The challenging year of the coronavirus pandemic taught us new ways to learn, teach, work, and connect.

Our department converted 40 classes to an online format in March in response to the pandemic. While we have some expertise in developing online classes, making the change in two weeks was a bit of a challenge. Faculty worked hard to provide high-quality class experiences. Ambassador in Residence, Ron McMullen, provided students with digital versions of what he would normally go over in class, such as maps, graphs, photos, and video clips to augment his recorded lectures. Professor Elise Pizzi had students post a video for their regularly-scheduled presentation and students worked collaboratively on Zoom and shared documents. Our fall semester included a mix of online, in-person, and hybrid classes, providing students the ability to choose their mode of learning.

Though working remotely, our office maintained a sense of community using Microsoft Teams, virtual meetings, Yo!Tribe gatherings, and online group crossword puzzles. Instead of our annual awards ceremony and graduation receptions, we created video tributes for our scholars and 2020 graduates. Our speed networking event was held on Zoom for the first time and the use of webinars gave us the opportunity to present informative workshops and a multi-college election forum.

As the university shut down and students went home to communities across the country, Mara Smith and I had a job to do – engage the student body and make our case for student body president and vice president. Since the summer, we had been planning for in-person public events at downtown businesses and the T. Anne Cleary Walkway, but sitting at home with piles of campaign buttons and Tiger King on repeat we were forced to shift our efforts to solely social media. With the help of fellow students, we were able to build a strong online presence through graphics and Instagram “live” conversations. It was not the campaign experience we had hoped for, but it was a challenging opportunity that prepared us for serving students during this unprecedented online year.
As a Linn County Supervisor, I’ve been involved with COVID-19 mitigation and public health planning since the beginning of the pandemic. I worked with my fellow supervisors and community leaders early on to activate an incident command structure to coordinate information sharing among various entities of government. I was the designated spokesperson for the board of supervisors and our emergency operations team, holding press conferences when they were needed. In the beginning, it was a challenge to push out important information because the public was often confused or misled by inaccurate media coverage. After the first few months, our response team had to switch course to fit the long-term reality of the pandemic. Sadly, many of the actions we wanted to take, such as a temporary shelter-in-place, were in direct opposition to that of the state government, which made it difficult to take meaningful action. Despite this resistance, our team continued to express our concerns with the Governor and issue proclamations in favor of stronger mitigation efforts.

Taking bold actions on the front end could have saved many lives, salvaged the economy, and prevented us from being in the bleak state we are currently in. As we have learned throughout the pandemic, underreacting has had grave consequences with more possible on the horizon. Our institutions must also do a better job of protecting all members of society. Addressing crises certainly requires elected leaders to consider the economic consequences of the initial event and any decisions they make afterward, but the chief priority of any leader is the safety of their people.
Like a virus, state responses to COVID-19 also diffuse

Frederick Boehmke

Back in March, MSNBC journalist, Chuck Todd interviewed Anthony Fauci, Director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, about the response to the novel coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19). He noted that “every state that touches Indiana has closed schools, but Indiana hasn’t, for instance. So is – are you risking something if not everybody is following the same guidelines?” This question acknowledges that viruses move easily across state lines, but it also underscores how success in combating the virus in one state depends on the choices made by other states. The study of policy diffusion goes back over half a century in political science and seeks to understand how policies adopted in one location affect the policy choices made in other places. The spread of state responses to COVID-19 provides an important instance of diffusion since policies that succeed in one state may save lives when they are adopted in other states. Fred Boehmke, in partnership with colleagues at Penn State and Notre Dame, received funding from the National Science Foundation to collect and publish a comprehensive database of state policy responses to COVID-19. The team includes a half dozen graduate and undergraduate research assistants at Iowa and has been collecting and coding these policy choices since March. They currently have downloaded over 1,250 laws and executive orders and identified nearly 200 different categories of policies, including regulations related to beaches, daycare centers, driving exams, funerals, notaries, and state parks.

Publications


Cary Covington Retires

Cary Covington began his career at the University of Iowa in the fall of 1982. Since that time, he has taught thousands of students, advised and mentored undergraduate and graduate students, helped to build and maintain the research reputation of the department, and provided an expert voice on the U.S. presidency and elections. Cary’s signature class, The Presidency, has been a fixture in our annual course offerings and the most popular class over the last decade. Cary’s expert knowledge of the subject and his dedication to teaching have enriched the university experience for countless students.

As part of his efforts to provide unique and high-quality educational experiences, Cary led a class of students to the 2000 Republican National Convention and 2008 Democratic National Convention. This opportunity allowed students to see and experience a major political event with the guidance of Cary’s in-depth knowledge of the political process. Cary has also been a publicly engaged scholar. He has spoken to domestic and international audiences about a host of topics including the Iowa caucuses, U.S. elections, and the presidency. Finally, Cary is an incredible colleague. He has always been willing to help the department in any capacity. He has provided leadership and important insight into numerous decisions during his time at Iowa. We wish Cary all the best as he retires after the fall 2020 semester.

Creating the Institute for Civic Engagement

In 2013, Cary worked with the provost’s office, College of Education, and the Hoover Presidential Foundation to set up the Institute for Civic Engagement. This program brought high school educators to the University of Iowa and Hoover Presidential Library and Museum to help generate ideas and plans for how to teach and promote civic engagement in their classrooms. Interest in the program grew each year and, in the seven years since its beginning, many Iowa educators have taken what they have learned back to their schools. Cary has been deeply committed to this endeavor and his passion for promoting civic engagement was clear to all the participants and is one of the primary reasons for its success. The Institute for Civic Engagement is one example of the many contributions that Cary has made to the university, our communities, and the state of Iowa.

Department News

Lindsey Allemang, Cody Schmidt, and Rachel Torres received 2020 Outstanding TA awards from the University of Iowa Council of Teaching.

Fred Boehmke was selected as a 2020 co-recipient of the prestigious Excellence in Mentoring Award by the Society of Political Methodology and received an NSF RAPID Collaborative Research Grant ($37,528) for “The Diffusion of State Policy Responses to the 2019 Novel Coronavirus.”

Joseph Coll received a Graduate College Post-Comprehensive Research Fellowship for spring 2021.

Kelly Kadera and Sara Mitchell received a Special Projects Grant from the American Political Science Association ($20,000) for “Journeys in World Politics.”

Sara Mitchell received an ICRU Research Fellowship ($2500) from the University of Iowa and was awarded as the 2019-2020 Best Reviewer by Political Science Research and Methods. She also received the 2020 Frank J. Klingberg Award for Best Paper Presented by a Faculty Member (along with Bomi Lee and Cody Schmidt) from International Studies Association and was named as Member of the Month (December 2019) by the American Political Science Association.

Martha Kirby was named president of the Midwest Association of Pre-law for a two-year term.

Elizabeth Menninga and Alyssa Prorok have received a grant from Army Research Office and the Folke Bernadotte Academy to fund their exploration of how cooperation during conflict shapes battlefield dynamics and opportunities for resolution.

Solomon Fenton-Miller left his position as graduate coordinator in the fall to pursue a PhD in Higher Education at Iowa.

The Palace of Westminster undergoing renovation. Photo taken by Prof. Osborn.

Tracy Osborn served as a Visiting Senior Research Fellow at the Global Institute for Women’s Leadership, King’s College, London, UK, in spring 2020.

Julie Pacheco was selected as associate editor for Public Opinion Quarterly.

Caroline Tolbert was awarded a Distinguished Professorship from the University of Iowa Office of the Provost.

Tracee Saunders received a NSF Graduate Research Fellowship to fund three years of research on state variation in Medicaid accessibility.

Lindsey Allemang, Cody Schmidt, and Rachel Torres received 2020 Outstanding TA awards from the University of Iowa Council of Teaching.

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Gerhard (Jerry) Loewenberg 1928 - 2019

Jerry Loewenberg joined the Department of Political Science in 1970, served as department chair from 1982 to 1984, and then Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences from 1984 to 1992. He mentored dozens of graduate students until his retirement in 2003. Jerry was known for his personal integrity, kindness, and optimism that inspired many colleagues and students.

PhD Placements

- Jielu Yao, PhD 2020
  Placement: Wesleyan University

- Aubree Herrin, PhD 2020
  Placement: Thiel College

- Courtney Juelich, PhD 2020
  Placement: University of Wisconsin-Stout

- Scott LaCombe, PhD 2020
  Placement: Smith College

- Ki Eun Ryu, PhD 2020
  Placement: Jeju Peace Institute

- Josh Tschantret, PhD 2020
  Placement: Emory University
Christopher Clark ('10 PhD)

Christopher is an associate professor of political science at UNC-Chapel Hill and teaches courses on state politics, minority representation, and conducts research in those areas. He is the author of *Gaining Voice: The Causes and Consequences of Black Representation in the American States*, published in March 2019.

Mackenzie Borders ('16)

Mackenzie is a staffing specialist at Google in Austin, TX. Mackenzie supports strategic recruiting initiatives, leads Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion efforts across her organization, and investigates hiring innovations through partnerships with Google engineers. Prior to Google, Mackenzie was an intelligence analyst at Principal Financial Group in Des Moines.

Jennifer B. Chavez-Rivera ('17)

Jennifer B. Chavez-Rivera has joined Whitfield & Eddy, P.L.C. in Des Moines. As an associate attorney in the firm’s business and banking group, Ms. Chavez-Rivera works with financial institutions and lenders on commercial lending transactions and is involved with real estate, wills, trusts, and estate matters.

Matthew Lathrop ('94)

Matthew Lathrop has worked in government and government relations for the last 25 years and is currently director of federal government relations at Yum Brands, Inc. in Washington, D.C. He resides in northern Virginia with his family and two wonderful dogs.

2020-21 Alumni Advisory Board

The Alumni Advisory Board met virtually for the 2020 spring annual meeting and elected three new officers. The board thanks outgoing president, Joe Gaylord, for his years of dedicated leadership. Current projects include proposals to attract new students to the major, increase fundraising, and boost the department’s social media presence. We look forward to planning the next alumni event once it is safe to host in-person gatherings.

New Officers

Joe Rubenstein
President

Tom Ewing
Vice President

Tim Ryan
Vice President

New Members

Andrea Woodard
Board Member

Seung-Min Kim
Board Member

For more information about the Political Science Alumni Advisory Board visit: www.clas.uiowa.edu/polisci/alumni/advisory-board

Have an update to share? Connect with us on LinkedIn or email polisci@uiowa.edu.
Give a gift…

Join the ongoing effort to support our program. Your generosity helps fund student opportunities, research, and our continued growth in educational excellence.

Make your gift online: www.givetoiowa.org/polisci

For more information about giving options please contact Adam Blind, Associate Director of Development, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at adam.blind@foriowa.org.