Suffolk University College of Arts and Sciences newsletter, 2006

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DISTINGUISHED VISITING SCHOLARS ENHANCE LEARNING

Nobel Peace Prize-winner Shirin Ebadi was among the four Distinguished Visiting Scholars who brought their expertise to the College of Arts and Sciences at Suffolk University during the 2005–2006 academic year.

As a girl growing up in Tehran, Iran, Ebadi defended her friends from neighborhood bullies. Her fight for justice led her to study law and to serve as Iran’s first female judge. Yet her tenure on the bench lasted just four years before the Iranian Revolution of 1979 swept Islamic fundamentalists into power and women out of positions of power. Ebadi refused to be bullied and used her time away from the bench to write numerous books and articles on democracy and the law. Upon finally regaining an Iranian lawyer’s license in 1992, she took on multiple cases in which she defended the rights of women and children. Her work earned her the Rafto Human Rights Foundation prize for human rights activities in 2001. She won the 2003 Nobel Peace Prize for her humanitarian efforts.

Ebadi was at Suffolk’s Beacon Hill campus from February 20 to March 3, 2006. On March 2, Ebadi delivered a Lowell Lecture entitled “Sharia Law and Constitutionalism” at the C. Walsh Theatre. She spoke of her childhood, her experiences in Iran before and after the revolution, and her hopes for greater understanding between the West and Middle East. She also gave a public lecture on the human rights situation in Iran and met with students in small classroom settings.

The other 2005–2006 Distinguished Visiting Scholars included acclaimed writer Maxine Hong Kingston; Robert Brustein, founding director of the Yale Repertory and American Repertory Theatres; and German political scientist Christiane Lemke.

National Book Award–winning author James Carroll, the inaugural Distinguished Visiting Scholar in spring 2005, has now joined the faculty of the College of Arts and Sciences as Distinguished Scholar in Residence. Carroll’s latest book, House of War: The Pentagon and the Disastrous Rise of American Power, was published in April 2006.

SAWYER LIBRARY OPENS IN NEW LOCATION

The completely refurbished Mildred F. Sawyer Library celebrated its grand reopening on May 8, 2006. Occupying three floors of 73 Tremont Street, the library offers members of the Suffolk community an inviting setting for their academic pursuits. The architectural firm Tsoi/Kobus Associates, Inc., designed the new facility with students’ needs in mind. The Sawyer Library offers abundant natural light and a mix of reading lounges, group study rooms, and ‘open’ study spaces. These areas feature working fireplaces, DVD technology, and comfortable sofas. Wireless Internet connections grant students access to thousands of electronic books and journals.

In addition to Suffolk’s general circulation and reference collections, the Sawyer Library houses the new Poetry Center and the Library/Research Skills Instruction Room, featuring distance-learning presentation capabilities.

SUFFOLK PHYSICS PROFESSOR AND COUNSELING CENTER DIRECTOR EARN TOP MARKS FROM PEERS

Walter H. Johnson, chair of the physics department, was named 2005 Massachusetts Professor of the Year by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE). Selected from among 400 professors nationwide, he was humble in accepting this honor. “I’m surprised that I was chosen, but I’m not surprised that Suffolk was chosen,” said Johnson, who has taught at Suffolk since 1971. “Suffolk has so many good teachers who could have won this honor. I’m just pleased to receive this award as a representative of the College of Arts and Sciences and Suffolk University, which prides itself on teaching.”

Kenneth F. Garni, director of Suffolk’s Counseling Center, earned the Association for University and College Counseling Center Directors’ Lifetime Achievement Award. He started his Suffolk career in 1969 as an assistant professor of psychological services and has directed the University’s counseling services since 1973. “I am gratified to be recognized for the things I have accomplished over the years,” he said, “but I am very aware that the acknowledgement should be shared with many, including my family, colleagues in the Counseling Center, and with the administration of the University, which always has been very supportive of our efforts to provide quality counseling services to members of the Suffolk community.”
The College of Arts and Sciences has experienced unprecedented growth during the last several years. Yet we have held on to our sense of community. Small classes and involved faculty provide a welcoming atmosphere, while a multitude of events around campus give the College a vibrancy and excitement matched by few other educational institutions.

We have had an active year here, polishing the new undergraduate curriculum for its scheduled launch in fall 2001, hosting visiting scholars and artists of international repute, celebrating the achievements of our students and faculty, and gearing up for the Suffolk University Centennial.

This newsletter can inform you of the highlights of the past year. It cannot, however, convey the feel of a theatre electrified by the brilliance of a student performance or silenced by the power and depth of a Nobel laureate’s speech. I invite you back to campus this year, to feel, hear, and see firsthand the excitement that pervades the College of Arts and Sciences as we go about the business of educating the next generation of students.

Kenneth S. Greenberg
Dean
College of Arts and Sciences

HISTORY DEPARTMENT TOASTS BOSTON’S HERITAGE

As Suffolk University rings in its centennial year, Boston celebrates the 375th anniversary of its founding. Professor Robert Allison, chair of the history department, is proud of the interaction between the University and its surroundings. "Rather than doing something particular to recognize Boston’s 375th," he says, "we continue to engage with the community so that we’ll recognize Boston’s 376th, 380th, and 400th anniversaries.

"Suffolk’s location is exceptional," Allison says. "You can walk out the door and go to Benjamin Franklin’s birthplace or Faneuil Hall. But it’s easy to take them for granted and never look at them." Allison and his history department colleagues make sure their students learn the stories behind such landmarks as the golden-domed State House and the Robert Gould Shaw Memorial in Boston Common by taking them onsite and in depth. "We do a lot of walking tours," he says. "We also bring in a lot of people who are involved in different historical or preservation groups. Hopefully the students learn that these are special places worth preserving, and that it is up to an individual to take the initiative."

Students gain new views on strolls around the Boston Public Garden, onboard the USS Constitution, and in the city’s diverse neighborhoods, like Dorchester, South Boston, and Charlestown. "Each neighborhood has its own special history," Allison says. "We get out and see the other parts of the city, where most people live. We’re all part of this city. It’s important that we all work so Boston continues to be a livable place."

Suffolk’s history majors and their professors also saluted famous Bostonian Ben Franklin’s 300th birthday with a reading of his Autobiography at the Old South Meetinghouse. "It takes about three hours," Allison says with a smile. "We thought it was going to take a lot less time. Turns out Franklin was more verbose than we had given him credit for."

MAN IN DEMAND: ALLAN MOTENKO

Allan Motenko, BA ’06, doesn’t usually have time for breakfast. Most days for this ambitious senior are chock-full from morning to night. As Student Government Association (SGA) president, resident assistant at 150 Tremont Street, and trustee ambassador for undergraduate admission, Allan is a man in demand. He also carries a 3.9 GPA and interns at the State House.

"This is who I am. I work best under pressure," he says. Actually, Allan thrives under pressure—a handy quality for a future politician. He has served in student government throughout his Suffolk career, gaining a valuable perspective on what government is like. "I have developed the ability to stay on message, on point. As president, everything falls to me. It’s been interesting to be the big picture person—building coalitions and consensus," he says.

Allan’s experiences in student government and in his government classes have shaped his career plans. "I have an intuitive sense that I can do this," he says. "Student government in particular has affirmed that I want to be an elected official."

Law school is next on the agenda, and Suffolk Law is a possibility. Allan would be happy to stay here. "This has been the best four-year period of my life," he says. "What makes Suffolk great are the people who work and study here. Suffolk students are intelligent, practical, and logical, and I admire that."

There’s a lot to admire about Allan himself—his impressive drive and energy and his undergraduate accomplishments. He’ll be one to watch when he launches his political career in the next few years. 
Soon after a tsunami devastated much of South Asia in December 2004, Dean Kenneth Greenberg considered how the College of Arts and Sciences might examine the subsequent relief efforts and their politicization within an academic context.

He and Government Department Chairman John Berg turned to Associate Professor Judy Dushku, a resident expert on Third World politics and the United Nations—and a natural at networking. "They know just love finding out who knows whom, who respects whom, and the politics of the different Washington think tanks," says Dushku. "They asked if I'd develop a panel to speak at Suffolk about the politics of the ongoing relief efforts. I jumped at the chance."

Dushku established a short list of experts knowledgeable about Banda Aceh, a small region of Indonesia that was especially hard-hit. "As a political scientist, I became extremely curious about how the influx of outside relief organizations and independent journalists was affecting Banda Aceh's struggle for independence," she says. "Suffolk's program was different from other post-Tsunami forums," she says of the January 2005 panel. "We didn't show photographs of the tremendous waves or discuss the science of undersea storms. Instead we explored the politics of giving aid, how alliances between nations affect that aid, and who that aid is intended to lift up in a political struggle and who it's intended to diminish."

In December 2005, Dushku was invited to join a delegation of eight national experts—including other educators, a human rights leader, and an anthropologist—for a ten-day mission to Banda Aceh to assess post-Tsunami conditions. "It was a phenomenal experience," says Dushku, whose observations have received significant media attention. "As I continue to teach Third World politics and the history of liberation struggles, I do so with the benefit of an incredible real-world case study."

A new stage apron, while the modernized lighting and other technical equipment will "bring the theatre into the 21st century."

While the C. Walsh Theatre gets ready for its close-up, Plotkins' department has been staging productions in the more intimate Studio Theatre. In February, Professor Wesley Savick directed A Country Doctor, a tragicomic take on a short story by Franz Kafka—himself a featured character in this multilayered play. Plotkins was excited to direct the first workshop production of Begin Again in April. This commissioned work by composer Jenny Giering and lyricist Laura Harrington, developed through the department's Boston Music Theatre Project, charts the poignant emotional journey of a teacher looking for life and love in the aftermath of 9/11. "When you do a workshop," Plotkins said, "you don't want to do it in a full-size theatre. So the timing was perfect."
NEWS FROM THE
College of Arts & Sciences

SUFFOLK UNIVERSITY ALUMNI EVENTS

SUNDAY, JUNE 4
Farewell Breakfast
9am, 73 Tremont Street

RHODE ISLAND ALUMNI CHAPTER
Newport Winery Tour
6:30pm, Sunday, June 25
909 East Main Road, Middletown

NATIONAL SOCIETY OF NEWSPAPER COLUMNISTS LUNCHEON
12pm, Saturday, July 1
David J. Sargent Hall, Boston

CHICAGO ALUMNI CHAPTER
Chicago White Sox v. Texas Rangers
1:05pm, Sunday, July 23
US Cellular Field, Chicago
11:30am, Pre-game Buffet

RHODE ISLAND ALUMNI CHAPTER
Pawtucket Red Sox v. Buffalo Bisons
1:05pm, Sunday, July 30
McCoy Stadium, Pawtucket

ALUMNI AT TANGLEWOOD
2:30pm, Sunday, August 13
4:30pm, Post-performance Reception
Koussevitsky Music Shed, Lenox, MA

ALUMNI NIGHT AT LOWELL SPINNERS
Lowell Spinners v. Tri-City Valley Cats
5:05pm, Sunday, August 20
3:30pm, Buffet at the Gator Pit
Lowell, MA

8TH ANNUAL ROAD RACE
10am, Sunday, September 19
Charles River Hatch Shell, Boston

CENTER ADVOCATES FOR
WOMEN OF THE WORLD

2006 marks the three-year anniversary of the Center for Women’s Health and Human Rights at Suffolk University. The nation’s only research institute focusing on these issues from a social sciences/humanities perspective, the center works with campus and community allies to promote better conditions for women in Boston and beyond. “We have accomplished a lot,” says Amy Agigian, the center’s founding director and associate professor of sociology, “but there are so many more things that we want to do.”

“In Massachusetts, in the United States, in the world, very privileged women are more educated than ever before,” she continues. “But a lot of women are not as fortunate. Their human rights are being rolled back and their health is deteriorating as a result of this mutually enforcing process. We try to educate people about the inextricable links between women’s health and human rights.”

The center runs multiple projects—frequently with support from academic departments in the College of Arts and Sciences, the Sawyer Business School, and Suffolk Law School—to fulfill its mission. The chemistry department has invited the center to cosponsor a fall brown-bag event with Vivian Finn, a distinguished African-American physician. Susan Sered, the center’s senior research associate, has just coauthored Uninsured in America: Life and Death in the Land of Opportunity, a book that is garnering national media attention. Agigian and her staff work with the Massachusetts Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) to ensure the Commonwealth meets international equality standards.

Also this fall, the center will celebrate the launch of the Mary Burke Collection on United Nations Women’s Conferences. Burke, who teaches in the government department, donated this archive, which features documents and ephemera from every UN Women’s Conference since the event’s 1975 inception in Mexico City. “We hope this will be a real resource for researchers and archivists,” Agigian says. “And we hope to bring attention to Suffolk as a leader in women’s health and human rights.”