AQ’s Model United Nations Performs Diplomatically!

For over a decade and a half—in fact, 17 years—Aquinas College students have traveled to the annual American Model United Nations (AMUN) Conference held in Chicago. The AMUN Conference hosts the debate, negotiation, and mock diplomacy of over 110 different colleges and universities as they role-play the actual United Nations’ constituents.

The weekend prior to Thanksgiving, Aquinas College students traveled to role-play the States of Botswana, Palestine, and Ukraine. By enhancing communication skills, teaching parliamentary procedure, and learning political positions, the Aquinas College team of nearly 50 bright, young minds had a phenomenal showing as usual.

Delegates Troy Dildine and Laine Tuitman won a conference award for their defense of Ukraine, preventing war in their emergency session. Randal Janisch and Joseph Wenderski were also awarded for their representation of the State of Palestine on the Sixth Legal Committee. The accolades did not stop there, however. At the Aquinas College awards ceremony, all students were recognized for their outstanding achievements.

In particular, Madeleine Burns (Botswana) and McKenzie Rumley (Palestine) were awarded the Roosevelt Award as most outstanding newcomers. Lainie Tuitman, Joseph Bootka (Palestine), and Chris Wilder (Palestine) won the Mandela Award for outstanding diplomacy under adversity. Head Delegates of Palestine Rachel Dykstra and Joseph Wenderski won the Bunche Award for outstanding leadership. Finally, Troy Dildine was this year’s recipient of the prestigious Dag Hammaskjöld Award for best overall delegate.

Yet, beyond the awards, students had a great time in Chicago modeling the United Nations. Congratulations to the award winners and, moreover, the entire Aquinas College team. Next year, Aquinas College will represent the countries of Spain and Afghanistan.
Congratulations to Our 2014-2015 Political Science and International Studies Scholarship Recipients:

**Erica Utter**, a senior pursuing her undergraduate degrees in International Studies, Political Science, Women’s Studies, and Spanish received the Ferughelhi Scholarship. Among her various activities, she was on staff this year at AMUN. Going forward, she says, “I hope to spend my life ending the various forms of violence against women, and I hope to start that journey by training to be a volunteer advocate for local victims at the Grand Rapids YWCA in the spring.”

**Amelia Kimbro** on the Palmatier Scholarship: “I am most grateful. Receiving this scholarship has meant not only that I will be able to continue my education here at Aquinas, but also that I can continue to grow and change within the beautifully unique environment that only AQ can provide. My next plan is to attend law school, focusing specifically on Environmental and Natural Resource law with hopes of practicing Environmental Law or doing some Environmental Consulting.”

By her tremendous work ethic, Junior **Ashley Trocinski** was awarded the Blake Scholarship. Hoping to conjoin her studies of political and economic systems, she says that Political Science “opened doors of awareness to what these people are facing that would impede these systems or why these systems may not be ideal for every region.” This realization has been key for her going forward as she intends to work for business development in lower economic regions.

**Thanks the Dag Hammarskjöld International Studies Scholarship, Zach Stepanovich finds himself able focus on a spring internship at the Department of Commerce’s International Trade Administration’s branch in Grand Rapids. Long-term, Zach hopes to take these experiences and evaluate further fields of study and graduate schools in International Relations. He has enjoyed researching human rights and hopes to tailor economics to better address and solve issues plaguing the human condition.**

**Student Research and Experiences**

Political Science and International Studies students at AQ are always engaged in significant research projects, and gaining excellent world experience. Recent examples of notable AQ Student Research and Internships are:

**Brandon Heritier**, a student hoping to go to law school, updated some former research and presented “Genocide and Responsibility to Protect: A Case Study of the 2014 Gaza Conflict” at the 2014 Michigan Political Science Association (MIPSA) Conference at Oakland University.

**Daniel Luckenbaugh**, a student of Political Science and History, also presented work at the 2014 MIPSA Conference. He presented a paper about Egypt’s Arab Spring written in his Middle East Politics course.

**Nathan Gimby**: “I was able to present my research on political narratives in graphic novels at the Northeastern Political Science Association conference in Boston. The project, titled ‘War and Terror Panel by Panel: Graphic Novels and the Construction of Post 9-11 Political Narratives’, focused on how political themes like counter-terrorism and authority were represented in comic books and the films they inspired since September 11, 2001.”

**Jacob Sabourin** participated in the “Poster Session” at the 2014 MIPSA Conference. Based on his experiences teaching social studies at an alternative high school, he presented his “Political Science, Civics, and Empowerment” poster.
Student Research and Experiences (continued):

Eva Borquez, a double major in International Studies and Spanish will be interning with the US State Department Spring 2015. She is working with the Virtual Student Foreign Service (VSFS) Campus USA program, one of only two interns from Michigan.

Faculty Notes

Dr. Durham has been busy with plenty of recent scholarship.

Presentations and Activities:

- Participant, Houston World Affairs Council Visit to Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, March 9-17, 2012.

Awards:

- Aquinas College Summer Scholars Grant, Human Rights and Responsibility to Protect: An Analysis of Israeli-Palestinian Relations, with student Brandon Heritier, 2013.
- Founders Award for Outstanding Contribution to the Michigan Political Science Association, October 5, 2012.

Alumnus Will Eberle Shares his Story

As a freshman at Aquinas in the fall of 2005, I never could have imagined myself going from Aquinas to the United States Senate to Harvard University’s John F. Kennedy School of Government to pursue a master’s degree. I know, however, that I wouldn’t have been able to do the things I have in my career without the solid liberal arts foundation and sense of service to the community that I built during my time at Aquinas.

I had always been interested in history and politics, but it wasn’t until I took World in Crisis with Dr. Durham that I was exposed to the formal discipline of political science. The class opened my eyes to new ways of looking at the world and motivated me to learn voraciously. I threw myself into political science and found that I wanted to pursue it as a career.

So, I triple-majoried in Political Science, English, and History, taking advantage of the incredible extracurricular activities offered at Aquinas. I played varsity baseball, participated in model United Nations, served in the Student Senate, was involved with the political studies club, and was a member of the Insignis Honors Program. I also took advantage of internship opportunities, spending time in U.S. Senator Carl Levin’s Washington, D.C. and Grand Rapids offices working on legislative issues. Upon graduation in 2010, I worked as Field Director on fellow AQ alumnus Pat Miles’ campaign for Congress. The campaign was a grueling, but ultimately rewarding experience that helped build networks and forge relationships which have helped me get where I am today.

After the campaign ended, I took a job as a staff assistant in the office of Michigan’s U.S. Senator Debbie Stabenow in Washington, D.C. I worked hard and took advantage of opportunities in the office, and in a little over a year I was promoted to Deputy Press Secretary. Because the communications team needed to have incredible breadth of knowledge about policy, I was involved in nearly every legislative effort the office undertook, from stopping Asian carp and other invasive species to issues of community mental health to the minutiae of tax reform. Most of my energy, however, was directed to implement and help design the office’s coordinated communications strategy around Sen. Stabenow’s bipartisan Farm Bill, the passage of which was a major legislative accomplishment for Sen. Stabenow and our team.

A few months after the Farm Bill was signed into law, I was promoted to full Press Secretary. I served as Press Secretary for a few months before leaving the office to pursue a Master in Public Policy from the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. Upon graduating from Harvard, I hope to return to Washington to continue my career in public service in foreign policy.

I can’t say enough about my experience at Aquinas. The professors have an incredible ability to stimulate discussion and learning inside and outside the classroom. My classmates challenged me to deepen my learning and be able to defend my ideals. Aquinas’s focus on service to others inspired me to pursue a career in public service and continues to play a significant part in my career goals. Aquinas is a truly special place that helps students cultivate diverse skills and achieve their potential. I know that I would not be where I am today without my Aquinas experience.

This story was also published on the Political Science Department’s Web page (www.aquinas.edu/polisci)
Dr. Patterson will be on sabbatical during spring semester 2015. Rather than doing something sensible like studying the politics of tropical islands, Dr. Patterson will be remaining in the Grand Rapids area in order to explore opportunities to better engage political science students in the community.

One goal is to learn more about the local political scene so that this background can be incorporated into classes about state and urban governments. Ideally, this work would also produce a roster of potential guest speakers. Additionally, Dr. Patterson intends to incorporate more community-based learning into her classes, as well as expand opportunities for internships, job shadowing, and community service.

In the best of all possible worlds, the research methods class will eventually be able to do substantive research about and of benefit to the community. If you are working in town, you may receive a call or email from Dr. Patterson asking for some of your time to share your insights. However, our records of alumni are incomplete and probably outdated; you need not wait to be contacted. Anyone who would like to help or has suggestions of organizations or individuals that Dr. Patterson should contact, please send Dr. Patterson an email (pattemol@aquinas.edu).

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Political Science Department Mission Statement

The mission of the Political Science Department is to foster critical, reflective, informed, and empowered participants and citizens. The Department introduces students to fundamental theoretic approaches, methods of study, and content about how people and governments behave in a political context.

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With all that the department is doing, we can always use your help!

Contact us anytime, especially to...

- Update your Contact Information
- Talk to Dr. Patterson about her sabbatical work
- Mentor a student
- Come speak to students
- Donate to Model United Nations or Model Arab League
- Endow a Political Science or International Studies Student

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Makes all the difference in the world.