When Marian and Alina Komarnicki immigrated to the United States in 1949, they had never heard of Texas Western College (UTEP’s former name). However, after learning about UTEP, they generously willed over half a million dollars to assist students with scholarships.

The generosity of their gift is especially important given their inspiring story. As teenagers, the Komarnicki’s lives were forever transformed by the Nazi German invasion of their native Poland. Marian and his family were forcibly expelled from their home and transferred to a concentration camp. They were later allowed to settle in Warsaw.

While in Warsaw, Marian, like many of his generation, joined the anti-Nazi resistance movement. One of his close comrades, Zbyszek, introduced Marian to his sister, Alina in 1941. Together they endured the harsh conditions in Warsaw until the 1944 Warsaw Uprising. Zbyszek died during this battle against Nazism, leaving Alina with a permanent emotional scar.

Both Alina and Marian were sent to forced labor camps after the Uprising. Their harsh living conditions ended when the U.S. Army liberated their camp. The Komarnickis married in 1947 and moved to the U.S. about two years later.

They met Z.A. “Tony” Kruszewski in Chicago and began a fifty year friendship. Like the Komarnickis, Dr. Kruszewski did not have family in the U.S., so they and many other Polish immigrants with similar experiences formed “a substitute family of refugees,” as Dr. Kruszewski puts it.

Many readers will know Dr. Kruszewski as a long time member of the political science faculty. So it was natural for him to speak about UTEP in regular conversations with the Komarnickis. It was through these words that they discovered the transformative effects UTEP has on our students. They understood that social mobility was possible with higher education. They also understood the important role higher education has in building democracy. So it was not surprising that they wanted to help students with financial need and provided an endowment to the College of Liberal Arts.

Their story is one of hardship and bravery due to events outside of their control, but events that they and others wanted to change. Their spirit of promoting change and transformation continues with their very generous gift. The department, college and university are truly grateful for their foresight.

The following students were selected as the inaugural cohort by the Komarnicki Scholarship Committee for the 2012-2013 academic year:

- Susan Achury
- Josiah Barrett
- Daniel Call
- David Carrasco
- Jazmin Cervantes
- Matthew Ibarra
- Jessica Medina
- Carlos Nevárez
- Rebeca Puentes
- Alejandra Ramos Gómez
- Ricardo Romero
- Maite Salcido
**CHAIR’S MESSAGE**

**BY GREG SCHMIDT**

This newsletter highlights some of the many activities and accomplishments of faculty and students in the Department of Political Science over the past year. I encourage you to visit our website for a broader perspective and more in-depth information.

The Komarnicki Scholarships, featured in this edition’s lead story, are truly a milestone in our department’s ability to assist students. A dozen Political Science students have already benefitted from the generosity of Alina and Marian Komarnicki and their friendship with Dr. Tony Kruszewski. Many more will do so in the future. Although gifts of this size are rare, all contributions to the department help us to better serve students.

I am pleased to announce that 2012 M.A. graduate Jesse Kapenga has won the award for the best thesis in the College of Liberal Arts for his work, “The Rhetoric of Construction: A Comparative Case Study of the Language of the U.S.-Mexico and Israel-Palestine Border Walls.” Josiah Barrett and Genesee Mullin are respectively the winners of the Thomas Cook Award for the Outstanding M.A. Graduate and the Joseph Ray Award for the Outstanding B.A. Graduate. Both completed internships with the U.S. State Department: Josiah in Riga, Latvia (see p. 3) and Genesee in Geneva, Switzerland.

Many more good things are in the pipeline, so please stay in touch with us. And Go Miners!

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**THE PROFESSOR’S CORNER**

**BY KATHLEEN STAUDT**

Editor’s note: We highlight a faculty member’s recent work in each issue of Political Spin.

In 2012, Mark Lusk, Kathleen Staudt, and Eva Moya co-edited a 14-chapter volume, *Social Justice in the U.S.-Mexico Border Region* (www.springer.com). The volume examines injustices, underdevelopment, and inequalities in many aspects of the geographic region, including health disparities, environmental problems, and immigration, yet the volume also documents the resilience of borderlands residents.

The collection is interdisciplinary, with chapter authors writing from frameworks in sociology, anthropology, public health, theology, medicine, social work, education, and (of course) political science. It was truly an honor for me to work with this distinguished group of scholars—scholars committed to connecting their analyses to changemakers, whether in policy or civil society.

Since the 1990s, my research and teaching have, in part, focused on educational policies and politics. In this volume, I co-authored a chapter, with Dr. Pauline Dow, on “Education Policies, Standardized Testing, English-Language Learners, and Border Futures.” The chapter includes Dr. Dow’s stunning research findings about how two-way bilingual/dual-language programming produces better outcomes in multiple students’ assessments than one-way bilingual and monolingual programs over six years in a large sample.

Dr. Dow served in high-level administration in two El Paso-area school districts and now works in the Austin ISD, 6th largest in the state.

I hope El Pasoans mobilize around strengthening our schools and developing alliances between teachers and parents to develop the talents of ALL our children. In fall 2012, I served on a planning committee for the January two-day forum “Social Justice in Education” that drew 400 people to Bowie High School. If any readers want to commit time and energy to this vital issue in our region, please contact me at kstaudt@utep.edu.

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**PRESENTING POLITICAL CORRUPTION RESEARCH**

**BY SUSAN ACHURY**

During February 2013, I had the opportunity to present my thesis research on political corruption and political party system institutionalization in Latin American countries at the 33rd ILASSA’s annual Student Conference in Austin, and the 2013 Latin American Social and Public Policy Conference in Pittsburgh.

The conferences were a great experience because I was able to share my research with diverse Latin American Studies scholars. Conferences that have a regional concentration allow us to conduct a deeper analysis of the political and social phenomena in a multidisciplinary manner. This perspective helps me bring a more nuanced understanding to my research which links the cultural and institutional factors that trigger political corruption. The experience allowed me to network with other professionals with similar research interests so I could receive important feedback and suggestions like inclusion of additional factors that can impact political corruption.

In addition to the benefits of attending the specialized conferences, it was a great opportunity to compare and assess my work during UTEP’s Political Science Masters program. The foundations in research methods I received and the high quality of our courses truly provided me with great tools needed for my research interests. I want to thank our faculty, particularly Dr. Schmidt and Dr. Hiroi, for their direction and sponsorship. I also wish to thank those that donate to the department gift fund. I would not have been able to attend without your help.
ALUMNA KAREN HART RECEIVES BUSINESS AWARD

Karen L. Hart (’97) won a Dallas Business Journal's 2012 Women in Business Award. Each year, 25 outstanding corporate executives and business owners in the Dallas-Fort Worth region are honored with this award. Karen was recognized for her work in the legal profession and her contributions to the Dallas community.

The award was presented on June 7, 2012 at the Irving Convention Center.

Karen is currently an attorney with Bell Nunnally & Martin LLP. Her work includes litigation and counseling involving complex commercial disputes, including general contractual and real estate matters. Her client base spans the globe and she advises clients on international litigation and arbitration matters and related cross-border transactions.

Her legal skills and experiences have received peer recognition. She was also recently named a Texas Monthly "Rising Star"...for the fourth time!

MY EXPERIENCES WITH THE HOUSE OF COMMONS BY PABLO CHAPA BLANCO

Imagine working at an office inside one of the oldest and most emblematic symbols of modern democratic parliamentary systems, being able to meet the Members of Parliament (MPs) whom students write about in their classes, and having a first-hand experience in constituency casework handling for an MP. This is what my internship abroad in the House of Commons was like.

As a Research and Administrative Assistant in the House of Commons, my daily job consists of managing the correspondence received by the MP's office and informing the MP on his or her constituents' requests and concerns towards different government policies. Reading and replying to correspondence is an everyday activity that is never the same. Sometimes I reply to letters from constituents, or from lobbyists, other MPs, and even from some top-ranking officials, such as the Chancellor of the Exchequer or the Attorney General.

Occasionally, I would do research and produce briefing notes on topics concerning government interests in order to brief the MP on the debates or committee work taking place in the Chamber, or on other events where his attendance was required.

These assignments are part of an enjoyable learning experience. They gave me great insight on a different political system and culture. They also simultaneously let me work alongside amazing people and enhance my communication and interpersonal skills, as well as my research and analytic abilities. I would definitely recommend this experience to anyone interested in working for any governmental institution, whether in the national or international environment.

INTERNING WITH THE STATE DEPARTMENT IN LATVIA BY JOSIAH BARRETT

In the summer of 2012, I served as a Political-Economic intern with the U.S. State Department in Riga, Latvia. The competitive internship gave me the opportunity to work with a government agency to see “politics in action.”

I was able to work on a wide range of political and economic issues including conducting research on Latvia’s fiscal transparency, identifying strategic infrastructure, and aiding in the development of a bilateral Sensitive Information Sharing Agreement.

Along with playing an active role in other diplomatic tasks, including writing cables and delivering official diplomatic messages, I assisted in the Embassy’s mission during official visits by Secretary of State Clinton, a Congressional Delegation, and the largest business delegation in Latvian history. With a particular interest in NATO and military policies, my last task required me to work with American and Latvian diplomatic and military officials. I was selected to write a briefing memo for the incoming American Ambassador on the key components of U.S-Latvian political-military policies. Overall, the State Department internship was a professionally and personally rewarding experience. I recommend that other UTEP Political Science students should never think twice when presented with a chance at similar opportunities.

The experience was made possible with recommendations from Ambassador Roger Pierce, Dr. Takeo Hiroi, and with the support of the UTEP chapter of Pi Sigma Alpha, which actively encourages its members to take advantage of academic and professional opportunities.
**Psalm 148**

*Hymn of Praise to the Lord*

Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord, O my soul.

I will praise the Lord with all my heart; I will tell of all the wonderful things he has done.

Praise him, all his faithful servants; praise his holy name.

Let those who follow him rejoice and be glad in him; let all his faithful servants say, "Praise the Lord!"

Glory and praise be to his name forever! Praise the Lord! Amen.
Dr. Gregory Schmidt taught undergraduate classes on comparative politics, Latin America, and Peru, and supervised Mani Ghaly’s thesis on Bhutanese electoral administration. He published an article on the 2011 Peruvian election, a book chapter on open list voting, and a review of a book on Peruvian President Alejandro Toledo. He also provided advice on metrics for gender and electoral systems to the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women.

Dr. Cigdem V. Sirin published three refereed journal articles in Armed Forces & Society, the International Journal of Public Opinion Research, and the International Journal of Conflict Management. She presented her research at the Turkish Studies Political Psychology Workshop and Conference co-sponsored by the International Society of Political Psychology and TOBB Economy and Technology University. She was also awarded a $5,000 UTEP URI Grant to conduct a national survey experiment. Under the leadership of Provost Junius Gonzales and Dr. Charles Ambler, she has also been a co-investigator of a teaching project aimed at developing early intervention strategies for at-risk undergraduate students.

Dr. Kathleen Staudt published an edited volume, Social Justice in the U.S.-Mexico Border Region (Springer). She was also on the opening keynote panel, along with Dr. Tony Payan, at the BRIT XII Conference: Border Regions in Transition, Fukuoka, Japan and Busan, Korea. The BRIT XII conference drew 250 participants, mainly from Asia and Europe.

Dr. José Villalobos published three refereed journal articles in Political Research Quarterly, Presidential Studies Quarterly, and the International Journal of Public Opinion Research. He also published three book chapters and two other works. He was selected for the College of Liberal Arts Grant Proposal Preparation Program, appeared as a panelist for a PBS (KRWG-TV) one-hour special, served as the keynote speaker for the Mexican American Bar Association of El Paso’s annual meeting and banquet, and continued his duties as Executive Board Member and website manager for the Presidents & Executive Politics section of the APSA.
Supporting your alma mater has always been very critical to us. Over the years, we’ve deeply appreciated your financial assistance.

UTEP’s Political Science Department is attracting diverse and outstanding scholars to an already respected faculty. We have dynamic students, with enormous potential. Everything we do is geared to developing high quality students, enriching our campus intellectually, and increasing the understanding of local and global events through our research. In short, we are doing our part to make UTEP a nationally recognized institution of higher learning. Exciting things are happening in the department and your gift helps make them happen.

Consider giving at the $50, $100, or $500 levels. Whatever your level of contribution, your generosity is deeply appreciated and will be wisely used. There will be a special recognition of donors at our annual homecoming celebration and in the newsletter.

On behalf of faculty and staff, our sincere thanks and best wishes to you.

Please make checks payable to UTEP and write in the memo area of the check either “Department of Political Science” or the name of the specific Department of Political Science endowment to which you wish to contribute.

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Office of University Development
Kelly Hall, 7th Floor
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El Paso, TX 79968-0524

Or, if it is more convenient, you may make your gift online at: academics.utep.edu/politicalscience

To learn more, please call Dr. Greg Schmidt (915-747-7973) or Dr. Gaspare Genna (915-747-6066).