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In a talk entitled “Costa Rica in Central America: A Historical Perspective,” President Solís provided a brief historical perspective on the evolution of Central America’s political, social, and economic development, with a focus on Costa Rica’s unique path of development and the role Costa Rica has played in Central America. President Solís also addressed the risks and opportunities posed by current internal and external forces. (Continued on pg 4)
The Schar School has had a very busy first quarter of 2017. We hosted well-known speakers including Francis Fukuyama from Stanford University, who began his academic career within the School, and Luis Guillermo Solís Rivera, the President of Costa Rica. The School has held numerous other events such as a forum on presidential transitions, a symposium on the roles and challenges of state and local government entities during transitions, the Symposium on 21st Century Threats and Integrated Emergency Operations, the DarkNet2, and many others.

Looking more broadly across this academic year, we have an agreement with the Washington Post for several Washington Post-Schar School polls. Two have been completed - the first just prior to the November election looking at our region of the country and the second just after the election looking at the national response to the results. These, and the national ABC-Washington Post polls, were the highest-rated polls in the country, according to Nate Silver, website FiveThirtyEight.

Our students continue to amaze us. Schar School graduates are doing consequential work at leading companies, consulting firms, nonprofits, and NGO’s, as well as local, state, and federal government agencies. The School’s enrollments are increasing, particularly in our newest academic degree program, the M.A. in International Security studies and also in our undergraduate Government and International Affairs program. These two factors are no doubt due to our faculty – leading scholars working across multiple disciplines and numerous policy practitioners who bring their experiences into the classroom. Among the latter are a retired ambassador; a former member of Congress; a retired past-director of the CIA and NSA; a past legal counsel to the NSA; the longest serving Inspector General, who served five different agencies; and many more. An added note - among all the programs within the University that were rated recently by US News and World Report, the highest rated were our own MPP and MPA programs.

Looking at the broader university community, we have been active in two campus-wide visioning projects - one for the Arlington campus, another for portions of the Fairfax campus - to determine how the campuses can be improved to meet the needs of students, faculty, and our surrounding community. Please look at our new website for continual updates about the Schar School and its activities. We are excited to look toward the future and to share our progress with you.
The Power of a Scholarship

For the spouse of a wounded warrior, each day can be a challenge. Marjorie Thomas has encountered this daily struggle since her husband, Henry, returned from Afghanistan in 2011 after sustaining wounds for which he received the Purple Heart. Following his transition into civilian life, he requires continuous rehabilitation therapy. This puts a burden on Marjorie, who juggles her own career goals with the demands of being a caregiver for her husband, a mother to their four young children, and an advocate for wounded veterans. After working as an administrative professional for nearly a decade, Marjorie decided to advance her education so that she could work in policy or advocacy for veterans’ issues. She entered the Schar School of Policy and Government as a part-time student in 2015, and then made the difficult decision to give up her job to focus on family and school. Foregoing that income is another challenge; her education would be impossible without scholarship support.

Last year, donations of less than $100 ($8.34/month) amounted to nearly $10,000 in support of Schar School students. The gift of scholarship is transformative. For our students, it means the chance to embark on career-advancing, public good by helping to solve students’ problems so they can achieve a lifelong goal. For the Schar School, it means the ability to recruit and retain students in an increasingly competitive market. Of course, scholarships would not be possible without generous contributions from alumni and friends. Continued financial commitment is crucial.

For most students, as you undoubtedly recall, most school costs are met through loan programs. The Schar School of Policy and Government has an extensive scholarship program established by alumni and their families. The School has scholarships for both merit- and need-based students.

No matter the size of a contribution, all donations are appreciated deeply. Alumni play an integral role in attracting and retaining the brightest students, regardless of their financial circumstances. Your support is a critical part of the Schar School’s continued success. Your gift is an investment in all of the wonderful students at the Schar School and truly does make a difference.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the Office of Development and Alumni Relations at 703.993.4035 or make a gift on-line by visiting schar.gmu.edu/scholarship (http://advancement.gmu.edu/ipp02). Be there for Schar School students by filling the gap between their resources and their educational costs.
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As we learned from President Solís, Costa Rica has the oldest and one of the most stable democracies in the region. In fact, the President’s contribution to public service has been based around the principles of peace, democracy, and sovereignty. The Congress has just reviewed and revised their Constitution—which he noted was, unlike the American Constitution, a living document that periodically undergoes formal review and updating.

President Solís also talked about the origins and future of his nation, and what it was like to run a successful third-party campaign for president. He noted that his campaign had very little funding, but relied on community and grassroots volunteers and staged neighborhood events that included music and “even had clowns in the street.” He said he still is surprised that he received a historic vote of more than 1,300,000. By constitution, the president of Costa Rica can serve a term of four years, then must step aside for at least 8 years before running for re-election. Among his campaign promises, President Solís pledged to serve one term, then return to his university life; he still plans to keep his pledge.
After his talk, President Solís joined Dean Mark J. Rozell and President Ángel Cabrera for a Q&A period. When asked what role his country plays in addressing climate change, he noted Costa Rica already is dealing with rising sea levels, increased droughts, changes in the rainy season, and its first out-of-season—and deadly—hurricane in late November. "We have to press on with the Paris Agreement," he said. "Costa Rica will keep its commitment."

Acknowledging that he would travel from the Schar School to the White House, the President was asked what he might discuss with Vice President Mike Pence. "We will reaffirm the good relationship we have with the United States," he said. "It is an opportunity to explain how [Costa Rica] is different, and with different challenges, from other countries in our region."

Prior to the public talk, President Solís and Mason President Cabrera signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Costa Rica and Mason to study airborne viruses, with a focus on the Zika virus. This important research will partner researchers in Costa Rica with researchers within Mason’s College of Science.

Dr. Francis (Frank) Fukuyama Returns to the Schar School

It was “old home evening” at the Schar School on March 30 when Francis (Frank) Fukuyama returned to the site of his early career successes (1996-2000) to provide the annual Harold Gortner Lecture in political science. As such, many friends and former colleagues joined in welcoming Dr. Fukuyama back to where he started his academic career.

The topic of the evening was “Vetocracy and the Future of the American Administrative State.” Dr. Fukuyama began by providing comments on the current state of affairs in the United States, which he defined as being in “political decay” because, while the American political system is a system of checks and balances, we have a fractured Congress and there is more power in a few people now than in the past. According to Dr. Fukuyama, the primary reason for this is changes in American society, including polarization — as exemplified by the red/blue states and the increasing of bandwidth in communications — and the rise of interest groups so that they become non-representative of the whole. In the mid-20th century, the two political parties overlapped in ideology, but have become completely different. This has led to “vetocracy,” which he defined as rule by veto.

Dr. Fukuyama identified two specific challenges posed by the current administration. The first concern is about Donald Trump just as a personality — one that gets around “inconvenient rules” and anyone who disagrees is seen as part of a “partisan institution,” including the media and the Bureau of Labor. The second concern is a lack of understanding about how a constitutional democracy works; Dr. Fukuyama asserted that Mr. Trump and his team do not seem to understand that, by design, the President of the United States actually is a fairly weak individual.
Among his other wide-ranging comments during the evening, Dr. Fukuyama noted that President Trump never held a campaign rally outside the states he won, and, along the same lines, he does not seem to consider himself as president of the entire country. Further, he sees the “deconstruction of the administrative state,” which he believes can be traced back to Congress, where legislative mandates typically are either over-detailed or under-detailed. He claims that our administrative state is aging, has too much red tape, and has become quite bureaucratic — and there does not seem to be an appetite for fixing the executive branch.

Dr. Fukuyama also suggested some implications of the current administrative state for the Schar School. While we are in great need of professionalism in the administration of such offices as NASA, the GAO, and the GSA, they also need protections. On the other hand, he wondered out loud about who would want to go into Civil Service in the type of administrative climate under which we now struggle. The evening ended with a round of questions from the audience.

Dr. Fukuyama currently serves as Olivier Nomellini Senior Fellow and Mosbacher Director in the Center on Democracy, Development, and the Rule of Law at the Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies, Stanford University. The lecture series is named for much-beloved, though now retired, political science professor Harold Gortner, who was responsible for creating our Master of Public Administration program — the first graduate degree offered at George Mason University. The inaugural lecture was given in 2006.

Faculty Spotlight

Judith Wilde

Meet the COO Taking the Schar School to New Heights

Last Spring, Judith Wilde served as a lead witness before a joint committee of the California Assembly as part of a special hearing on the outside compensation for executives who serve on corporate boards within the University of California and California State University systems. According to Dr. Wilde’s testimony, “Serving as a corporate director has considerable financial benefits for the individual and these directors, especially the independent directors, are required to make a substantial time commitment.”

As one of the leading authorities on the structure of employment agreement for university presidents, Dr. Wilde’s testimony made a difference. The new budget bill for California, signed by Governor Jerry Brown last July, incorporated a number of her recommendations. As of January 1, 2017, both university systems in California are required to “review the policies and procedures governing outside employment by university executives and senior management.”
Dr. Wilde has brought her policy acumen to the Schar School since being appointed COO in April 2016 and embodies the spirit of policy in action. She plans to continue research on university presidents serving as corporate directors. “Our hope is that by the end of 2017,” Dr. Wilde said, “we will be able to identify every university president who is serving on the board of a publicly traded corporation.”

In addition to this area of research, Dr. Wilde is also a hot air balloon enthusiast, regularly attending the Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta (AIBF) since 1973. Dr. Wilde has held her ballooning license since 1989 and purchased her first balloon in 2001. She’s flown in about 20 of the AIBF events.

Dr. Wilde’s balloon, the Frog Princess, is roughly the height of an 8-story building, and is now in retirement, having begun to show its wear and tear. She’s currently in the market for a new, smaller balloon as a replacement, which is tentatively set to be named the Tadpole.

Tonya Neaves

Preparing for the Unexpected: Schar School Professor Organizes Event on 21st Century Threats

Given the ‘tectonic shifts’ in the nation’s political climate, the nexus between security and socio-cultural respect presents a variety of policy and administrative challenges as risks are ever increasing. Amidst an unpredictable world that is more dangerous and complicated than ever before, public safety professionals must be prepared for evolving scenarios of atypical emergencies and complex attacks.

As Director of the High Threat Institute, Dr. Tonya Neaves organized a forum to explore this topic at the Symposium on 21st Century Threats and Integrated Emergency Operations, held December 12, 2016, at George Mason University’s Founders Hall. The event brought together over 300 public safety professionals from across the Commonwealth of Virginia and the National Capital Region to discuss best practices and lessons learned for the first responder community.

As Thomas Anger, a prominent attorney and emergency medical technician from Ohio, described the event, “The Symposium was a veritable who’s who of devoted public servants. Each speaker, from members of the London Fire Brigade to the former Surgeon General of Israel, provided an insightful, fascinating and unique examination of the threats facing our world.”
The event held both personal and “pracademic” meaning for Dr. Neaves. When thinking about the onset of active shooter scenarios in educational settings, many consider the Columbine Massacre to be the first incident in modern history, but this supposition is incorrect. A year and a half earlier, on October 1, 1997, there was an attack at Pearl High School in Mississippi. The assailant was Luke Woodham, a former algebra partner of Dr. Neaves and a student whom she shared the bus with her freshman year.

While Dr. Neaves had transferred to another school by the time of the shooting, the threat of an additional attack was imminent in the months that followed and the incident left a looming shadow of doubt in the surrounding community. For Dr. Neaves, an interest in law enforcement and intelligence gathering from a young age left her eager to process what had happened. While she considered entering the intelligence field, a passion for academia and research prompted her to finish a Master’s and Doctorate of Philosophy in Public Policy and Administration at Mississippi State University. In her role today at the Schar School, Dr. Neaves is leveraging her prior experiences into a new platform of “high threat” research and practice.

Anne Washington

*Mason Professor, CAREER Grant Recipient, Studies Technology and Open Government*

It’s almost impossible for youth today to imagine a world without technology - especially since so many websites, with so much information, are at their fingertips. The question arises, do they fully understand how much of the information is available because of (or through) the government, and how our lives are affected by the openness - or obstruction - of government information and big data?

Probably not. But, not many others understand the correlation between public policy and data either. The Schar School’s Dr. Anne Washington, however, is one of the country’s most passionate and capable voices on the demand for open government data.

Washington is a digital government scholar who specializes in informatics and technology management, holding degrees in computer science, library and information science, and information systems. What does all of this mean? It’s all about data and information, as well as the ability to access them. Although there’s much information out there, it’s useless if you don’t know how to use it, or where to find it.

“I find everything about data fascinating,” Washington says. “Data can be highly valuable if you know how to leverage it properly.”

Washington is a former researcher on Capitol Hill at the Congressional Research Service, where she developed legislative technology systems that allowed her to help make government data more available to people.
My years on Capitol Hill gave me an opportunity to spearhead innovative open data projects. Public policy is really far behind technology, yet our world relies on technology and the information it generates. I encourage my students to be prepared to fill that gap in science and technology policy.

Washington has spent many years collaborating on research about open government data in the United States - even working in concert with other researchers on a grant from the National Science Foundation (NSF). Still, being eager to work on her own research, she applied and received one of NSF’s most prestigious grants, the Faculty Early Career Development Program, open to “early-career faculty who have the potential to serve as academic role models in research and education and to lead advances in the mission of their department or organization.” This grant offers Washington the opportunity to conduct a five-year study on the demand for open government data.

“The release of government information as open data is arguably one of the more significant trends in governance. Nations, cities, and regions have made investments in government data websites, but with little systematic evaluation of these commitments. My CAREER project will be an in-depth assessment of the demand for open government data.”

In other words, there is an inconsistent way of understanding how most effectively to make government information more available and accessible to people around the world. While many world governments are taking measures to make government data more available, it is difficult to determine how successful those measures are.

“Governments around the world are duplicating the United States, but we don’t know which aspects of our open data policy are working, and which are not. My research will identify solutions that will improve the use of open data for both innovation and civic [civilian] participation.”

Washington believes that it is dangerous for the populace of any country not to have the ability to access and understand government data. Such a lack of knowledge makes it difficult for people to participate in their communities. Washington asserts that even if the United States and other governments make this information available, it remains useless if people are unable to find it, or do not know how or where to find it. Washington’s project aims to improve and streamline how open government information is released and accessed.

“My education plan is devoted to advancing data literacy in the classroom and in the workforce. The project contributes directly to improving open government data policy.”
Zavin Smith Joins Schar School as Director of Development and Alumni Relations

After leaving the position open for more than six months, the Schar School now has a new Director of Development and Alumni Relations: Zavin Smith. Zavin creates and oversees the implementation of a strategic approach to alumni engagement, alumni activities, and fundraising, which includes major gifts, corporate donations, and in-kind resources. In addition, he provides development support and counsel to the academic and alumni leadership.

Zavin comes to us with experience. He was the Director of Annual Giving at the University of Maryland Francis King Carey School of Law (2012 – 2016) where he managed the school’s annual giving program, including strategic planning and execution of constituent solicitations, matching gifts, online giving, and phone-a-thon programs. He also served as Director of Annual Giving for the American University Washington College of Law (WCL) from 2006 - 2012.

Zavin received his BA (Communications) and MA (Telecommunications) at Mason, with the master’s degree including a focus on policy. He also has received the outstanding alumni award from Mason’s School of Integrative Studies. With his degrees from Mason, it is no surprise that Zavin is active in his alumni chapter as well.

We are excited to have Zavin join us. Don’t be surprised to find notes, emails, or even phone calls from him.

Schar School Alum Elected to New Hampshire Legislature

Mark King received a Master’s degree from George Mason University’s Organizational Development and Knowledge Management (ODKM) program in 2015. King is not only a proud Mason alumnus, he is also a newly elected member of the New Hampshire House of Representatives. However, his path there did not come without challenges. A motorcycle accident that nearly killed him left King with a need to give back.

King decided to work at the library, which he calls his ‘favorite place,’ seeing libraries as the most democratic institutions. However, in order to move up in the library field, King understood that he had to receive his Bachelor’s degree. He enrolled at the National Labor College in Silver Spring, Maryland, where he received a degree in Labor Studies in 2012. He enrolled in Mason’s ODKM program Labor Cohort 3 and graduated in 2015.

King became involved in politics in 2008, volunteering for campaigns including serving on Bernie Sanders’ New Hampshire State Steering Committee. He was inspired, not only by working on his campaign, but by Sanders’ plea for our fellow citizens to run for local office.

King was sworn in to the New Hampshire House of Representatives as the representative for Nashua District’s Ward 6. He currently sits on the House Fish and Game and Marine Resources Committee, and is also co-sponsoring a bill on redistricting in New Hampshire.
“Working with people, for people, is who I am and where I belong.”

As he continues to follow his bliss, and the doors to future opportunities open, King will always remember the role that George Mason’s ODKM program played in his life.

“George Mason University has been instrumental in my formation as a conscious person in a very complex system, our political world. My GMU education has facilitated my reflective nature giving me a standpoint to act with integrity and confidence. The ODKM program at GMU has touched my life in a marvelous way.”

We would like to acknowledge here our Schar School Distinguished Alumna, Captain Tina P. Laguna (BS Criminology, Law, and Society, 2004 and MPA, 2006). Captain Laguna has worked with the Manassas City Police Department for more than 22 years. Although she began her career as a dispatcher, Captain Laguna transitioned to a police officer and worked in various assignments throughout her career including patrol and investigations. A graduate of the Professional Executive Leadership School from the University of Richmond and the FBI National Academy, she was promoted later to the ranks of sergeant and lieutenant and, in July 2013, was promoted to the rank of assistant chief of police, becoming the first woman to achieve this rank in the department. In July 2015, she competed in the World Police and Fire Games, winning a silver medal in the 4x400 meter relay.

Tina is a member of the International Association of Chiefs of Police, Virginia Associations of Chiefs of Police, the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives (NOBLE), The Professional Executive Leadership School Alumni Association and the FBI National Academy Associates.

Passionate about community engagement, she has used her leadership role to create and spearhead numerous community initiatives and activities. She makes presentations in her local schools and mentors several students; she is bilingual, speaking English and Spanish. Captain Laguna is married, with two stepchildren, two sponsored children in Ecuador, and a dog. Her husband, father, and sister attended the awards ceremony with her.

We also should note that the Schar School was well represented among other award winners as well. The Alumni Service Award was presented to Gail A. Bohan, who received an MPA in 1982 and the College of Education and Human Development Distinguished Alumni Award was presented to Britt J. Davis, who holds a 1996 MPA.
The Schar School offers classes at Mason’s Fairfax and Arlington campuses in Virginia. Both campuses are located within the heart of a dynamic region and close to the nation’s capital. Opportunities for internships, jobs, and research are unequalled, as is access to archives and museums, policymakers and think tanks, and diverse career opportunities. With 80 full-time faculty, we offer 14 degree programs at the undergraduate, masters, and/or doctoral levels.

Congratulations to all our 2017 graduates!