Greetings to all. I hope that the semester has been going well so far.

I had mentioned in the last Newsletter that the department was undergoing a search for two new faculty members to replace ones who had recently retired. I am very pleased to report that our searches were quite successful. We were able to hire our top choices for both positions – medical sociology and social movements. A future Newsletter will provide profiles of our new department members, but for now I want to highlight that they will be offering new courses in the fall in their respective areas. Both topics are highly relevant in a variety of ways, and are likely to become more so. The courses and the general expertise of our new department members, but for now I want to highlight that they will be offering new courses in the fall in their respective areas. Both topics are highly relevant in a variety of ways, and are likely to become more so.

The courses and the general expertise of our new members will add significantly to our curriculum and to the ability of our students to address our most pressing social issues.

Taking a break from one’s routines can bring many benefits, including new experiences and knowledge, and fresh perspectives on life and work. One way that students do this is by studying abroad. Studying abroad not only allows them to encounter new cultures and languages, but also different viewpoints and ideas about the focus of their studies. One of our students, Nora Charidah (a sociology/criminology double major), recently spent time in Morocco taking classes and completing an independent study. In this edition of the Newsletter, she writes about her trip and what she learned.

Faculty members also benefit greatly from time away in the form of a sabbatical. The sabbatical allows them to focus on their research uninterrupted by other obligations. Doing so is important in its own right and also contributes to high quality teaching. Indeed, the ability to concentrate on research helps insure that professors are able to bring the most current and pertinent thinking into the classroom and to their students. Next spring, Professor Allison Payne will be taking a sabbatical and, in this Newsletter, she describes the research that she will be doing.

Prof. Rick Eckstein will also be partially on leave. For the next two years, he will be a visiting fellow in the University’s Honors program. Prof. Eckstein has frequently taught courses for Honors, but as a visiting fellow he will also be involved in developing programming. During his tenure there, he will teach courses both for Honors and for the sociology and criminology department.

An important part of ongoing curriculum improvement is offering new courses that speak to important issues. In addition to the medical sociology and social movements courses, a new course titled Race, Crime and Justice developed by Prof. Kelly Welch will be offered in the fall. The Newsletter contains her description of the course. Given the increased attention to concerns about race and the criminal justice system, her course is a welcome addition.

Best wishes for success in the remainder of the semester.

- Robert DeFina, Chair
School’s Impact on Juvenile Delinquency through Extracurricular Involvement and Zero Tolerance Discipline

- by Dr. Allison Payne

During the Spring 2018 semester, I will be on sabbatical working on two research projects. The first project examines the impact of students’ extracurricular activity participation on their involvement in deviance and delinquency. Hirschi’s (1969) theory of juvenile delinquency states that an adolescent will engage in deviant behavior if their social bond, or tie to conventional society, is weak or broken. He details four elements of this bond: attachment (the quality of relationships with conventional others), commitment (the value placed on conventional activities), involvement (the participation in these conventional activities), and belief (the legitimacy given to conventional rules and norms). Although much work documents the protective impact of attachment, commitment, and belief (e.g., Payne 2008), research has thus far been inconclusive on whether involvement has an effect on deviance. Indeed, studies differ on whether involvement has an effect at all (e.g., Faulkner et al. 2007), whether this effect differs depending on the type of activity the student is involved in (e.g., Kreager 2007), whether this effect differs depending on the type of deviance examined (e.g., Hoffman 2006) and whether differences are seen depending on the student’s gender, race, and socioeconomic status (e.g., Hoffman 2006). In addition, the studies that have been conducted suffer from several limitations, including the use of small samples, limited geographic regions, and failing to examine different types of activities. I will use data from the National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS) to fully explore the relationship between school extracurricular activity involvement and rates of deviance and delinquency among students. This is a nationally representative longitudinal study of students who were 8th graders in 1988. Research questions include: How does involvement in extracurricular activities affect student deviance? Does this relationship differ by type of activity? Does it differ by type of deviance? And are there differences based on gender, race, or socioeconomic status?

The second project investigates the effectiveness of zero tolerance discipline policies; I have the pleasure of partnering with Dr. Welch on this work. Zero tolerance in schools is a philosophical approach to discipline that generally mandates predetermined punitive consequences—most commonly expulsion and suspension—for violations of particular school rules, regardless of circumstances or situational context, with the apparent intent to deter and prevent undesirable behavior. Original supporters advocated greater fairness toward students, more consistent discipline, and violence prevention (Gorman and Pauken 2003; Renault 2001). Research, however, has yet to produce any evidence that zero tolerance policies have achieved these objectives. Indeed, much research actually reveals detrimental unintended consequences, such as diminished student learning (e.g., Gardella 2015), engagement in future crime (e.g., Fabelo et al. 2011), disproportionate application (e.g., Welch and Payne 2012), and a negative impact on school communities and subsequent student bonding (e.g., Henry 2009). Much more information is needed, however, and Dr. Welch and I will use the Department of Education’s 2013-2014 Civil Rights Data Collection to conduct this research. The data is a survey of all public schools and school districts in the United States. Within its measures is information regarding student discipline, including zero tolerance practices, as well as information on student demographics, behavior, and academic performance. We will be investigating how many and which schools are actually using zero tolerance and what offenses are punishable by zero tolerance, as well as specific demographic data about the students who are punished.

The purpose of a sabbatical is “to enable faculty to devote full time to study, research, or other academic activities that will enhance their scholarly and teaching competence and capabilities and will enable them to make greater contributions to their disciplines, their students, and Villanova University” (Full-Time Faculty Handbook). Working on these two projects during the spring 2018 semester will further my scholarship, allow me to make a strong contribution to my field, and enhance my teaching in the areas of school crime and discipline.
No Better Time:  
Dr. Kelly Welch Offers Seminar on Racial Justice  
- by Dr. Kelly Welch

For the first time, Villanova University is offering a special Seminar on Racial Justice, co-sponsored by the Honors Program and Department of Sociology and Criminology. Issues pertaining to race, ethnicity, and social justice are central to many courses across the university, but this seminar focuses exclusively on the meaning and significance of racial justice at a time when many had contemplated whether America had become a “post-racial” society. In fact, current data clearly show—particularly when examined from a criminological perspective—that it has not. Now is as important a time as ever to thoughtfully study racial justice. Students in this small, discourse-driven seminar are examining our long national history of criminalizing persons of color and analyzing how various institutional mechanisms, such as criminal justice, immigration law, anti-terror policy, and school discipline, continue to disparately impose social control in ways that disadvantage, subordinate, and brutalize minorities. In the few short weeks that this reading- and writing-intensive seminar has met, I have been extremely impressed by the students’ engagement and critical thinking about the urgent matters we are covering. All indicators suggest students are eager to learn more.

Given the importance of studying racial justice and students’ requests for more classes of this nature, I am delighted to be offering a brand-new course, entitled Race, Crime, and Justice, in the Department of Sociology and Criminology in the Fall, 2017 semester. This course will have a different format and structure than my current seminar, allowing the enrollment of 35 students in what will initially be listed as a “special topics” elective. I am hoping the success of this course will eventually facilitate its inclusion in the regularly offered department curriculum. I encourage anyone who is interested in this course to contact me with questions and ideas.

Congratulations Denise!

The Department’s Research Associate, Denise Wilson welcomed a new son, Jackson Butch Wilson. JB was born on December 16, 2016. Big sister Callie is thrilled with the newest addition to their family.

Denise is currently on maternity leave and plans to return to the Department on March 14th.

Recent Publications and Presentations (continued)

An article written by Dr. Rory Kramer titled “Defensible Spaces in Philadelphia: Exploring Neighborhood Boundaries through Spatial Analysis” was recently accepted for publication in the Russell Sage Foundation Journal of Social Science.

An article written by Drs. Brianna Remster and Michael Massoglia titled “The Linkages between Incarceration and Health” was recently accepted for publication in Public Health Reports.
My Journey Abroad in Morocco
– by Nora Charidah, Crim/Soc ’18

Studying abroad in Morocco this past Fall semester was the most incredible experience of my life thus far. As a part of the School for International Training (SIT), I participated in their study abroad experience titled, Human Rights and Multiculturalism. I was lucky to live with a host family in the capital city, Rabat, for the majority of my journey and I experienced what it was like to live as a young woman in Morocco. My family consisted of my two wonderful parents and five siblings, three of whom have children under the age of four. This was seemingly overwhelming, especially because initially I did not speak the same language as my host family. But, that did not take away from the strong connections and unforgettable memories that we were able to make together. At the end of my four month journey I had become my parents’ sixth child and my siblings’ new sister. Living with a host family taught me the true values of what it is like to be a Moroccan and truly care for one another, and I could not be more appreciative.

Throughout my four months of studying, we traveled on three excursions throughout this charming and geographically diverse country. On these excursions I was able to embark on many adventures, such as exploring the dunes of the Sahara on a camel trek, visiting the biggest Atlas cedar forest in the world, wandering throughout the medieval city of Fes visiting a leather tannery, roaming the beautifully chaotic markets in Marrakech and many more once in a lifetime experiences. In Ait Ouahi, a village of about 400 in the Middle Atlas Mountains, I lived with a second host family for one week. Here I shared in my family’s daily activities: farming, taking care of livestock, and cooking. Traveling all around the country of Morocco and visiting fifteen cities as well as being a part of two incredible Moroccan families allowed me to fully embrace this country as well as meet genuine and profound Moroccan people.

I learned Darija (Moroccan Arabic) from my homestay family because this is the dialect they colloquially speak in the home, and Fusha (Modern Standard Arabic), the more formal and traditional Arabic, which I learned in school each day. Alongside Arabic, I took a Multiculturalism class and a Methods and Ethics course with many distinguished and notable professors from all around the world coming in to teach us each week. In my Multiculturalism class we learned about the myriad of different cultures, religions, languages and people that reside and fluently live in Moroccan every day society. I was also privileged to experience in Morocco Methods and Ethics, a course that can be applied toward the Sociology major at Villanova. Taking this course requirement in Morocco gave me such interesting insights and different outlooks on the preexisting knowledge that I have learned here at the University. Studying these Sociology courses abroad gave me a more refined and cultivated experience that I am fortunate and excited to bring with me while I am back taking courses at Villanova. Learning in a classroom about social, cultural and familial norms in Morocco was definitely remarkable, but experiencing them first hand is where I have truly learned and appreciated this culture and country even more.