A Message from the Dean

Dr. Stanton Green

Laering i den liberale kunst (Learning in the Liberal Arts): Some thoughts

*Education is an admirable thing, but it is well to remember from time to time that nothing that is worth knowing can be taught*  
— Oscar Wilde

Let’s think about this quote for a minute. If ‘things worthwhile’ cannot be taught, then what are we all doing? What is the mission of Monmouth University? What is the frenzy of activity in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences all about? Indeed, how can we justify a new general education curriculum, if “nothing that is worth knowing can be taught?”

The answer, I believe, requires some reflection and cannot be put off to just semantics. If we portray Oscar Wilde’s words to his being ‘philosophical’ or perhaps even humorous, we miss a profound opportunity to understand the significance of our collective endeavor in the McMurray School of Humanities and Social Sciences. Two points of entry would seem to help us toward this understanding.

First, the Humanities and Social Sciences fit squarely within the disciplinary areas of the liberal arts. A source often used by our students, Wikipedia, defines the liberal arts in the following way:

*The term liberal arts denotes a curriculum that imparts general knowledge and develops the student’s rational thought and intellectual capabilities unlike the professional, vocational, technical curricula emphasizing specialization.*

The freedom that the liberal arts offer, therefore, is through the capabilities it organizes in rational and intellectual thought. Wikipedia continues:

*In classical antiquity, the liberal arts denoted the education proper to a free man (Latin: liber, “free”), unlike the education proper to a slave.*
The educational mission now takes on the social objective of creating free persons. These are indeed lofty even daunting goals; to create free, rational thinking intellectual citizens! Perhaps Oscar is correct: how could we possibly claim to teach this? The answer to this would seem to lie in what we mean by the verb “to teach.”

Oscar Wilde’s words, I believe, lead to the insight that teaching is a systemic process not a linear set of events. If teaching is limited to the one way transmission of information, then perhaps he is right – there is not much worth knowing that can be taught. If, however, we look at this word via the Danish language, where teaching and learning are expressed in one verb – at laere – the educational process has almost infinite limits.

I apologize if this treatise seems a bit lofty for a newsletter. But, as I thought about my annual appraisal of the outstanding achievements of the students, faculty and staff of our school, I realized that describing them required a more reflective description of learning. (If you would like to see a summary of the hundreds of activities that occurred in our School, please ask for a copy of our annual report.) How to really describe the ‘learning’ that occurs among our faculty and students came to me during my recent visit with our students studying abroad in Cadiz, Spain. Among our students’ activities was a half-day tour of the Alhambra, a palace and fortress complex of the Moorish rulers of Granada. I wondered how one would capture the ‘education’ they were getting during their visit to this enormous site that existed over centuries, and was the residue of clashing cultures. I observed them learning as they conversed in Spanish over menus at the Plaza of the Cathedral in Cadiz, and haggled over the price of clothing with local vendors. I thought about that same kind of ‘learning’ experience occurring as our music students performed Gershwin at Pollak Auditorium, and our psychological counseling students worked with local charities; as art and design students prepared their work for gallery exhibition; psychology students prepared their posters and presentations for a research conference; as the debate team argued their cases at national tournaments, and anthropology students excavated Joseph Bonaparte’s estate in Bordentown. The learning/teaching process between student and faculty in all of these instances is inextricable.

I like to say that our School is characterized by connections and integration built on the disciplinary strength of the humanities and social sciences. When we add to this the distance our faculty and students travel, both literally and virtually, and the real-time experiential situations we offer in the classroom and beyond, we can begin to appreciate the learning community we call the Wayne D. McMurray School of Humanities and Social Sciences.

Perhaps nothing worth knowing can be taught – but much can be learned, and I am proud of the serious commitment of our faculty and students as they work together in their collective endeavors.
In this newsletter, I would like to focus on some of the exciting events that took place in the past two semesters within the Wayne D. McMurray School of Humanities and Social Sciences. On behalf of our School, we organized a panel discussion during the Global Understanding Convention 2009 on: “How Does Ethnicity, Language, and Religion Impact Genocide?” This was organized based on Samuel P. Huntington’s best seller book, *The Clash of Civilization and the Remaking of World Order*, I recently read. In his book, the author notes to a very large degree, the major civilizations in human history have been closely identified with the world’s great religions; and people who share ethnicity and language, but differ from each other in religion, may slaughter each other, as what happened in Lebanon, the former Yugoslavia, and the Indian Subcontinent. Two consecutive panels critically examined the degree to which ethnicity, language, and religion mattered in contemporary genocides. The first panel led by Dr. Kevin Dooley, Assistant Professor, Political Science; Ms. Jane Denny, Director, Holocaust, Genocide and Human Rights Education, Brookdale Community College; and myself, set the tone for the second panel, highlighting international laws, both conventional and customary, currently in force. The second panel was led by Dr. Nuran Nabi, Councilman, Plainsboro, NJ; Dr. Nagip Skenderi, University of Prishtina, Kosovo; and Dr. Julius Adekunle, Associate Professor - History Department. This panel documented and examined contemporary examples of gross violations of human rights and social justice issues during the Bangladesh genocide of 1971, ethnic cleansing and genocide in former Yugoslavia during the 1990s, the genocide in Rwanda in 1994, and the on-going genocide in Darfur. Provost Dr. Thomas Pearson, Professor of Russian History did a marvelous welcome address to begin this panel discussion; chaired by Professor Dr. Stan Green, Dean-School of Humanities and Social Sciences. Our moderator for the second session was Dr. Pasquale Simonelli, Lecturer, Department of Philosophy, Religion and Interdisciplinary Studies.

A conference on “Race: Future of Illusion, Future of the Past” was organized by Dr. Julius Adekunle and Hetti Williams, faculty members in the Department of History and Anthropology. The conference brought peoples from various academic disciplines and represented several countries. Dr. Andrew Cohen, Chair of the Department of Art and Design, organized and chaired the Celebrating South Asia, which hosted a number of events focused on South Asian cultures, arts, politics, history, and economy through films, panel discussions, lectures, and dialogues. Dr. Pasquale Simonelli organized and coordinated the recital of the Soprano Raya Gonen, “Singing for Survival: From Holocaust to Hope,” in Pollak Theatre on November 19, 2008.

Leading off our faculty forums for this past academic year was Dr. Peter Liu, Chair of the Department of Criminal Justice, which took place on September 24, and entitled, “China Meets the World-Study Abroad and the Olympic Experiences.” Dr. Liu reflected on his
experiences leading a group of MU students to China during the Beijing Olympics, 2008. In February, our Dissertation Scholar-in-Residence, Ms. Janette Yarwood, presented on “With Mixed Feelings: Negotiating Colored Identities in Post Apartheid South Africa.” Ms. Yarwood took the audience for this event on an exploration of the everyday-lived experiences of colored people in Cape Town, and the implications of negotiating colored identity with the specific context of the new social economic conditions of post-apartheid South Africa.

Steven Kosiba (Ph.D. candidate), Assistant Professor in the Department of History and Anthropology, lectured on “Mummies and Maps: Recent Archaeological Research on the Inka Populations of Cusco, Peru” on April 22nd. His presentation highlighted on how the Inkas cultivated an image of imperial authority in their capital city by transforming and ordering select places significantly associated with non-Inka past, such as shrines and local seats of power.

Our School takes pride in the recognition and accomplishments of Dr. Joe Patten, Associate Professor in the Department of Political Science, winning the distinguished faculty award for the year 2009. Also, Assistant Dean, Michael Thomas, has been awarded a fellowship by the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts (VCCA). Professor Thomas will be among the approximately 20 Fellows focusing on their own creative projects at this working retreat for visual artists, writers and composers during the month of August in rural Virginia.

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 2009-2010 academic year.
I am sitting on the beach in Venice, Florida, relieved by the warm sun, having escaped the northeast’s endless June rain. The book in my hands needs extra support from my knees. Beyond the top of these (1.100) pages is the Gulf of Mexico’s calm surf. The clouds and blue sky match the book jacket’s image of infinity, appropriately aligned with the title—Infinite Jest by David Foster Wallace. My former student, Dan Duffy is in New Jersey on the sands of Long Beach Island with the same book. Since Wallace’s tragic suicide last fall, Dan and I have had many conversations about him, sharing ideas and responses to his essays, short stories and essays reviewing his life and work.

But it was another friend who gave me this copy of Wallace’s tome, English Professor Emeritus, Donald McKenzie. At this moment he has the northernmost view of a coastline, from Stonington, Maine. With the same joyful insistence I heard in Dan’s voice after he read the first hundred pages, Donald told me how wildly wonderful a novel it is. This trio, with our mutual love of books and our connection to Mombrek University, across three generations and three vantage points, creates a strong sphere of influences. Donald’s gesture of forwarding Wallace’s now famous commencement address, This is Water, when it was reprinted in the Wall Street Journal shortly after his death, was the seed of our exchanges about and around Wallace.

When novelist Amitav Ghosh visited campus in April, he spoke to some of my students during an informal discussion. At one point, in his beautiful lyrical voice, Ghosh lamented the fact that so many social conversations revolve around movies. He was not cynical about it, but rather gracious, as he is with all communication. It seemed, though, that Ghosh was hoping that the few students sitting with him for our intimate hour might find a lifelong pursuit in reading. Last year when novelist Caryl Phillips visited, he spoke about literature’s moral role in that it helps us understand people, leading to more compassion in our culture. As I look up from my own book, I see that most people here are reading. A woman on a nearby towel has Michael Cunningham’s The Hours, which was made into a film. Is it the film that motivated the reader? Or vice versa? I don’t really care, truthfully. What matters to the reader most is the book, at least for now, as is indicated by her concentration and absorption despite the nearby beach volleyball fracas.

At the heart of the solitary atmosphere of reading is the influence of other people. The motivation to read has, for me, always been the result of mentors, teachers, professors, students, friends, and, even movies. In the closing scenes of the film, Sideways, a middle school student reads aloud from a novel. The passage struck me instantly and I found the title in the credits.

As the owner of too many books, I delight in the surprise of rediscovering an inscription. It is the small accounting of influence. Every time I open the book The Art of
the Sonnet, I find Donald’s handwriting and remember his generosity, his care to mentor my work as a poet. With most books, I think, too, of my high school English teacher, Mr. Sempreora. I wonder what he might have said. Twenty-three years ago, I was reading Keats and writing an essay for my seminar on the Romantic Poets when I received a call from my twin brother, who informed me, choking back tears, that Mr. Sempreora had died suddenly at 49. It was a poem in The Art of the Sonnet which prompted and inspired a piece about him.

I look again at the clouds here over the gulf, and then on the book cover and try to distinguish those shapes. In that clichéd manner of mourning, I ask the air, “Where are you, Mr. Sempreora?”

I see him again, not only standing in the middle of the semi-circle, but also there in the unlit classroom when I approached him once again for advice. He was sitting at a corner desk grading our essays. I showed him an essay from the New York Times Magazine written by a man who had recently been in a fist fight and regretted his aggression. My mother had cut it out after I was in my first and, thankfully, only fight. “You can write like this,” he said.

I pick up Wallace again. Eventually, I will reach the end of this novel, but the influences on my life by mentors and apprentices alike will never conclude. In the books, all the words and plots and metaphors, all the longings and memories, the generations lie there, in that abstract space I want to give shape and structure. It’s all in the bookcase: the losses, the loves, the languages, the influences—that beauty I try to remember to welcome, none of which is finite.

Mr. Sempreora

after Donald Justice

Heads of the great revolutionaries adorned corkboards around the room. Fierce stars and mad Sempreora calling out questions on Brecht or Pinter or Beckett. He loomed above our old style desks in rows and we feared he might abandon us in silence until the tuneless 2:40 bell. He hiked up his loose corduroys with elbows squeezed against his hips, still waving our words out. I hated his wrinkled forehead and comic book eyebrows. “Thomas!” he beamed half with disdain, half love, as I was lost studying Lauren Andolino’s legs. Once, after class, I confessed my family’s sudden fracture and he sat silent while I wept. I saw a faint, white dust on the corners of his mouth left by a stomach tonic he drank before class. Still, he demanded I finish my essay on The Good Woman of Szechuan. Who could forget him? Long dead now. Son of a bitch. Ah, those were the days.
**Art & Design Department**

Starting the 2009-10 academic year, the Art and Design Department will offer two new degrees and one new minor: BFA in Graphic Design with concentration in Animation, BA in Art with concentration in Photography, and a minor in photography.

In June 2009, student Simone Takacs won the Third Prize of the SIGGRAPH Annual International SpaceTime Student Exhibition (poster category). Along with Art/Design student, Mae-Yung Tang, their posters will represent Monmouth University during the international SIGGRAPH Conference, which will take place in August 2009. Professor Jing Zhou served as the faculty advisor.

Professor Jing Zhou received the Award of Distinction (Silver Award) of the Communicator Awards International Competition (Self Promotion Website Category) in 2009.

Pat Cresson will be attending a five-day workshop on Serial Monoprinting and Incorporating Digital Files at the Women's Studio Workshop Summer Arts Institute in Rosendale, NY, the last week of July.

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**English Department**

The Spring Graduate Symposium, Literature Matters,” was organized by Dr. Heide Estes and Dr. Kristin Bluemel; it took place on May 5th. It featured six student paper presentations and a spirited roundtable discussion on writing and publishing.

The English Department honored six students at the annual Student Awards Ceremony in April. Kelli Lorelli-Smith received the English Merit Award for outstanding graduating English major; Susan Berrios received the Caryl Sills English Teaching Award for outstanding senior English/Education major; Sian Flinders received the Academic Writing Prize; the Creative Writing prizes went to Lauren Coleman and Janna Frommer; Maria Geiger received an award for Graduate Study; and Amy Sloan received the English Alumni Scholarship for a rising junior English major of promise.

Our Monmouth Chapter of Sigma Tau Delta, the International English Honor Society, inducted 20 new members on April 29th. The guest speaker was Michael Thomas, Assistant Dean of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences (SHSS), and a published poet. The faculty advisor for Sigma Tau Delta this spring was Dr. Lisa Vetere. Sigma Tau Delta members supported an initiative this year to reach out to international students. They hosted dinners and movie nights in an effort to provide opportunities for unstructured social interaction with native English speakers.

Dr. Michael Waters and students from his spring poetry class hosted a poetry workshop with students from Brookdale Community College on May 5th.
Polling Institute

The Polling Institute continues to emerge as a leading voice on New Jersey politics and public policy. Institute Director, Patrick Murray was named by PolitickerNJ.com as one of the political “people to watch” in New Jersey this year, and he regularly appears as a political commentator in print and on television. The Institute’s work is also nationally recognized. In May, Murray and Tim MacKinnon, Research Associate, presented research stemming from the Institute’s polling during the 2008 election at the 64th Annual Conference of the American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR).

In addition to public polling on New Jersey issues and the upcoming gubernatorial election, the staff spent the past year assisting faculty and students with their research projects and collaborating with the Urban Coast Institute on their second Coastal Community Survey and the Human Relations Advisory Council (HRAC) on the University’s Campus Climate Assessment.

This year, the Institute also began work on the long-planned Garden State Quality of Life Index Project, raising $150,000 from corporate sponsors and foundations and will draw on partnerships across New Jersey and within the University during this important statewide project. The effort aims to measure public opinion on quality of life in our state and will issue quarterly reports on the subject; starting this fall with a high-profile press conference in Trenton.

The project held its June 9th kickoff conference at Wilson Hall which was attended by a diverse group of over 40 stakeholders from around the state. Attendees ranged from representatives of the NJ Office of Homeland Security & Preparedness to the Monmouth County Arts Council. The event featured a working lunch and a lively roundtable discussion where participants discussed the meaning of “quality of life” and offered suggestions on what might need to be known in order to improve it in our state.

An integral part of this effort is an advisory team of MU faculty and administrators. In attendance on June 9th were: Stan Green, Dean, School of Humanities and Social Sciences; Rekha Datta and Joe Patten (Political Science); Don Swanson (Communications); Jim Sinclair (Urban Coast Institute); Fran Trotman (Psychological Counseling); Alan Steinberg (Public Servant in Residence); and Paul Dement (Public Affairs). The Institute is eagerly anticipating the project’s official “roll-out” this fall, and welcomes input from the Monmouth community.

Psychology Department

Janice Stapley, Chair of the Psychology Department, has developed two new external collaborations that will provide our students with both Experiential Education and research opportunities. In addition to the research collaboration with Alcatel-Lucent, which has provided financial support for our research labs, as well as, research opportunities for the students and faculty, the department is pleased to announce that we have added ReRun Inc. and Red Bank Catholic High School as new partners.

This summer, Monmouth Junior Psychology major, Jennifer Noonan of Rumson, NJ, is doing her Psychology Internship working with Janice Stapley to develop a program
evaluation plan for the Equine therapy project at ReRun, a non-profit organization dedicated to saving retired race horses. The on-going relationship between the Psychology Department and ReRun should provide opportunities for psychology majors to obtain field experience in both program evaluation and grant writing.

The partnership with Red Bank Catholic High School will give high school students a chance to learn about how research is conducted in university labs and provide the developmental researchers in the Psychology Department as Monmouth with a high school population interested in participating in their studies of topics such as communication technology norms, self-regulation, and attitudes toward college. Dr. Stapley will also visit the high school to do workshops and talks with parents about college adjustment and parenting adolescents.

Senior Psychology major, Shannon Connell was the recipient of this year’s Dean’s Award of Excellence, with the nomination of 100% of this department’s faculty members. During her time at Monmouth, Shannon served in the roles of peer advisor for First Year Seminar, President of Psi Chi, the National Honor Society in Psychology, research assistant with Dr. Lisa Dinella and co-author of several conference presentations and upcoming publications. In the fall, Shannon will be begin the Psy.D program at Chestnut Hill College, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

In May, the Psychology Department celebrated 25 years of undergraduate research in Psychology, in conjunction with hosting the 50th Semi-Annual Research Conference in Wilson Hall. The day consisted of both paper and poster presentations. Awards were received by Thomas Bingham, recipient of the best paper presentation award; Stephanie Sullivan, recipient of the best poster presentation award. A new award was presented this year, the Alcatel-Lucent Foundation Applied Psychology Poster award. Christina Grimaldi was the recipient of this award, as well as, a job offer from her placement! Two special awards were given out this semester to our faculty members—Dr. Alan Cavaiola received the Distinguished Alumni Award for his outstanding contributions to the understanding and treatment of substance abuse and Dr. Jack Demarest received the department Visionary Award for his role in conceptualizing the Psychology Department’s current Research Sequence, which culminates in the opportunity for students to collaborate with a faculty mentor, resulting in an original thesis project.

**Gender Studies Program**

A Helen Gurley Brown Symposium, co-sponsored by HSS speakers series brought gender scholars to Monmouth University. Guest speakers included Betsy Israel, Dr. Julie Berebitsky and Dr. Jennifer Scanlon.

Additional events hosted by this program are: The Faculty Research Brown Bags and The Vagina Monologues. If you would like additional information about the Gender Studies Program, please visit their website at: [http://www.monmouth.edu/academics/gender_studies/default.asp](http://www.monmouth.edu/academics/gender_studies/default.asp)
Department of Philosophy, Religion, and Interdisciplinary Studies

The department received an approval for offering a minor in Religious Studies beginning in the fall 2009. This is in addition to an existing minor in Philosophy. Faculty members in the department are working on developing various interdisciplinary studies programs combining existing minors across disciplines.

In April, two significant awards were presented to two of our students –The Douglas Turrell Memorial Prize in Philosophy was awarded to Mr. Kyle Jordan of Middletown, NJ; and Ms. Nicole Russo, Garden City, NY, was named Interdisciplinary Student of the Year, 2009.

A few faculty changes have transpired within the department. Effective January 2009, Dr. Barbara Andolsen resigned to accept a position as the James E. Buckman, Esq. Chair of Applied Christian Ethics at Fordham University. We would like to welcome back Adjunct Professor, Mary Geer, for the 2009-2010 academic year. Professor Geer will temporarily be in Howard Hall, in the office of Dr. Alan Schwerin. Dr. Schwerin is on a one-year sabbatical to extend his research into the philosophical problems of the self, with the focus on contributions from the Scottish philosopher, David Hume.

The La Carboneria Philosophy Club, under the direction of Dr. Pasquale Simonelli, has some exciting events scheduled for this academic year. Two trips are planned to the opera; one in November – Puccini’s Turandot and Mozart’s The Magic Flute scheduled for April. Additional trips and events will be announced. New members are always welcomed!

DATES TO REMEMBER

FALL 2009

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>September 1</td>
<td>New Adjunct Orientation</td>
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<td>September 2 &amp; 3</td>
<td>New Faculty Orientation</td>
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<td>September 8</td>
<td>First Day of Classes</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 9</td>
<td>Academic Orientation for Students</td>
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<td>September 16</td>
<td>Opening Convocation</td>
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<tr>
<td>October 14</td>
<td>Founder’s Day</td>
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<td>November 4</td>
<td>School Faculty Meeting</td>
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<td>November 26-27</td>
<td>Thanksgiving Recess</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 16</td>
<td>Last Day of Classes</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 24-January 1</td>
<td>Holiday Break</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 29</td>
<td>Final Grades Due by 6 a.m.</td>
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SPRING 2010

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 18</td>
<td>Martin Luther King Holiday - MU Closed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 19</td>
<td>First Day of Classes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 16</td>
<td>Mid-term Grades Due</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 8—March 12</td>
<td>Spring Holiday</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 3</td>
<td>Classes End</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 13</td>
<td>Final Grades Due by 10 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 20</td>
<td>Commencement</td>
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If you wish to contribute an article for publication, please contact Eileen Jones (emjones@monmouth.edu).

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF: Golam Mathbor, MSW, Ph.D.
MANAGING EDITOR: Eileen Jones