

Political Science Alumni Newsletter

"Education is the passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to those who prepare for it today."

- Malcolm X



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In this edition of the Alumni Newsletter, we spotlight three alumni who have chosen diverse paths in their post-college careers. The examples of Tinacho Chitongo, '10, Ryan Walsh, '09, and Aimee Audette '09, demonstrate something that we try to impress upon our students—and their parents, who when their children first enroll often ask us anxiously what their child can do with a degree in Political Science. That is, a degree in Poli Sci is good for *lots* of things, and our graduates go on to succeed in a wide range of fields.

The three alumni featured here reveal how their interests and passions developed out of courses and conversations with professors, internships and assignments for class, and a lot of searching and thinking along the way. Their stories make clear how much intellectual and personal development happens outside of formal class times. The Department is small enough, and our emphasis on teaching strong enough, to allow professors to get to know their students and have a sense of their students' ambitions and interests. Thus we have the example of Aimee Audette, who got her first post-graduation job because Professor Blum tipped her off about an opportunity he thought might suit her. This shows, I think, that Political Science at PC is not the kind of program in which an individual student is little more than a face in the crowd. Rather, it is a place where collaborative learning and personal interactions with faculty enable students to discover and pursue their passions.

--Professor Susan McCarthy



Tinacho Chitongo '10

Head of Admissions: African Leadership Academy

Most students in the Political Science Department begin their undergraduate lives having already declared Poli Sci as their major. Others are drawn to Political Science only after they arrive, often as a result of taking a course or because they hear about the positive experiences of friends and roommates in the department. Tinacho Chitongo, who graduated in 2010, exemplifies this second group of majors. Tinacho entered Providence College as a Finance major, though he soon switched to Economics. However Economics also proved to not be quite the right fit for Tinacho's interests. Thanks to positive experiences in Poli Sci courses and interactions with professors in the department, Tinacho eventually switched again, to Political Science. Looking back at his somewhat circuitous path to the major, Tinacho admits today that he

frequently questioned his goals and ambitions, and whether his field of study made sense in light of these. In hindsight, he believes that all of these changes of major were, in a sense, a challenge to himself "to seek the right sort of learning that would prepare me for the career I wanted." Tinacho believes that his eventual choice of Political Science has served him well. As he puts it, "I never regret getting my Political Science degree from Providence College."

When asked about how the department contributed to the development of his career, Tinacho highlighted the versatility of the major and the breadth of topics covered in the different required and elective courses. According to Tinacho, he had always had an interest in working in a field focused on global issues and concerns. As he explains, "studying Political Science proved to be very useful in preparing me for my career going forward.... I tried to take as many classes as possible that would help me understand the world better. This explains why I took International Relations, I

completed an Independent study on the Darfur conflict and I took a Middle Eastern politics course. I am very curious about the world and the rigor of some of these courses helped me understand that the world is a complicated place, which requires continued learning beyond the surface." Studying the world also means studying the politics of the United States, and Tinacho emphasized how much he got out of Professor Joe Cammarano's American Government and Politics. "Learning the basics of the American political systems with Joe Cammarano helped me understand how the USA works. This is very important because of the many interactions I am bound to have with the world's only superpower."

A native of Zimbabwe, Tinacho returned to southern Africa following his graduation from Providence College. What drew him there after graduation was a field internship with an organization called Grassroots Soccer (GRS), which is based in South Africa. GRS teaches life skills to teenagers from

disadvantaged backgrounds through the medium of sport. GRS' primary focus is HIV prevention. South Africa has the one of the highest HIV infection rates in the world, and civil society organizations have been crucial in the fight against HIV/AIDS, especially in finding innovative ways to connect with people and promote safer sex and healthy lifestyle choices. Grassroots Soccer exemplifies this innovative strategy. During his internship, Tinacho worked in the GRS office in the city of Port Elizabeth, managing professional development sessions for the volunteers who conduct life skills educational programs in local communities.

Following the conclusion of his internship with Grassroots Soccer, in November of 2011 Tinacho secured a position as an Admissions Associate at the African Leadership Academy, or ALA, in Johannesburg, South Africa. The ALA is a secondary educational institution focused on cultivating entrepreneurship and leadership among Africa's youth. According to the Academy's own website, it "seeks to transform Africa by developing a powerful network of over 6,000 leaders who will work together to address Africa's greatest challenges, achieve extraordinary social impact, and accelerate the continent's growth trajectory." The ALA offers a two-year, pre-university program for students between 16 and 19 from all over the African continent. Tinacho emphasized the impressive

geographic reach of the Academy in terms of whom it serves, noting that students and alumni of ALA come from forty-five different African countries.

Currently Tinacho leads the Admissions team at African Leadership Academy, a position he has held since June 2015. Tinacho feels his personal mission in life is "to bring out the best in others," and working for the Academy allows him "the opportunity to interact with some of Africa's most talented young people." In addition to managing the competitive admissions process for the Academy, Tinacho and the department he leads are also involved in identifying Africa's top youth entrepreneurs through the Anzisha Prize competition. The Anzisha Prize is Africa's premier award for youth entrepreneurs aged 15 to 22. "We shortlist twelve finalists from among several hundred applications. These finalists are flown down to Johannesburg, where we are based, for a week where they get coaching and professional development.... Finalists pitch their businesses to a panel of judges and a grand prize is awarded to the strongest enterprise at the end of the week." Thanks in great part to support from the MasterCard Foundation, the ALA is able to offer substantial grants to prize winners. According to Tinacho, "this year a total of US \$100,000 in prize money will be awarded to Anzisha finalists."

Tinacho stresses the cumulative and positive nature of his experiences as a student in the Political Science Department. He says he occasionally finds himself thinking about the Modern Political Theory class he took with Dr. Mary Bellhouse, and the effect of the philosophies and ideals addressed in that course on the African continent. As he explains, Western political theories had a profound influence on the leaders, independence movements, and post-colonial governance of African states. Today, Tinacho continues to think theoretically about the politics of the African continent as a whole. He is interested in exploring how "ancient African political theory might influence the way we govern ourselves, and how it can relate to the systems we have already embraced in a globalized environment." Tinacho Chitongo makes clear that what he learned as a Political Science major gave him the conceptual and practical knowledge with which to make sense of the world and his place in it.

For more on Tinacho's internship with Grassroots Soccer, visit <http://tinachograssroots.blogspot.co.za/> For more on the African Leadership Academy and the Anzisha Prize, visit www.africanleadershipacademy.org and www.anzishaprize.org/about-anzisha/.



Our next Political Science alumnus is Mr. Ryan Walsh. Ryan is currently working as the Deputy Director of the Boston Regional Intelligence Center at the Boston Police Department. He serves as the analytic supervisor of a team of criminal intelligence analysts, attempting to fuse information from local, state, and the federal government to solve crimes and prevent terrorist attacks. Ryan has been working at the Department for just over 4 years now.

After graduating from Providence, Ryan moved to Maryland and began a master's program in Public Policy at the University of Maryland, graduating in January 2012 with a specialization in International Security and Economic Policy. While getting his masters, he began working at the U.S. Department of State as a management analyst for a performance management program. He moved back to the Boston area following graduation in 2012 and became an analyst with the police department. After moving back, Ryan married fellow PC grad Katherine Helming in June 2014. Awwww!

Ryan Walsh '09

Intelligence Analytic Supervisor

Ryan mentioned several professors who encouraged him to seek graduate education as soon as possible after finishing his education at PC. His experiences are a great example of how important our faculty are to maintaining such a successful department. Among those who had a particularly strong influence were Professors Hyde, Hudson, Carlson, and Cammarano. "I worked as a research assistant for Dr. Cammarano, co-authoring a paper on political shifts after the 2001 World Trade Center attacks. His guidance encouraged me to pursue a career in public service after graduation. Dr. Hyde and Hudson were critical in my empirical analysis training, providing me with skills that I used on a daily basis in the Police Department and at the State Department. Dr. Carlson taught one of the most informative and interesting classes of my time at PC, an Elections class during the fall of 2008, helping us to analyze the major political shifts occurring with President Obama's election. Dr. Hudson served as my thesis advisor for my Honors Thesis senior year, and was always available to provide advice on political theory helping me to refine my analysis of polarization in the US Senate for the paper." He continued, saying, "They impressed upon me the advantage that a graduate degree gives you in an incredibly competitive job market, and the necessity of graduate education for many public service jobs, which I knew would form the basis of my career. Several political analysis courses prepared me including Empirical Political Analysis and Program Evaluation." As Ryan explains, these courses provided concrete skills that many of his classmates in grad school were encountering for the very first time.

Aimee Audette '09

Attorney – RWU Law Grad



Attorney Aimee Audette, Class of '09, has been practicing law for almost two years. She works in a small plaintiff's firm in East Providence with her father Bob Audette, also a graduate of PC ('80) and Political Science major. Their firm focuses

primarily on workers' compensation issues in Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and at the federal level, as well as on personal injury matters, social security disability claims, and estate planning, among other things. Aimee attended Roger Williams University School of Law right here in Rhode Island. She graduated in 2014 and was admitted to practice law in Rhode Island and Massachusetts a few months—and two grueling bar exams—later.

Aimee found her passion to succeed during her four years at Providence College. "I have to give credit especially to Professors Doug Blum and Jim Carlson. They truly cared about my progress and my future and they were excellent role models for me to look up to during my four years at PC and beyond. They treated all of their students like adults, and challenged us to think critically about the world around us. I would not have landed my first job after PC if it weren't for Doug keeping me in mind as he became aware of opportunities."

As an undergrad, Aimee secured several internships that have served her

well in her career. "I interned with the Rhode Island House of Representatives, with the Association of Independent Colleges and Universities of Rhode Island, and with Presiding Justice Gibney of the Rhode Island Superior Court. All of these internships were extremely different, but all related to my interests. Each one helped me explore different career opportunities and opened my eyes to the endless options available to me after graduation with a degree from PC."

After Aimee graduated in 2009, she spent a few weeks traveling through Europe. Upon her return to the States, Professor Doug Blum let her know of a possible job opening that he thought she might be interested in. "I followed through with this lead and soon found myself employed as the Deputy Finance Director of a state-wide gubernatorial campaign. Shortly thereafter I was hired to work at the Rhode Island Attorney General's office in the felony charging unit. I learned a lot about the law that year, criminal law in particular (enough to determine that criminal law was not an area that I wanted to practice). After a year of working for the AG I realized that I needed to find a fulfilling and challenging career for myself and I decided to go to law school."

As a student at PC, Aimee was extensively involved with the campus chapter of Amnesty International, and she helped establish the Student-Labor Alliance at PC. Aimee emphasizes how important both on-campus and internship engagement can be in helping one to develop career skills and to figuring out one's career objectives. "Both of these organizations gave me my first taste of advocacy on behalf of those who do not have a voice of their own. I use my education and experience daily to help real people, regular people. I love that about my career and it has been extremely rewarding. These are interests and passions that I discovered in myself during my time at PC."

Dr. Thea Riofrancos

This year the Department welcomed Assistant Professor Thea Riofrancos to Providence College. Dr. Riofrancos teaches Latin American politics, comparative politics, and political theory. She earned her Ph.D. in Political Science from the University of Pennsylvania in 2014. Prior to coming to Providence College, Dr. Riofrancos held a post as a visiting fellow at the Kellogg Institute for International Affairs at the University of Notre Dame.

Dr. Riofrancos possesses a wealth of experience in and knowledge about Latin America, having lived and traveled there extensively. Her scholarship focuses on the politics of resource extraction in Latin America, and in particular looks at how interactions between states and corporations in processes of extraction have shaped democratic regimes in that region.

Dr. Riofrancos truly enjoyed her first year teaching at Providence College. She is impressed by her students, especially by their work ethic and their interest in the subject matter. She looks forward to teaching and learning from them in the future.



Dr. Julia
Jordan-Zachery

2015-2016
Accinno
Teaching Award
Recipient

This spring the Political Science Department was thrilled to learn that Professor Julia Jordan-Zachery had been named winner of the 2015-2016 Joseph R. Accinno Teaching Award. The selection of Dr. Jordan-Zachery reflects the profound influence she has had on the College in her capacity as a Political Science professor and as Director and Professor of Black Studies. She has been an invaluable resource especially for students of color in their efforts to make Providence College a more inclusive and welcoming environment.

Dr. Jordan-Zachery says that one of her main goals is to “guide her students to the ledge of learning,” all the while making them feel comfortable knowing that she will be there to catch them. She challenges her students to get outside their comfort zones, as doing so is essential to creating a stimulating environment in the classroom. She loves to step back from the traditional modes of teaching and allow students to drive the learning experience.

Growing up in Barbados, Dr. Jordan-Zachery was inspired to teach by one of her mentors in prep school. “She always encouraged us to believe in ourselves that we can learn. She instilled the confidence in each of us that we all have things to aspire to as individuals. I think in the ways I teach and with this award, she would be really proud of me.” Dr. Jordan-Zachery joins Political Science Professor Joe Cammarano and Emeritus Professor Mark Hyde in winning this prestigious award. Congratulations, Dr. Jordan-Zachery, for this well-deserved honor!