The faculty of the McMurray School of Humanities and Social Sciences continues to push the envelope in terms of creating an increasingly innovative learning environment for our students. We continue to innovate on all fronts, prioritizing the Centers of Excellence and departmental endeavors. The Center of Distinction for Arts has a strategic plan to guide its growth as it moves to meet its mission of Connecting the Arts and Engaging Students. The Monmouth University Polling Institute continues as one of the most prolific and highly respected polling institutes in the region.

This year we are saying hello to a new Center of Excellence, a new Department and goodbye (in an organizational sense) to another department.

The Center of Human and Community Wellness is led by a collaboration between Dr. Fran Trotman and the Department of Psychological Counseling, Dr. Janet Mahoney and Dean Marilyn Lauria of the School of Nursing, Dr. Franca Mancini from Counseling Services, Dr. Joy Jackson Director of the LCAC, and Dr. Golam Mathbor; this Center fulfills the university’s strategic plan to create a center devoted to human services.

The Department of Philosophy, Religion and Interdisciplinary Studies, chaired by Dr. Golam Mathbor brings together a group of 4 talented faculty who have been somewhat scattered until now: Prof. Barbara Andolsen (Helen Bennett McMurray Professor of Social Ethics), Prof. Alan Schwerin, Prof. Pasquale Simonelli and Prof. Stuart Dalton. Many of you know them and I ask you to welcome them in their new home in Howard Hall. It is certainly time, in my opinion, to offer our students an enhanced curriculum in philosophy, a program in religious studies and to rejuvenate the B.A. in interdisciplinary studies for students who find their interests overlap traditional disciplines.

This summer, we said goodbye, at least on the organizational charts, to the Department of Social Work, which will become its own school. Dr. Robin Mama has been appointed as dean. She and her fine faculty have worked hard at gaining accreditation and an excellent national and international reputation and we should all wish them the best of luck.

We can all look forward to two new majors in interdisciplinary initiatives for this coming year:

- In the fall, a 3-day national conference on The Future of Race in American Society, organized by Profs. Hettie Williams and Julius Adekunle, will examine the issue of race for the future of American society — quite a timely discussion given Barack Obama’s campaign for the presidency.
- The spring brings an interdisciplinary program on South Asia, led by Prof. Andrew Cohen in collaboration with the Global Understanding Institute. This multi-week program will examine the history, culture and arts of the subcontinent as it relates to present day realities. Again, a most timely topic.

Both of these integrate the cutting-edge scholarship of the faculty with the teaching mission of the university. I wish all participants good luck with these major endeavors and encourage everyone to participate and attend these programs.

I look forward to working with all of you this new year as we move the McMurray School of Humanities and Social Sciences to the next level.
Let me begin with an important quote that I have learned from Bill Drayton, the founder of Ashoka Foundation, regarding his notion of four stages of becoming a successful social entrepreneur as noted in David Bornstein’s book *How to Change the World: Social Entrepreneurs and the Power of New Ideas*. Drayton broke down the entrepreneurs’ “life cycle” into four stages: (1) “apprenticeship,” a long period in which entrepreneurs acquire the experience, skills and credentials they need to cause major change; (2) “launch” the early period during which entrepreneurs begin testing and demonstrating their ideas; (3) “take-off,” an extended period in which entrepreneurs consolidate their organizations and continue to refine and spread their ideas until they become widely adopted; and (4) “maturity,” the point at which entrepreneurs have demonstrated an impact on their fields. As a strong believer in social entrepreneurship bringing positive changes in institutional culture, I consider my first year as Associate Dean of the Wayne D. McMurray School of Humanities and Social Sciences was of the “apprenticeship” stage. In the second year of my deanship (“launch” stage) after spending substantial time with faculty, administrators, and staff in the school, I have learned that an interdisciplinary approach is a key not only to bring the faculty, staff, and administrators aboard but this approach is necessary for the growth and development of our largest school. In focusing so, I have been involved in a number of initiatives for our school that I would like to describe here.

One of the most successful events of our university is the annual Global Understanding Convention that brings both faculty and students across disciplines together. I co-chaired the conventions of 2007 and 2008 with Prof. Kathy Smith-Wenning and Dr. Kevin Dooley, respectively. Through the many events of these conventions, I believe we have been quite successful highlighting that there is not a single approach that can resolve or address the diverse human needs of our communities. Many of the joint presentations during the conventions by faculty and students from different academic disciplines are an affirmation to this end. The Monmouth community has valued global awareness as an essential factor in our learning process. Consequently, the Global Understanding Project, started in 2000, has been established as the Institute of Global Understanding in 2008. Another important interdisciplinary initiative by our school is the creation of the Center for Human and Community Wellness. This center has drawn faculty and practitioners from various academic and student service disciplines of the university. The Center is now working on organizing a symposium to explore multidisciplinary approaches to address human and community needs of our globalized society.

Our faculty forums during this academic year were very successful, both in terms of quality and attendance by faculty and staff from various disciplines. These events also bring cross fertilization of ideas that eventually calls for an interdisciplinary approach to learning and problem solving. On October 17, 2007, Dr. Bojana Beric, Dr. James Konopack, and Dr. Laura Jannone from the School of Nursing and Health Studies presented an information session followed by questions and answers on Monmouth’s new major in Health Studies. Dr. Alan Cavaiol from the Department of Psychological Counseling led the November 14, 2007 forum on “The Life and Death of the American Psychiatric Institution: From McLean to Marlboro.” Dr. Aaron Ansell from the Department of History and Anthropology presented on “Race and Development in Rural Brazil” on January 30, 2008. Monmouth’s diversity fellow for the last academic year, Ms. Brooke Campbell, lectured on “Taking a Vulnerability Approach to Contemporary Debates on Sex Work” on February 20, 2008. Dr. Julius Adekunle from the History and Anthropology Department presented on “Ghana: The Land of Gold” on March 19, 2008. Dr. Jingzi Huang, School of Education, and Ms. Jane De Tullio, Director, Writing Center presented on “Working with Minority Students (LMS) in Your Class” on April 23, 2008.

The faculty in our new Department of Philosophy, Religion, and Interdisciplinary Studies has developed a minor in Religious Studies with a tentative date of implementation effective from Fall 2009. It is evident that students are continuously experiencing difficulties addressing human and social problems just by learning and acquiring skills from one discipline. Therefore, faculty in the new department will be exploring potential opportunities for joint collaboration between and among various academic departments that can better serve the unique needs of our students.

I believe all these ongoing activities in the school will provide us a platform to “take off” for the next level and eventually will bring more “maturity” that will definitely have a positive impact on our Monmouth University community. I thank you for your hard work and continuous support in our school’s mission and new initiatives implementing mission goals. I wish you all a pleasant and prosperous 2008-2009 academic year.
Growing Pains: Notes on Advising, Teaching and Reading

By Michael P. Thomas

Too many narratives, too many "lyric" moments and some abbreviated images, have been running towards me like those sandpipers at the edge of the surf, twittering and dancing up the wet sand together with the beat of the waves. Some chaos mixed with steadiness. I've finally decided to have those brief, sometimes disparate entries and notes stand alongside one another, to have them run together. The French poet, Paul Valery said, "Poems are never finished, just abandoned." In that spirit, here is the unfinished, with the hope that my readers will let me know how it all makes sense.

1) At several orientation sessions this past year, I've read a poem by the poet, William Matthews, called "Poetry Reading at West Point." Besides my pleasure in the poem as a whole, I have been trying to tell students that even military cadets, soon to be Army Officers, study poetry. I wonder what the cadets would have contributed to our discussion about liberal arts. Or what about the English professor at the Julliard School of Music, who taught my twin brother literature, even though my brother spent 7 hours a day practicing percussion and in rehearsals. I thought about this and about my brother reading novels in the orchestra pit of Aida on Broadway at intermission. He always wanted to show me the books stacked near the timpani.

2) The student who has walked out of the building with me after literature class keeps asking questions. About the reading, about some characters in Chekhov. He has to run off, he says, to chemistry lab to finish a project, but wants to make sure his take on Gurov's love for Anna is "more or less on target." Then I remember my Humanities (Art History & Literature combined!) professor at Boston U, whom I would follow out of class, down the stairs to Commonwealth Avenue. Can you carry this bag for me, she always asked, pausing briefly before finishing her explanation of Yeats or Roth or Goya. My small labor for the new world I was entering. Finance was my original major. Along with Navy ROTC. Soon enough I discovered I wasn't any good at marching.

3) Coming out of the library late on a Sunday night during the first week of classes, a group of fraternity "men" called out to me: "geek!" "toad!" "loser!" in that three-beat sequence. Thinking I could ignore them by lowering my head, they said, "You should keep your head lowered, toad." The next week I bought headphones.

4) I transferred to Hamilton College from Boston U in search of an English Major with a Creative Writing Concentration. I am not sure about the percentage, but I recently read that around 65% of undergraduates take a degree in one subject and radically shift their career plans within five years of graduation. Speaking of numbers, I can't remember the GPA I had at graduation. I do remember finding out that I wasn't awarded departmental honors and how sad I was for several days after. And that August, the only thing that mattered was a letter from my creative writing mentor, Agha Shahid Ali, urging me to keep writing. That was it. The numbers faded.

5) My student says he feels like he is the only one in class who cares about the books. I tell him that he has new ideas and his passion for literature is unlike the others, and that real thinkers and artists have always felt like they live in the margins. "But it's lonely in the margins," he says. Citing the recent Peace Rally on campus, which has happened twice in a year (compared with zero in the previous ten years), I tell him that life in the margins may not be the margins.

6) When my students in Literature II see a video of a man in a large red squirrel costume (a.k.a. MC Nuts) reciting Wordsworth's "I WanderedLonely as a Cloud" like a hip-hop artist, backed with heavy drum rhythms, they laugh and explain that the poem has been demeaned by the video. Their favorite part of the video is the end when circled by spinning daffodils, the phrase "RESPECT WORDSWORTH" appears before the fade out.

7) The poet, William Matthews says, in that aforementioned poem, ". . .he (a cadet) and I were, after/ all, pained by the same dumb longings."

8) "At the moment, he is reading Anna Karenina. Toward the end of one afternoon his heart leaps, and he has to catch his breath. He puts the book down and whispers to himself, 'My God.' His stepmother calls him downstairs for dinner. He sits at the table in silence but he cannot eat. He stares at this brothers, at his father, at his stepmother. Do they not understand? Anna has thrown herself in front of a train." These words come from novelist Caryl Phillips, who read in our Visiting Writers series this past year. That moment in his narrative ("Growing Pains"--the title I stole) has remained in my imagination since then. The debate I have with students and advisees is consistently about "reality" and the imagination, passions as opposed to the practical.

9) At the end of her essay on teaching at West Point, "In the Valley of the Shadow," Elizabeth Samet writes about a student struggling with his civilian friends who accuse him of "wanting to kill people." That's not at all
what he wants, he explains to her during her office hours. She writes that he is trying to figure nothing less than how to live his life. I wonder how often I might assume I know what my students’ motivations might be and how that affects my teaching or my advising.

10) Even if I don’t always know what motivates my students, I know some will close a book, breathless. Of course not all will, but some. As I’ve mentioned before, we can’t always know what will remain with our students in the years ahead of them. But I believe if we keep in mind that we are doing nothing less than trying to help them figure out how to live their lives, we will define our success by the relationships we cultivate in advising and teaching.

If you wish to contribute an article for publication, please contact Eileen Jones (emjones@monmouth.edu).

Editor: Golam M. Mathbor, MSW, Ph.D.