A Message from the Chair

All students should prepare to answer a question sure to be asked by a prospective employer (or graduate school admissions committee) – Why should we hire (or accept) you?” If you have a GPA in the top 5-10%, you have already answered that question. If you are not so “lucky,” there are other ways to answer it. I think an excellent way is to expand your educational experiences by taking advantage of opportunities outside the classroom.

Sophomores and juniors: I strongly suggest an internship. There are a variety of interesting placements available to provide you with “real world experience” that gives you a chance to explore possible career opportunities. Last year several students worked in the Philadelphia District Attorney’s Office. Over the past three years, students have put their research skills to use working in the Research and Evaluation Office of the Philadelphia Zoo. Letters of recommendation from your supervisor are a nice addition to those from your professors.

Seniors: it is not too late for you. I encourage you to dust off the paper you wrote for Theory or Methods and present it at the Mid-Atlantic Undergraduate Conference in April. Each year 12-18 students participate in this conference and they all have reported it to be a very positive experience. It is a great addition to your resume and helps your professors boost your reference letters. Contact me for further information.

- Dr. Tom Arvanites
Remembering Dr. McGarry

Dr. Lawrence McGarry passed away peacefully in his home on November 29th, 2004 after battling illness for several months. Dr. McGarry joined the Sociology Department at Villanova University in September 1963 after serving his country in WWII.

A deeply spiritual man, Dr. McGarry was a quiet yet relentless advocate for social justice. Generosity and a deep-seated concern for others were two of the outstanding qualities that made him a special human being.

Each year he made significant contributions to a number of non-profit organizations. He was also noted for maintaining a cordial and helpful relationship with his students, never failing to greet each of them by name and with a smile.

His colleagues in the Department of Sociology honored him for his commitment to his students and the less fortunate by establishing the Lawrence J. McGarry Award which is presented to the graduating sociology major who best combines “Academic Excellence with a Commitment to Social Justice.”

He was an esteemed colleague, an avid supporter of the student athlete, and an excellent teacher who was respected by four generations of students. He will be greatly missed.

Featured Professor—Dr. Rick Eckstein

By: Jen Troutman

Dr. Eckstein joined the VU sociology team in 1990 after getting his PhD from SUNY, StonyBrook. It was within his first two months of undergrad at Marietta College that he decided the life of a professor was for him!

Rick includes NY Yankee, Roy White; Ralph Nader (before he ran for president); and Daniel Ellsberg (who leaked the Pentagon papers to the media) among his heroes. He has appeared in many quiz bowls since his first in junior high. His greatest accomplishment to date is surviving parenthood (well, so far at least.)

Rick’s current research interests center on publicly financed stadiums, the theme of a recently released book entitled, Public Dollars Private Stadiums. He would also like to explore how and why our nation is so obsessed with sports, what social factors may influence this obsession, and how this obsession is a threat to social justice.

In his spare time, which is not much with two young children, he enjoys cooking, softball, golf, basketball, and rockin’ and rollin’ on the piano, guitar or drums! His advice to students: “Eat a good breakfast! I’m not kidding. You can’t believe the difference it makes in class. Also, don’t think that good notes just reflect what’s written on the black/white boards, especially because we (professors) can’t stop sniffing the dry erase markers. Listen carefully and write down what’s important, not just what’s obvious. And read some books for goodness sake!”

In order to afford to rent a two-bedroom home at the nationally-weighted Fair Market Rent, a worker would have to earn $14.66 per hour, which is nearly three times the federal minimum wage, and still more than double the highest minimum wage among states that have enacted higher minimum wages (National Low Income Housing Coalition, 2002).

A woman with a high school degree earns barely over the poverty line for a family of three. This is, on average, half as much as a woman with a bachelor’s degree (National Urban League Report, June 2002).
Spring Semester Events

March 16th -
Social Science Forum featuring William Julius Wilson on “The World of the New Urban Poor” - 7pm—Bartley 1011.

March 30th -
Elizabeth Cady Stanton Conference featuring Beth Hillman, PhD & JD. Beth, a former Air Force officer, will be speaking about the prison scandals at Abu Ghraib and the ways that, in her view, military sexual culture—its treatment of women, its promotion of sexual entitlement, etc., has set up a framework that makes this kind of behavior inevitable.

April 7th -
The Sociology Department’s Career Session. Come and find out how to make your sociology degree work from people who actually have. Session begins at 11:30am in Mendel 154.

April 19th -
25th Annual Mid-Atlantic Undergraduate Social Research Conference at Elizabethtown College. Students have the opportunity to present their research papers. See Dr. Arvanites if you are interested.

Sociology Beyond the Classroom
By: Jen Troutman

VU alumni update us on their life after college and share how sociology extends outside the classroom.

Kelly Burchill (’03) took Dr. Defina’s Social Safety Net class and now sees many of the class concepts in real life. She is in her first year of law school at the University of Wisconsin and has recently gotten involved in an unemployment clinic, which offers free advice to people who have been denied benefits. The main reason she got involved with this clinic is because of the problems she learned about in that class. Now she is able to help ensure people in Madison who are being wrongfully denied unemployment benefits, receive them until they are able to find new employment.

Nancy Steedle (’03) is doing missionary work in Nigeria. She started out by gathering basic demographic and qualitative information about the women who came to her center since no records like this existed before. She found that most of the women wanted to start a sewing business in their villages, but had no idea how to bring that to fruition. Since then, she has been teaching basic business principles to the women and challenging them to think of other realistic business opportunities for themselves. She also works with the literate students teaching them basic computer skills on the one donated laptop they have. She pulls from many sociology lessons in her everyday life.

Julie McLaughlin (’95) recently published an article in the September 2004 issue of the Journal of Health and Social Behavior entitled “In Sickness but Not in Health: Self-Ratings, Identity, and Mortality.” No doubt she applied many of the lessons learned in research methods to her research.

Among American Indians age 25 to 34, the rate of violent crime victimizations was more than 2½ times the rate for all persons the same age between 1992 and 2002 (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2004).

Almost 70% of the cities surveyed in the Jan. 2002 report have passed at least one or more new laws specifically targeting homeless people. Meanwhile, 100% of the communities surveyed lack enough shelter beds to meet demand (National Coalition for the Homeless 2002, 2003).

Over 41 million Americans have no health care insurance (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2002).
**Internship Opportunity!**

by Jen Troutman

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Montgomery County is always looking for interns and/or AmeriCorps VISTA Volunteers. BBBS is a non-profit organization that works with “at-risk” youth. Their main office is located in nearby Norristown.

They provide a wide variety of services including traditional one-on-one mentoring (inside and outside of the school setting), after-school programs for elementary students (High Schoolers As Bigs), and during-school programs that work with the most at-risk middle school kids (Brothers/Sisters). They also run an Independent Living program that works with older kids (16-21) transitioning out of foster care, and in Abington they are part of the Youth Aid Panel that works with first time offenders. Additional programming is run when funds are available.

This kind of opportunity would be ideal for someone looking to gain some experience in the areas of case work, social work, and/or criminal justice. A desire to work with youth is needed as well. The people at the agency are great to work with and you will see a whole new world you may not even know exists. They will work with you to tailor your internship so you get the most out of your experience.

For more information, please contact Alicia Lewis, Program Manager, at 610.277.2200 x205 or at alewis@bbbsmontcopa.org - You can also contact Jen Troutman at jennifer.troutman@villanova.edu with any questions you might have. Visit www.bbbsmontcopa.org for additional information.

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**Equal Justice Internship**

Villanova A&S students who qualify for internship credit through the VU Internship Program can request placement with Professor Beth Lyon in the Villanova Law School during the semester and summers.

Each year she involves interns in a variety of projects, including legal casework with low income immigrant workers, outreach to immigrants, and service projects for the National Employment Law Project, the Organization of American States Inter-American Commission on Human rights, the Association of American Law Schools International Human Rights Law Section and Catholic Relief Services.

For more information, please contact Dr. Arvanites.