studying.

Sixteen political science students and two social work students are learning real work skills all over D.C. They have their plates full also taking a class in which they visit all kinds of Christian political organizations and another class titled, “Politics as if reality matters.” Things are going well for the interns. Lerae Kroon, interning at the International Justice Mission, says everybody likes their internship. She was also impressed by the culture of the city, with its free museums, concerts, intelligent and passionate people, blueberry buckwheat pancakes at Eastern Market, and easy public transportation. “There’s never an excuse to sit around,” Kroon says.

Professor Doug Koopman, the faculty leader for this year, has a sort of internship of his own. He has been working for the faith based office of the White House researching and planning for an academic faith based conference scheduled to take place in June. “I’m really an intern just like the students,” Koopman said.

There is another element of this year’s D.C. program that has never been a part of it before: a blog. Students have been encouraged to write about any of their experiences on line. Blogging on internships, cultural events, the city in general, living quarters, or restaurants is encouraged. Koopman’s idea is that students will have a place to reflect and write, family and friends will be able to get a more complete picture of their experiences, and students potentially interested in taking the semester could see what it’s really like. Visit the blog at http://knightvision.calvin.edu/webapps/lobj-journal-bb_bb60/blog/08SP_STDC-A.

The D.C. interns are putting their substantive knowledge to work, and gaining career and life experience to see just how far a degree in political science can take them.

**Scholarships and Awards for 2008-2009**

- **Dekryger-Monsman Memorial Prize** Sarah Vester
- **Charles Strikwerda Scholarship** Paul Gehm
- **Peace and Justice Scholarship** Erica Boonstra and Amos Garcia
- **Johan and Wilma Westra Scholarship** Austin Hakes and Sarah Vester
- **Dr. Bernard Zylstra, S.J.D., Memorial Scholarship** Joey Breems, Tommy Heyboer, David Jasperse, and Josh Ryden
- **Lyle and Barbara (Duimstra) Voskuil Family Scholarship** Lerae Kroon
- **Pi Sigma Alpha Award** Joshua Herr, Kari Holmgren, Lerae Kroon, Caitlin McGill, and Paul Schrampfer

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In the Name of Honor

These are exciting times for Calvin’s Chapter of Pi Sigma Alpha, the nation wide political science honor society. More than one PSA assisted event has come up this semester, including the April 23 career day.

Pi Sigma Alpha is a great opportunity for students with above average achievements in political science to get together and provide service to the college and the community. Students accepted into PSA are recognized for their academic achievements even after graduation with a federal pay step increase for any PSA member.

There are over 650 chapters across the country. Pi Sigma Alpha is a member of the Association of College Honor Societies, along with honor societies for business (Sigma Beta Delta), metallurgy (Alpha Sigma Mu), and pretty much anything you could think of.

PSA is a student organization led by students, this semester, Jonathan Hirte as president, and Austin Knuppe as vice president.

There are many reasons to join PSA. Students spend time with other driven and motivated students, they have opportunities to volunteer in a wide variety of leadership and communication positions, and simply for the honor.

A typical meeting will bring up ideas for events and service, go over old business, provide cookies and soda, and usually include a funny but relevant u-tube video.

Professor Rogers Helps Out

With all the professors that are leaving for off campus semesters or new director appointments, the political science department is grateful to have Professor Rogers help out. “She is doing a fine job and is a great help to the department,” said Department Chair Professor Penning.

Professor Rogers was an adjunct faculty last year and is now teaching full time at Calvin. Next year she will do the same. She works by term appointment, and so is helping out while she is needed. Normally she teaches at Grand Rapids Community College, and she will teach there again after next year.

A Grandville native and alumnus of Calvin, Rogers got her masters in comparative politics with a special interest in immigration issues.

Rogers enjoys the part time nature of her work. She is busy with her 20 month old daughter, Kylea, and with a planned adoption in the near future; she appreciates the flexibility. Rogers enjoys the variety of classes she teaches at Calvin and is glad to help out where she can.

—Career continued from page 1

Professor’s Picks

Sea of Glory: America’s Voyage of Discovery
Nathaniel Philbrick

Despite its discovery of Antarctica, charting of the Washington and Oregon coasts, and founding of the Smithsonian Institution, the US Exploring Expedition of 1838-42 has largely vanished from our collective memory. Philbrick’s book provides an exciting and detailed account of the expedition and its aftermath - a tale of geopolitics, political intrigue, and human nature, centered around the expedition’s flawed leader, Lieutenant Charles Wilkes. —Professor Westra

Team of Rivals
The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln
Doris Kearns Goodwin

This book is a masterful, compelling analysis of the Lincoln Presidency from the unique perspective of his Cabinet which included his four chief rivals for the Republican nomination. These ambitious, able rivals could only effectively work for a common cause if Lincoln were their superior in wisdom, inner strength, and magnanimity, which most of these eventually saw. Goodwin makes a fresh and significant contribution to our understanding of Lincoln and the Civil War. —Professor DeVries