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Director's Corner



**Dr. Stephen
Craig, Director**

So when is Craig finally going to retire? For those of you who may be asking yourself this question, the answer is . . . not just yet. As noted in this column last year, I continue to enjoy my work (including the research on citizens' attitudes about sexual harassment described elsewhere in this newsletter). I'm also reluctant to head for the exit until the Campaigning Program is on more solid ground financially, with the resources in hand that will allow it to grow and prosper in the years to come. I encourage anyone, whether campaigning grads or simply friends of the Program, to help achieve this goal with personal donations large or small – or even better, by working with us to identify others who believe that a bipartisan program like ours is worth nurturing in today's climate of conflict and polarization.

Money aside, however, there is another way in which many of you can be helpful. Ours has always been a relatively small program and, nestled as we are in a Ph.D.-granting department (a good one in fact), that is not likely to change much in the foreseeable future. To be sure, the opportunity for students to interact with their professors – and with each other – in a way that might not be possible at other schools remains one of our strongest selling points to prospective campaigners. Yet, it turns out that our main competition in the recruiting wars is not so much other programs,

but rather the allure of law school for polisci grads (a) even when they don't really want to be lawyers and (b) whose parents are often convinced that a legal career is somehow more reputable than a political one.

We can debate that last point with all the lawyers out there, but here's a thought: Many of you (especially UFPC alumni) are in a position to put a bug in the ear of any interns or other young people with whom you may come into contact about the advantages of pursuing an M.A. degree at the University of Florida. If just a few of you point one good prospect our way every couple of years, that would ensure a steady flow of applications from exactly the kinds of people we're looking for. If you'd like to chip in a few dollars to help support those prospects, all the better – but even without money, it all starts with the students.

Several of you have commented on the Campaigning Facebook page about how the Program had a big (and positive) impact on your lives and careers. You can pay that forward by encouraging any bright and politically engaged young people you know to check us out. Yes, money would be nice. But if you can help us on the recruiting front, that would mean every bit as much.



Voter Turnout in 2018 and Beyond

By Dr. Michael McDonald, Associate Professor

Slightly more than half of those eligible to vote participated in the 2018 midterm election. While “half” is not a great statistic, it is rather stunning in context. The 2018 midterm had the highest turnout rate since 1914. Just four years earlier, turnout in 2014 was under forty percent and marked the lowest participation level for any federal election since 1942. The increase from 2014 to 2018 came from all corners of the country, with all but two states seeing increases between these two elections. There was only one major disruption in American politics during this period that could explain such a result: Donald Trump. Whether you love him or hate him, he inflames passions, and has stoked political engagement to levels not seen for more than a century.

The 2018 midterm is likely a precursor to a truly epic hundred-year-storm of turnout in 2020. An NBC/*Wall Street Journal* poll earlier this year found 63% of adults saying they were “very interested” in the 2020 election — a year and a half out from the actual balloting. In comparison, 67% of adults said they were very interested in the 2016 general election in October of that year. Interest usually peaks as Election Day draws near, so we are starting from a truly unprecedented high level of early engagement.

A high-turnout presidential election should give a boost to the Democrats because young people and Latinos – two groups in that party’s political coalition – are more likely to be activated than might otherwise be the case. According to the Census Bureau, turnout rates for each of these groups doubled between 2014 and 2018, compared with just twenty-five percent for the population as a whole. As a result, the overall electorate became younger and more diverse compared to 2014.

A potential upside for Republicans may be found among non-Hispanic whites with a high-school education or less. Higher levels of education are closely correlated with higher turnout, and this important group in Trump’s constituency saw its turnout rate increase by eleven points in 2018, much less than the comparable figures for young people and Latinos. The president was not on the ballot in 2018, however, and these voters might be expected to show up in greater numbers when he seeks re-election in 2020. Indeed, tempering Democrats’ hopes for reclaiming the White House is that in the NBC/*Wall Street Journal* poll, Republicans reported that they were slightly more interested in the 2020 election than Democrats, a turnaround from the 2018 election. (Continued on p. 6)



The Face of Congress Has Changed — and Will Change Even More in 2020

By Doyle Bartlett, Washington, DC Managing Director, GrayRobinson Attorneys

Lobbying is a relationship business. Given the size and scope of Congress and its legislative reach, targeting is the critical first step in any successful federal advocacy campaign. It takes several years to develop relationships and to educate members and staff. Each new Congress requires a reassessment and the creation of targets among the newly elected members as well as continued attention on veteran members.

The last three congressional elections have made the task of targeting and educating members particularly challenging. There has been significant turnover in Congress, some voluntary and some imposed by voters. You can debate whether 2018 was a “wave” election in the U.S. House of Representatives. Regardless of the label, the 2018 election produced the largest freshman class since 1992 and second largest since the Watergate election of 1974. The current Congress looks considerably different from any of its modern predecessors.

Among other things, this is one of the least-experienced Congresses in history, certainly the least experienced since the Civil War. Of the 435 members of the House of Representatives, 204 — 47 percent — were elected in 2014 or later, and therefore have less than three full terms in office. Thirty-five of the nation’s 100 Senators were elected in 2014 or later. And the lack of experience isn’t just in Washington: Of the 101 freshmen elected to the House of Representatives, 32 members had no substantive experience in government at all.

They’re also the most diverse freshman class in congressional history, changing the demographic makeup of both House and Senate. Women now comprise 23 percent of the House (102 members) and 25 percent of the Senate. The House of Representatives includes 315 non-Hispanic whites, 56 African Americans, 44 Hispanic members, 15 Asian Americans, and four Native Americans. A look at voting trends and electoral demographics suggests that these changes will only accelerate going forward.

In planning and executing a federal lobbying campaign, more time and resources must be dedicated to educating new members of Congress. This will make attempts to change federal law even more time consuming and expensive than in the past.

Meet Samantha Sexton, Director of Governmental Relations at UF and Political Campaigning Program Graduate (Class of 2013)



Samantha grew up in a civically engaged family that is still regularly involved in their community. Like many individuals interested in politics, she volunteered on local and state races during high school and college, both partisan and nonpartisan. It was these experiences that allowed her to find her voice, passion, and the principles that kickstarted her career.

Her varied career in politics has included direct involvement in both candidate campaigns and advocacy. Previous stops were as Regional Field and GOTV Director for congressional and presidential races, Director of Government Affairs for the PACE Center for Girls, and VP of Legislative and Regulatory Affairs for the Personal Insurance Federation of Florida. Samantha credits the Campaigning Program for equipping her with the foundational skills to execute a winning campaign, think like the opposition (a must for both campaigners and successful advocates), strengthen professional networks, and utilize academic concepts to better understand the political environment.

While Samantha herself isn't surprised to be where she is today, her parents were surprised when she decided to forego law school. She knew that she wanted to make a meaningful difference for her community, state, and nation through her passion for advocacy, and this ultimately led to her current role as Director of Government Relations for UF. "Although some might say our work is seasonal, we're advocates year-round," Samantha said. "During committee weeks and session, we educate and engage stakeholders almost daily about UF's priorities. During the off months, we work closely with the Board of Governors and agencies to implement the enacted laws and set our priorities for the following session." Samantha sees UF eventually rising to become a top-five public university in the nation, with UF students, faculty, and alumni achieving great success in countless industries and conducting research that will benefit Floridians and the world.

Meet Nikki Fried, Florida's Commissioner of Agriculture and Political Campaigning Program Graduate (Class of 2003)



As with many program alumni, Nikki's love for politics and public service came at a very young age, asking her parents to see the White House for her 10th birthday. A passion for service is clearly evident in her unconventional, varied career in politics. At UF, she became the first female Student Body President in over 18 years. She practiced commercial litigation at the Holland & Knight law firm, worked in the Public Defender's Office in Alachua County, and protected homeowners in south Florida during the mortgage foreclosure crisis. Her passion for impacting public policy brought her back into the political fold to become a lobbyist, working for an array of clients.

These experiences helped to shape Nikki's decision to enter the 2018 race for Florida's Commissioner of Agriculture and Consumer Services. Her election victory was historic in several respects. In addition to being the only Democrat elected statewide that year, she also became the first woman to be elected Commissioner of Agriculture and the first Jewish woman ever elected to state office in Florida. Although she always knew she wanted to run at some point, she wasn't sure when, for what office, or from where. "I certainly didn't dream of being Commissioner of Agriculture when I was a little girl," Nikki said, "but now I get to inspire young girls to be Commissioner. It's why I get up each morning."

Nikki's keys to success were simple: Work hard and be yourself. With agriculture being such a critical component of Florida's economy — the second largest economic driver in the state with over two million jobs — her goal is to make sure that it continues to thrive for future generations. She lists a variety of policy goals, including growing the agricultural sector, giving farmers alternative crops like hemp, inspiring the next generation of agriculture providers to protect consumers, combating food insecurity, providing affordable access to medical marijuana, and bringing new energy technologies to protect the environment. "I have a lot of work to do in my 4 years, but I am up for the challenge."

Alumni Spotlight



David Rancourt (Class of 1990)
Managing Partner
Land South Group

David came from a family devoted to community service but averse to politics, so his choice of a career may seem surprising. He got an early start, registering students to “vote” in 6th grade, played the role of George H.W. Bush in high school debates, and befriended Florida Attorney General Jim Smith. These experiences led to volunteer roles in Smith’s first race for governor and Bush’s 1988 presidential campaign. When he learned of the Political Campaigning Program, David said, it was a no-brainer for him to apply.

After completing his M.A., David became Political Director for Congressman Mike Bilirakis’ re-election campaign, then managed Bilirakis’ next race followed by Smith’s gubernatorial bid in 1994. He then made his way into government service, working as Florida’s Director of Elections, Deputy Secretary of State, and Deputy Chief of Staff for Governor Jeb Bush. David co-founded the lobbying firm Southern Strategy Group in 2000, helping to grow it into the nation’s largest state-based lobbying firm. Along the way, he continued to pursue his passion for political campaigns in various capacities.

As is typical, David’s political career has seen some changes and taken a few surprising turns. He never thought he’d be a lobbyist, but having two children to take care of and having his passion rewarded far more in the private sector led him to leave state government. While he still does political consulting, he’s no longer engaged in daily management and works from his own office.

David credits the Political Campaigning Program for contributing to his personal and intellectual growth. “My degree was more than just checking a box — it forced me to learn how others think and to appreciate differences between people and ideas as much as their similarities.”



Lee Concha (Class of 2000)
Senior Vice President for University Enhancement
Rosalind Franklin University

Right out of the gate after receiving her M.A., Lee took a position in the Office of the Governor of Illinois. She left briefly to work on the Victory 2000 presidential campaign, then returned to Illinois to join the Office of State Treasurer. “Illinois politics is as real as it gets,” Lee says. “Coalitions are critical, alliances run deep, all politics are local down to the ward level, and you need to strike the perfect balance between being careful and knowing your stuff.” She credits the Political Campaigning Program for being the best training ground she could ask for.

After five years in government and a few statewide races, Lee joined the YMCA of Metro Chicago. One of the largest human services providers in the state, the Y was experiencing the simultaneous challenges of rapidly declining use of core mission services and rising property values. Lee headed up all PR and communications practices when it became apparent that there was a need for more precise and strategic messaging. Through careful navigation in Chicago politics, the Y was able to sell some properties and reinvest those dollars in areas of the city with a dire need for its services. All of this was accomplished under Lee’s leadership.

Eventually she found her way into higher education, which was a path Lee never envisioned that she might follow. Change is a constant in her field and she spends the vast majority of her time in meetings. This might scare off many people, but Lee sees it as an opportunity to learn and grow.

Lee believes that the most critical aspect of her job is relationship management. Fostering trust without overpromising is key, especially when dealing with faculty. All of her professional and educational training has equipped her to excel in this area. One lesson that particularly resonated with her was to “never stop thinking like the voter. . . . As strategic communicators and campaigners, it’s our job to balance persuasion and trust.”

Post-Election Workshop: Looking Back at 2018 and Ahead to 2020

The Political Campaigning Program held its biennial post-election workshop at the Hilton University of Florida on February 1, 2019. The workshop gathered several top academics, political practitioners, and journalists to discuss what had happened in the 2018 election and what we might expect in 2020. As always, the discussion panels (apart from media types) included both Republicans and Democrats. The day began with a 2018 retrospective that reflected on the outcome and considered the extent to which it constituted a referendum on Donald Trump's first two years in office. After lunch, panelists took out their crystal balls and speculated about whether 2018 was a harbinger of things to come.

The morning panel featured political practitioners Elizabeth Sena, Bryon Allen, Steve Schale, Andrew Wiggins, and Ryan Gravatt, along with journalist Steve Bousquet. (Elizabeth and Andrew are also graduates of the Political Campaigning program, and Elizabeth taught a portion of the Advanced Campaign Strategy class during spring semester.) Each panelist provided unique and valuable insights on the events of 2018, focusing especially on his or her professional involvement in the campaign. Not surprisingly, the most pressing question was the degree to which the Trump presidency had shaped the results. While it was generally agreed that Trump had a large impact — a mostly negative one for the Republican Party — each panelist focused on a different angle or data set, thereby providing a variety of perspectives that contributed to an overall understanding of the election. Elizabeth Sena, for example, discussed how polling for the races she was involved in (particularly with regard to female voters) was impacted by Trump, and Steve Bousquet recounted how his coverage of campaigns was shaped by developments in Washington.

In the afternoon, audience members returned for the look ahead to 2020. Panelists included political professionals Madalyn Blackburn, Becca Guerra (a graduate of the Political Campaigning Program), David Hill, David Johnson, and Joe Lenski, along with *Politico's* Marc Caputo. Once again, each of these individuals brought his or her own perspectives, professional experiences, and insights to a broad-ranging discussion of what we might have to look forward to over the next year. Although the burning question was whether the 2018 results were a sign of things to come, no clear consensus was reached. Can Trump and the Republicans bounce back? The group's conclusion: Only time will tell.

Throughout both panels and during lunch, audience members — including both current and prospective students of the Political Campaigning Program, UF faculty, and other friends of the Program — were able to interact with each other, and with the panelists, sharing their own thoughts about the state of American politics today. Among the academic contingent were UF's Stephen Craig, Daniel Smith, Michael McDonald, and Roger Austin, as well as political analyst and retired USF professor emeritus Susan MacManus. A trademark of the Campaigning Program is that it encourages the exchange of differing viewpoints in a civil manner (not always evident in the real world of politics), and every two years this event provides us with an opportunity for us to show that this sort of thing is still possible.



Morning panelists at the workshop, taking questions from the audience



Our 2019 PC award winners: Ben Torpey, who received the Walter "Skip" Campbell Leadership Award, and Patricia Mitchell, who received the Ralph E. Gonzalez Independent Spirit Award



Dinner at Harry's with (most of) the Political Campaigning graduate class of 2019

The Politics of Sexual Harassment

By Stephen Craig, UF/PC Director



In last year's Director's Corner column, I described a research project which at the time was just in the planning stage. Work on that project is now entering the home stretch as my co-author (UF Ph.D. Paulina Cossette) and I put the finishing touches on our book, *Politicians Behaving Badly: Men, Women, and The Politics of Sexual Harassment*, to be published by Routledge Press later this year or early next.

Inspired (though that might not be the best word for it) by the Harvey Weinstein scandal that broke in October 2017, the subsequent emergence of the #MeToo movement, and a wave of scandals involving members of Congress,

Paulina and I decided to take a closer look at how citizens react when allegations of sexual harassment are levied against elected leaders. Prior research suggests that the electoral penalty for sexual misconduct is usually less than that for financial misdeeds or political scandals – but most of those studies define "sexual misconduct" in terms of marital infidelity, and what we wanted to look at is something quite different.

Our analysis is based on an internet survey experiment involving a national sample of registered voters, conducted during summer 2018. In addition to seeing how respondents reacted when a hypothetical member of Congress (sometimes male, sometimes female; sometimes Republican, sometimes Democrat) was accused by former aides and co-workers of sexual harassment, our research design also allows us to assess the effectiveness of various types of responses (denial, apology, and counterimaging, the latter being an effort to portray the behavior in question as less offensive than it might appear at first glance) in restoring the target's standing with voters and regain support lost as a result of the original allegations.

Making a long story short (you'll have to buy the book), our results are consistent with what Paulina and I found in our previous work on the effects of negative campaigning: Partisanship drives the bus in American politics today: Differences between women and men on almost every question we asked were generally small compared to the differences between Republicans and Democrats. As for the results of our experiment, we found that (1) allegations of harassment contributed to a loss of voter support that is roughly equal for male and female politicians; (2) both women and men voters "punished" female and male candidates equally for their alleged wrongdoings; (3) the most effective response (more so for women than for men) when a politician is accused of sexual harassment is denial, augmented by assertions that the charges have been manufactured by disgruntled former employees or political opponents . . . and much, much more.

In addition to whatever contribution it may make to the current dialogue, we hope that our book encourages other scholars to continue exploring the nature and political consequences of sexual misconduct in American society today.



Voter Turnout in 2018 and Beyond

By Dr. Michael McDonald, Associate Professor

(continued from page 2)

Big demographic trends in the country are working against Republicans in the long run, especially as minority and college-educated come to constitute a larger share of the eligible electorate, and the percentage of non-Hispanic whites with only a high school education continues to decline. Turnout is not the only factor that determines election outcomes, of course, so these developments do not mean that Republicans are doomed by the country's changing demographics. But they do suggest that Republicans need to reach out to constituencies other than Trump's base in order to win elections. Indeed, Florida Governor DeSantis and U.S. Senator Rick Scott both courted Puerto Ricans in their successful 2018 election bids. Other Republicans might look to these campaigns for clues as to how to be successful in 2020 and beyond.

Advanced Campaign Strategy

The Tools of the Trade in the Campaigning World

The Spring 2019 semester featured our biennial seminar on Advanced Campaign Strategy, taken by both first-year and second-year campaigning students. The class was taught by three well-respected political professionals, each of whom focused on a different aspect of campaign strategy for a four-week block of classes.

The first third of the semester was taught by Elizabeth Sena, a Partner in the Washington-based public opinion research firm Greenberg Quinlan Rosner as well as an alumna of the Campaigning Program (Class of 2004). Elizabeth discussed how to develop a well-rounded campaign plan, including the creation of sample scripts for contacting voters and get-out-the-vote tools, identifying media markets, and determining vote goals. At the end of her portion of the course, students prepared campaign plans for districts of their choosing (as long as they had close elections in 2018) and assumed that the 2020 election would involve a rematch of the candidates from 2018.

The second of the three practitioners to teach was Damien Filer, owner of 50+1 Strategies, LLC. Damien's section of the class focused on earned media, publicity gained through promotional efforts — such as press conferences — rather than through advertising. He discussed the various intricacies that go into making earned media efforts successful, including the strengths and weaknesses of various forms of outreach, controlling the message, the best ways of delivering that message, and fostering relationships with reporters who cover your campaign. Damien's section culminated in mock press conferences, with students splitting into groups in which each fulfilled a specific role — candidate, campaign manager, communications director, and an endorsing representative — to make it all work.

The final section of the course was taught by Roger Austin, one of the regular adjunct faculty members involved with the Campaigning Program and owner of Austin Political Consulting. Roger focused on paid media efforts in campaigns, bringing in guest speakers involved in different types of paid media to talk with students to augment his own insights. Discussions included the strengths and weaknesses of different types of paid media, how to tailor messages, and what are the best paid media strategies for different types of campaigns. Assignments focused on evaluating the strategies employed by a number of recent and ongoing campaigns.

The Advanced Campaign Strategy seminar is one of the most crucial components of the Campaigning Program, serving as a capstone for the Program's practical curriculum. At this stage, students should be able to compare and contrast what they have learned from their academic courses with the valuable insights provided by those who work in the political trenches.



Elizabeth Sena



Damien Filer



Roger Austin



Where Are They Now?

Michelle Andres (UF/PC 1994)

is senior vice president of digital media and broadcasting with the NFL's Baltimore Ravens.

Carmen Beatriz Fernandez (UF/PC 1996)

is CEO of DataStrategia, an international consulting firm; she currently is a doctoral candidate at the Universidad de Navarra in Spain, where she teaches courses on political communication and researching cyberpolitics and disinformation.

Jason Gainous (UF/PC 2002, UF Ph.D. 2005)

is Professor of Political Science at the University of Louisville and a leading expert on the topic of information technology and politics.

Heather Hicks (UF/PC 2011)

recently received her Ph.D. from the University of Maryland (her dissertation dealt with racial and gender stereotyping in political campaigns) and will be joining the Political Science Department at Colorado State University in Fall 2019.

Kolby Peterson (UF/PC 1987, the first student ever to enroll in the program)

is director of polling for the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME).



UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA POLITICAL CAMPAIGNING PROGRAM



The University of Florida's Graduate Program in Political Campaigning (UF/PC) is designed to provide students with the skills, insights, and experiences that are critical for success in the ever-changing profession of politics and political consulting. Unlike other programs in professional politics, UF's M.A. in Political Campaigning combines the best of both academic study and practical experience.

By incorporating academic study in the fields of voting behavior, political participation, public opinion, political parties, and political communication, students are presented with a sound theoretical basis that can be used to better understand the "how" and "why" of political competition in the electoral or any other arena.

Political Campaigning Program (UF/PC)

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