I hope that this newsletter finds you well and energetically engaged with the semester’s work. It’s hard to believe that we are at mid-term already. Whatever your plans for break, I hope that you will come back refreshed and ready for the second half.

Jobs are always a worry for students and parents, and that concern appears to be heightened by the ongoing weakness of the economy. But keep in mind there are a number of things going your way. First, while the overall unemployment rate is 6.1 percent, the rate for college grads is 3.2 percent. And a Villanova degree in particular adds to your possibilities. Moreover, there are a variety of great opportunities within the sociology and criminology majors that can help position you for great success.

One is the curriculum itself. The department has continued to develop, adding new courses and hiring new faculty members, such as Melissa Hodges, who we welcomed this fall (be sure to read about her in this issue of the Newsletter). Former students have told us how much their studies have given them analytical and technical skills as well as promoted an intellectual curiosity that employers value. Indeed, several former students have made short videos about their experience at VU and their subsequent success in the job market, which are posted on our homepage, socandcrim.villanova.edu. I encourage you to view the videos and take their messages to heart.

A second great opportunity is to get an internship. Internships can help deepen your understanding of your coursework, are a great resume item, and can help establish a network of contacts. This last point is key, as sociological research indicates that the majority of jobs are acquired through such contacts. As you may know, you can do an internship for credit, and the information on how to do that is on our website. One current sociology student (Kerry Anderson) and a 2013 grad (Nicole Accurso) who recently completed internships have articles in this Newsletter about their experiences, and hopefully these will inspire some of you to acquire one of your own.

A third possibility is to get involved in research with department faculty members. We have a top-notch research faculty that is very active and that publishes in top journals and university presses. Working with faculty members, either as their assistants or under their mentorship, will give you hands-on technical knowledge, sharpen your analytical abilities, and might even result in a co-authorship. It also allows faculty members to know you better and write strong recommendation letters. Along these lines, the department offers a tremendous opportunity in the form of a Vreeland/Gallagher research grant. Thanks to a gift from a VU alum, the department offers monetary support to students engaged in independent research under the supervision of a faculty member or work as a research assistant. Details can be found on our website. (Chair’s message continues on p. 2)
Dr. Donna Shai will be presenting her paper “The Great Recession and Child Maltreatment: The case of California” in Memphis, Tennessee in mid-October at the Annual Meeting of the Southern Demographic Association.

My Summer Internship at the Hospital
-by Kerry Anderson, SOC '15

This summer, I had the opportunity to work as an intern at the Greater Baltimore Medical Center (GBMC) in Towson, Maryland. The Greater Baltimore Medical Center (GBMC) is one of the largest hospital systems in the Baltimore area and is considered to be a high-quality healthcare provider. I chose this internship because I believed working in a healthcare setting would provide me with valuable experience in order to help me refine my career goals. In general, my career goals are to help improve access to quality healthcare for people living in the United States. I believe that the enactment of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010 (“Obamacare”) provides a tremendous opportunity for sociology graduates to contribute to significant healthcare improvements for U.S. residents and to help resolve health disparities which exist among certain U.S. populations.

GBMC’s approach to care allowed me to experience a practical application of theories that I learned through coursework in the Department of Sociology and Criminology. Specifically, one of my favorite and most thought-provoking courses was Contemporary Theory in Sociology. I believe this course provided me with a theoretical foundation pertaining to issues and complexities surrounding healthcare improvement efforts. Contemporary Theory in Sociology enabled me to see that using scientific evidence to improve care practices is only one factor which must be considered when attempting to improve healthcare. Differences in patient health which result from social factors must also be considered. To make significant improvements to a population’s health, healthcare providers and policymakers must assess and address the effect social issues and structures such as socioeconomic status, culture, and ethnicity have on the delivery and availability of quality healthcare.

The internship exceeded my expectations and showed me how beneficial having a degree in sociology will be in pursuing my career goals.

Chair’s Message (continued from p. 1)

Finally, the department is an affiliate member of the American Sociological Association (unfortunately an affiliate status is not available from the American Society of Criminology). This provides some perks for our students. One is an upcoming free webinar on building your career with a degree in sociology (also quite relevant for criminology majors). Be sure to register online for the October 15 event.

As students, you always face the temptation to get your degree with the least possible amount of work, taking the bare minimum number of courses to satisfy the major, etc. Doing so would be a big mistake. There are numerous ways to enhance your intellectual development within both majors and you should seek out as many as you can.

-Bob DeFina, Chair

1 www1.villanova.edu/villanova/artsci/sociology/opportunities/credit.html

2 www1.villanova.edu/villanova/artsci/sociology/opportunities/funding/vreeland.html

3 www3.gotomeeting.com/register/773491478
Who knew that a quote originating from a TV show about a high school football team would be so applicable to college students deciding their futures? Well, by having a clear vision of what you want and putting your full heart into it, regardless of any obstacle, you cannot lose.

Graduating senior year without a full-time paying job was disappointing. I had gone to a top university, chosen two majors, and graduated cum laude. But deep down I knew that my unemployment had nothing to do with my capabilities and everything to do with my goals. Let me explain.

Throughout my four years at Villanova, I recognized the importance of internships and of gaining as much experience as possible in your desired field. One of my internships was at the Philadelphia District Attorney’s Office during my senior year. I was offered a paralegal position there after graduation; however, I turned it down for a non-paying internship at the New York State Office of the Attorney General’s Organized Crime Task Force (OCTF). Although it took me some time to figure out that I wanted to work in investigations, I knew for a fact that I did not want to be a lawyer. Being a paralegal was not for me, and accepting the job at the District Attorney’s Office would not be fulfilling, nor would it give me investigative experience. The opportunity at OCTF, on the other hand, was right in line with my aspirations, and I was ecstatic.

OCTF is comprised of attorneys and investigators who conduct long-term investigations of various criminal enterprises. They work with other state and federal agencies, such as the NYPD and The Department of Homeland Security. Starting out, I mainly conducted research and drafted subpoenas. But it wasn’t long before I had the responsibilities of an employee, not just an intern. Soon I was immersed in one investigation and Grand Jury preparations for another case. My hours were nine to five, but often I arrived early and stayed late. I knew there was a possibility of getting hired at OCTF; I just didn’t know how long it would take. Yes, it was frustrating at times. It was difficult to see my friends living on their own, spending their hard-earned money, while I did not have an income and still lived at home. People would tell me it was so crazy, working for free. But I loved what I was doing, and I knew that it would be worth it.

I was with OCTF for about a year before I was hired as an analyst. I have many of the same duties, such as subpoenaing information related to the cases and putting together evidence to present to the Grand Jury. I also monitor wiretaps and piece together probable cause for eavesdropping and search warrants. On any given day, I do a ton of writing, and I always say to myself, “I never would have thought I’d be so thankful for all those research papers in college.” The Sociology and Criminology Department’s emphasis on research and writing has helped me immensely. The writing assignments in classes taught by Drs. McCorkel, Payne, and Eckstein -- just to name a few -- could not have prepared me better for my job. I also have applied my knowledge of legal issues and Supreme Court decisions, as well as my critical thinking skills -- all things that I have learned at Villanova.

By the time graduation rolls around, every Criminology or Sociology major will have skills that make them desirable in the real world, as it is the nature of the department to instill such skills. I know how hard it is to get a job in the criminal justice field, especially if you don’t plan on going to law school like many other CRM/SOC majors do. But if you know that it’s something you want, then work for it. Explore different internships, network with alumni, and take every opportunity that is available to you, even if it means working for free for a little while. It’ll be worth it. I promise.

Get Connected...

Jump-start your search for an internship or job by attending a workshop sponsored by the Career Center!

Learn how to write a winning resume: October 27 - 2:30 pm
November 12 - 3:30 pm

Learn how to interview successfully: October 30 - 3:00 pm
November 5 - 2:30 pm

All workshops take place in Room 117, Garey Hall and no registration is required.

Through the William and Carolyn Vreeland and Bernard J. Gallagher III Fund for Mentored Research, the Department of Sociology & Criminology offers funds to majors conducting research centering on underdeveloped countries or major social problems in the U.S. Learn more about this fund by visiting the department office and our website.
Introducing Dr. Melissa Hodges

Melissa Hodges is thrilled to join the department and the community at Villanova. Receiving her Ph.D. in Sociology from the University of Massachusetts-Amherst, her primary research and teaching interests focus on the intersections of race, class, gender inequalities and work and occupations.

Professor Hodges’ research agenda primarily focuses on the study of wage inequality among individuals and families both in the United States and cross-nationally. Her dissertation research investigates the role of parenthood and gender dynamics within households in the production of wage gaps across families by race and social class in the US. While previous research has primarily investigated these phenomena across individuals, she finds that current wage inequality is partially situated within married couple households. She also finds that the gender wage gap within married couples grows with the addition of children to the household and that these effects contribute to overall US wage inequality.

Her ongoing research also examines the wage penalties associated with paid and unpaid caregiving and the effect of motherhood on women’s self-employment. Her work has been published in the American Sociological Review and Gender & Society. She is a past recipient of the Reuben Hill Award from the National Council on Family Relations and the Rosabeth Moss Kanter Award for Research Excellence in Families and Work. In 2012, her work was also recognized by the American Sociological Association when she received the Article of the Year Award, Family Section.

Professor Hodges has had several opportunities to teach in diverse classroom settings ranging from urban high schools to her current position at Villanova, but in all of her courses, she encourages students to engage critically in the social world around them. As an educator, her goal is to encourage students to apply sociological theories and concepts in making sense of their social world and to use these tools to make an impact on society. She is particularly excited to join the faculty at Villanova as the university’s emphasis on service to the community and social justice is well-suited to both her research and teaching goals. She is also committed to continuously improving the learning experience of her students and appreciates student feedback on her courses. Her teaching interests include courses on the family, gender and work, race, class and gender, and political sociology. She is teaching Introduction to Sociology and Sociology of Gender this fall.

Professor Hodges received her undergraduate degree from James Madison College of Public Affairs at Michigan State University. A Detroit native, Professor Hodges is a serious Tigers fan, but also enjoys reading, gardening, and cooking in her spare time. She is looking forward to exploring all that Philadelphia has to offer (especially all the great restaurants), cheering on the Wildcats, and to meeting you on campus. Go ’Nova!