

# Shooting the breeze with the deans

BY MIKE UNGER

Sophomore Sarah Tubianski is exploring the possibility of attending law school after she earns her undergraduate degree from AU. At the top of her list of potential schools is a familiar institution just down the street from the campus she now calls home: AU's Washington College of Law (WCL).

Hoping to gain any tidbit of knowledge that could enhance her chances of getting into WCL, Tubianski went straight to the head honcho, Dean Claudio Grossman.

Tubianski and other students had the opportunity to meet and chat with Grossman last month during the third installment of "Dialog with the Dean," a forum that brings students and deans together for informal sessions at McDowell Hall.

The program was started by SOC professor Joseph Campbell, who as AU's faculty member in office residence keeps an office in McDowell.

"Rightly or wrongly, deans do have this reputation of being up on a pedestal," Campbell says. "An important objective of my having my faculty office in McDowell Hall is to encourage informal, outside-the-classroom interactions between faculty and students. Arranging for an opportunity for the deans of the respective schools and colleges to meet separately and informally with students is very much in keeping with that objective."

Throughout this semester, impressive crowds have gathered Wednesday evenings in McDowell's Formal Lounge to chat up Grossman, SIS dean Louis Goodman, and SOC dean Larry Kirkman over pretzels, cookies,

and juice. CAS dean Kay Mussell is scheduled to stop by tomorrow night. The effort is coordinated by McDowell resident director Eric Ratner and his student staff, and it's an opportunity all parties have relished.

"It was an extremely positive experience," Goodman says. "I thought the purpose was for students to get to know deans beyond the formal relationship, so I talked about my relationship with my parents and grandparents. They gave me a sense of history which was important in my personal formation, and I encouraged students to do the same. With my grandparents I could have conversations that took me back more than 100 years. I encouraged [students] to do the same. I think it's important for students to have a sense of how they can lead and begin to take ownership of their own lives."

The chance for students to absorb a dean's personal family stories is one that does not present itself every day. They are, as Campbell says, "very busy people."

Students have taken the opportunity to question the deans on topics ranging from their job responsibilities to their specific opinions of teachers.

"I heard about their favorite courses,



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—SOC dean Larry Kirkman

where they wanted to study abroad, their favorite professors," Goodman says. "It was very beneficial."

Kirkman toured the dorm prior to speaking informally with students for about 45 minutes, giving a brief presentation, then hanging around afterwards for more conversation.

"I had a great time meeting the students," he says. "We went to almost every floor. I thought the dorms all had a real vitality. There was real energy to the rooms of the students that I met. The multimedia, the decoration, the use of the lounges on each floor. I think that Professor Campbell's role in providing a doorway into the

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dorms for faculty is tremendously important."

Kirkman's visit led to action. The day after fielding a question from a student on how SOC works with the undergraduate student council, Kirkman contacted the organization.

"We immediately made plans to work with them for a SOC week, the week before the Reel Journalism Festival April 3rd to 10th," he says. "Professor Campbell's created a wonderful meeting ground. I was gratified by the interest and engagement that I had with the students. I got some challenging questions about our SOC programs and had the chance to present my vision for the school. With 1,200 students, it's important to have the opportunity to engage them in these informal and intimate settings.

It gets the word out that I'm accessible, that there's a community discussion that involves students, faculty, and alumni about the future of the school, and that the big ambitions we have for developing the school and moving into McKinley are being played out now and that students can participate."

Grossman fielded primarily questions pertaining to WCL admissions and dished out advice to students hoping to attend law school. With just 295 positions available for the 10,000 people who apply to WCL each year, students were eager to come away with any information that could help them get a leg up.

"Develop your analytical skills," Grossman says. "Study, and read, and be a balanced person with the ability

to write. Don't let your skills erode because you are lazy. When you see a problem there is a solution, because if there is no solution, there is no problem."

Grossman also discussed his role as dean within WCL.

"There are different molds," he says. "I miss sometimes being a normal professor with the time to do certain things. [But] the satisfaction of being able to contribute in the shaping of an exciting institution, so far I feel that satisfaction."

It's an institution Tubianski hopes to one day attend, and her dialogue with the dean provided her with the first step toward reaching that goal.

"It was really interesting," she says. "I learned a lot."

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W E E K L Y

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## Columbia Journalism Review praises SOC professors' report on war coverage

BY ADRIENNE FRANK

A report by School of Communication professors MJ Bear and Jane Hall examining media coverage during the early months of the Iraq War was praised in a March 17, 2005, article in the *Columbia Journalism Review*.

Writer Paul McLeary lauded Bear and Hall's work as "the first comprehensive attempt to understand the realities that shape war coverage." He also noted that the report, which exposes the self-censorship practiced by many media outlets during the first 15 months of the war, is "a good start in examining how news coming out of Iraq is tailored to reflect not what's going on at ground level, but what editors think the public wants, or needs, to know."

Bear and Hall found that many press outlets used their Internet sites to post material that differed from what was printed in the newspapers or broadcast on TV and the radio. They also found that many outlets self-censored

their reporting of graphic images and grisly details that might repel the public.

More than 200 American and international journalists participated in the anonymous, online survey in September and October 2004.



Courtesy of MJ Bear



Jeff Watts