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THE COMPASS FALL 2016

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RETIRING WITH MORE THAN 26 years of service, Dr. Sonia Spencer, associate professor, who was chairperson of Foreign Languages and Literatures for more than a decade, is leaving the College with a legacy that will continue to enhance the campus, according to Dr. Cindy Vitto, professor of English and CHSS founding dean.

"Sonia Spencer has been an institution of her own at Rowan," Vitto said. "She has served on and chaired multiple Senate and American Federation of Teachers committees and has mentored countless students who remain in touch with her. She has also worked closely with CHSS pretenured faculty and brought 10 Chinese foreign language teaching assistants to Rowan through the Fulbright Foundation. We will miss her."



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The Compass

The Newsletter of the
College of Humanities & Social Sciences



CHSS Faculty and Staff Provide Vital Service, LEADERSHIP ACROSS ROWAN'S CAMPUS

DEEPLY INVESTED IN ROWAN'S future, faculty and staff members of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences are taking the lead in serving the University and College in many roles.

"It's obvious that the University is undergoing a period of rapid and sustained change," said Dr. Bill Freind, Senate president and associate professor of English. "I think it's absolutely essential that all members of the Rowan community participate in the discussions about the future of the University."

As president of the Communications Workers of America on campus, Denise Williams keeps employees up-to-date through meetings and emails and serves as an advocate for employees.

Williams is dedicated to protecting the working rights of Rowan employees. "I feel it is my job to help make the University a better workplace for all employees," said Williams, who is an administrative assistant in the History Department.

"Service is essential to the maintenance of a vibrant university community and college," said Dr. DeMond Miller, Senate vice president and professor of sociology. "Understanding the different points of view around campus helps me represent the College of Humanities and Social Sciences to the larger community of scholars."

Christine Larsen-Britt, a senior academic advisor and instructor who serves as the Rowan University Senate secretary and on numerous boards, explained that her dedica-

tion to service is crucial to her professional satisfaction and identity.

"My service commitments allow me to help craft our student experience in ways that are outside my everyday position of academic advisor," she said. "I have seen the progress we have made during my time at Rowan, and I take heart in the fact that my colleagues and I go above and beyond our duties, our hours, and our expectations each time we sign on to a committee or volunteer for a special project."

Dr. Catherine Parrish, ombudsperson and associate professor of English, acts as a resource for Rowan employees involved in work-related conflicts as well as students with conflicts involving Rowan employees.

"The ombudsperson position is similar to student advising," she explained. "I make people aware of their options. I try to help them troubleshoot problems and, when possible, I connect people to resources. I've learned a lot from serving as an ombudsperson. It's very rewarding when I can help someone."

Serving as the chair of the University's Institutional Review Board, Dr. Harriet Hartman protects human subjects involved in research conducted by Rowan researchers or on the Glassboro campus, making sure all submitted research complies with established Office for Human Research Protections (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services) ethical guidelines.

A faculty voice is important as a bridge between researchers and administrative staff,



Pictured Left to Right: Dr. DeMond Miller, Dr. Harriet Hartman, Ms. Denise Williams, Dr. Bill Freind. Not Pictured: Dr. Cathy Parrish and Ms. Christine Larsen-Britt

she said. "I like having expertise in a critical area (research) that is expanding at Rowan and making sure we comply with necessary and important national guidelines," said Hartman, who is a professor of sociology.

"And I enjoy hearing about all of the human subject research that is ongoing at Rowan," she said. "It's very impressive." ■

Political Science's Pluta HELPS PUBLIC UNTANGLE THE POLITICAL PROCESS

LIKE MANY THROUGHOUT THE country, the morning after the presidential election, Rowan students were looking for answers. Trying to make sense of election results that contrasted radically with the picture pollsters had painted before the election, they filtered into the Student Center for a campaign recap and discussion.

"They asked lots of questions, and I think they were trying to digest what happened," said Dr. Anne Pluta, assistant professor

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of political science and event panelist. Hosted by the Political Science and Economics Department, the discussion also featured Dr. Lois Vietri, instructor of political science; Jim Walsh, editor and columnist at the Courier-Post; and Dr. Danielle Gougou, instructor of political science and panel moderator.

"For the most part, there was surprise and then some uncertainty about what the future was going to hold, and I think that's a pretty normal reaction. I think no one is quite certain as to what a Trump administration is going to look like, so I could understand their apprehension."

Pluta is used to helping the general public decipher the intricacies of the political process. She has written for FiveThirtyEight.com, has appeared on NBC10, and has been interviewed by numerous media outlets.

As an academic, Pluta maintains a balance between her research and public scholarship, but her studies, which focus on presidential communication and the media, also feed her public role.

"There's not a whole lot of point to being in your ivory tower and doing research and not putting that research to work in any way," she said.

"To me, the way to put it to work is to talk to the public about how we can understand some of these political occurrences based on empirical evidence," she said. "Based on research that's been done, how can it help us understand what's going on, understand implications, reach conclusions, and try to look at things — not just what we feel or what our opinions are — but with actual evidence?" ■

For History's Hague, HOMES YIELD CLUES TO SOCIAL HISTORY



RAGS-TO-RICHES LEGENDS ARE woven into the very fabric of our society, but are these accounts accurate?

Not entirely, according to research by Dr. Stephen Hague, instructor of history, who examined modest 18th-century houses in England and British North America to gauge social mobility.

Based on this work, Hague wrote *The Gentleman's House in the British Atlantic World 1680-1780*, which was among four finalists for the Alice Davis Hitchcock Medallion. He also penned an essay for an anthology titled *Building the British Atlantic World*, which received the 2016 Allen G. Noble Book Award.



Owners of these homes occupied a lower rung on the social ladder compared with those living in large English country houses that historians often study.

His research revealed that social mobility for these people was measured and incremental — rather than changing overnight. "They could build fairly big but not overwhelmingly large houses that were relatively economical and cost-effective," Hague said. "These were really strong indicators of how social mobility took place."

Hague's work is unique in that it examined British North America as part of a larger British world, Hague explained. It also included material culture, looking at the products people produced as important sources in cultural history.

In addition, he focused on furnishings, landscapes, and buildings, areas that usually are studied separately by curators, landscape historians, and architects. "I wanted to show that these houses are living organisms and



Dr. Stephen Hague discusses his new book, *The Gentleman's House in the British Atlantic World 1680-1780*, during a book signing event in November.

we need to look at all of these facets together in order to understand what was happening," he said. ■

For 2011 Alumna, MILITARY SERVICE A PERFECT FIT



OVER THE YEARS, LINETTE RIVERA Rodriguez, '11, tried on several careers for size, but she knew she had the right fit when she pulled on a pair of combat boots.

"It calls out to the values and traditions that have been ingrained in me by my family," said Rodriguez, who is the daughter of New Jersey State Senator Nilsa Cruz-Perez. "That's the way I was raised. My mother is a public servant and that's the example I have." In addition, both of her parents served in the military.

A sociology major, Rodriguez entered the New Jersey National Guard in 2012, where she will serve until the end of 2016. "From 2012 to 2015, I completed a total of four different military schools to advance my military career as well as to make me a stronger soldier and leader," said Rodriguez, who was promoted to sergeant in 2014. She recently reenlisted with the federal component of the United States Army for four more years.

She became one of the first women in the Army to earn the 12B combat arms military



Linette Revers Rodriguez accepts the Distinguished Young Alumnus Award alongside **President Ali Houshmand**, Director of Alumni Engagement, **Chris D'Angelo**, and VP for Student Life, **Richard Jones**.

occupational specialty, leading to removal of gender-based military combat restrictions. She is currently the first and only female in her new unit in 474 Engineer Platoon in Orlando, Florida. She is pursuing a master's degree in homeland security from Fairleigh Dickinson University.

She continues to value the sociology degree she earned at Rowan. "I've been able to apply the concepts to my career as well as to my master's studies," said Rodriguez, who currently lives in St. Augustine, Florida. "I'm so happy to have a background in sociology because as I take my core classes, I'm able to pull from the foundation I have in social research and analysis."

Her favorite part of serving is seeing the impact of all military forces coming together to protect Americans' freedom. "The fact that we have a sense of direction and purpose — that's what makes our nation's military great and ultimately why I love serving," she said. ■

Students Explore LIMITS OF FREE SPEECH



ALTHOUGH AMERICANS UPHOLD free speech as a fundamental right, they agree less often on how opinions should be expressed.

To help students discuss this issue in depth, Law & Justice Studies, Africana Studies, American Studies, and Philosophy and Religion programs hosted a panel discussion, "From Trigger Warnings to Free Speech Zones: What Is the State of Free Speech on Campus?"

Commemorating Constitution Day, this event featured Melissa Wheatcroft, Rowan's associate general counsel; Richard Corrado, attorney and board member of the American Civil Liberties Union-New Jersey; and Joseph Cohn, legislative and policy director of the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education, as well as statements by two students, Brendan Kain and Tyriese Holloway, and a question-and-answer session.

Speakers discussed the University's policies on free speech, the Constitution, and related issues. "We had a good turnout, and

the students were really engaged," said Dr. Chanelle Rose, associate professor, coordinator of Africana Studies, Department of History, who moderated the panel.



Ms. Melissa Wheatcroft, Associate General Counsel, discusses free speech legislation as it pertains to Rowan's campus community.

"I think it raised a lot of questions and gave them some good information that made them reevaluate some of their preconceived notions," she said.

Rose explained that such events increase students' critical thinking and expand their awareness beyond the classroom to the campus and other campuses across the country. "Part of what we try to do at the College of Humanities and Social Sciences is to help them learn through the more traditional channels but also through experiential learning so they can become more informed, become better citizens, become productive, and become better employees or employers," she said.

Such a holistic education helps develop students' critical thinking and allows them to engage in discussions that they may not experience in their own disciplines. "We think it pushes students out of their comfort zone, to hear from students who may not think like them and to be informed about issues that are really important, inside and outside the classroom," she said. ■

Students Explore LANGUAGE THROUGH ART, MUSIC, AND MORE



WHEN THE FINAL BELL RINGS, most students are bursting to leave school behind. However, students in the Glassboro School District were eager to learn more when they engaged in an after-

school program developed by Esther Mas, instructor of Spanish.

In this grant-funded program, first- through third-graders learned Spanish through art projects, music, sports, and games. "Even during their snack time, they practiced Spanish in a meaningful way," Mas said.

"Being in an environment that was free of regimented tests, students felt no pressure to perform any given task," said Vanessa Valdes, '16, a Spanish and subject matter education major from Hackensack, who taught the program. "All the activities were engaging and encouraged students to explore the language. Because it piqued their curiosity, they willingly joined in the fun."

Meanwhile, Valdes gained hands-on experience with students. "She put into action what she was learning in her theory classes," Mas said.

Although Valdes had set her sights on a career in secondary education, interacting with younger students opened her eyes to new possibilities. "I underestimated how fascinating young children can be," she said. "They truly are unpredictable, making every experience one where I could appreciate their quirky and unique outlook on learning."



Spanish instructor, Dr. Esther Mas, collaborates with students at Rowan.

Valdes also developed local ties. "It was helpful for her to connect with the Glassboro community. The Glassboro after-school program was very appreciative that Vanessa was here helping with the students in an enrichment program," Mas said.

Engaging students in foreign languages has become increasingly important, Mas noted. "We want to create a very positive tone and broaden students' horizons to different cultures and languages while they are still young," she said. ■