

Year-End Report for AY 2015-2016

1 DIRECTOR'S NOTE



July 2015 kicked off the inaugural year of POLIS: The Center for Political Leadership, Innovation, and Service. Typical of a start-up, we spent much of our time building a foundation for future success: hiring staff, refining a vision, creating a brand identity, establishing relationships with potential partner organizations, generating buzz among students and colleagues, and, of course, raising money. Atypical of a first-year program, we hit the ground running, sponsoring or co-sponsoring **26 events**; launching **3 experiential**

learning programs; engaging **67 alumni** in programs, meetings, and events; and bringing together **51 state leaders** for two significant and ongoing North Carolina-focused projects.

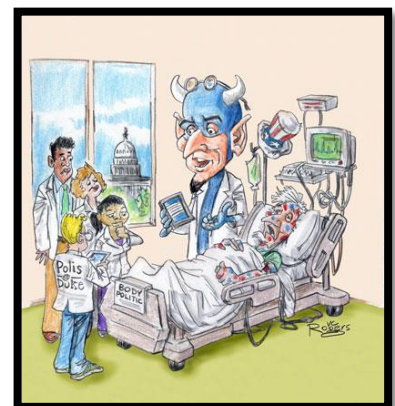
We are proud of what POLIS has been able to accomplish in such a short time, but we are even more excited about what is ahead. If this political season has demonstrated anything, it is that the twin missions of POLIS—to seek solutions to the problems that plague our politics and to develop the next generation of political leaders—could not be more critically needed.

Frederick "Fritz" Mayer
June 2016

2 BUILDING POLIS

2.1 STAFF

In July 2015, Landy Elliott joined POLIS as associate director after having having launched and directed the Duke in DC office. Landy has thrown herself into the job with amazing energy and creativity, overseeing the planning and execution of all programs, events, and initiatives we pursued this year. We also added an undergraduate engagement and communications fellow to expand our digital media and visual design capability. A half-time program coordinator will join the team in July to enhance our administrative and events capacity.



2.2 DUKE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

A strong internal Duke advisory committee has provided tremendous guidance and support in our first year. See the members [here](#).

2.3 TOM ROSS JOINS THE TEAM

In January 2016, former UNC President Tom Ross joined the team as the first Terry Sanford Distinguished Fellow. Tom is heading an important project looking at how we can improve the process for drawing political districts (“Beyond Gerrymandering,” see below) and will be giving a Terry Sanford Distinguished Lecture this fall.

2.4 VISION, BRANDING, AND COMMUNICATIONS

Much effort was focused this year on creating a clear vision and brand identity for POLIS. This included a refined mission, logo and visual design, social media accounts, online newsletter, and, ultimately, a brand new website.

POLIS

www.POLIS.sanford.duke.edu

Our audience can now follow POLIS activity on Facebook (Facebook.com/POLISatDuke), on Twitter

([@POLISatDuke](https://twitter.com/POLISatDuke)), on our [website](#), or via our newsletter, Happening@POLIS ([subscribe here](#)). We are proud to report that Happening@POLIS enjoys an average open rate of 48.8%, more than double the industry average.

All of these modes of communication are essential to telling the POLIS story, but they don’t amount to much without a clear story to tell. After incorporating input from across and beyond Duke this year, we refined the POLIS vision to include **two complementary missions**:

- *To seek solutions to the problems of contemporary politics.*
- *To prepare a new generation of political leaders and engaged citizens.*

3 REINVENTING POLITICS: SEEKING SOLUTIONS TO POLITICAL PROBLEMS

Rather than simply commenting on the politics that is, POLIS is dedicated to creating a politics that could be by facilitating and supporting solutions-focused projects, convenings, and research. These initiatives are grounded in real-world challenges and include individuals and groups from inside and outside the academy, working together to find innovative approaches to the challenges facing American democracy.

3.1 NORTH CAROLINA LEADERSHIP FORUM - PROMOTING CIVIL DISCOURSE

Based on the novel premise that we should have more opportunities to listen to and build trust with people with whom we disagree, the [North Carolina Leadership Forum \(NCLF\)](#), launched in March, provides an opportunity for civic, business and political leaders from across North Carolina to discuss issues central to the future of the state. By design, the forum includes [35 individuals](#)



representing a broad spectrum of ideologies, different geographic regions of the state, and both political parties.

3.2 BEYOND GERRYMANDERING – REDISTRICTING REFORM

Under the leadership of [Terry Sanford Distinguished Fellow](#) Thomas W. Ross and in partnership with Common Cause North Carolina, POLIS has launched [Beyond Gerrymandering: Impartial Redistricting for North Carolina](#). The ongoing project seeks to educate the public on how an independent, impartial redistricting commission might work. We have gathered a bipartisan commission of 10 retired jurists (5 Republicans, 5 Democrats) to simulate such a commission, and their efforts will result in a new (unofficial) North Carolina Congressional map. All phases of the project –



an orientation session, map-drawing session, map reveal, public education tour, and parallel student simulation – are open to the public.

3.3 ENGAGED SCHOLARSHIP

Faculty research and engagement is at the heart of POLIS. Our [faculty](#) are tackling some of the most important issues facing our politics. To name a just a few:



Sunshine Hillygus is working on how to improve political polling methods



Nick Carnes is working on how to encourage more working-class citizens to run for political office



Deondra Rose is working on the politics of social policy



Kristin Goss is working on the politics of guns in America

3.4 THE DEMOCRACY LAB

POLIS launched *The Democracy Lab*, a program that involves teams of students, faculty and practitioners seeking innovative solutions to political problems. The first of the projects, on election polling, is underway this summer. Two more will get started this fall—one connected to the Beyond Gerrymandering project, the second to the politics of climate change—and we expect several more next spring.

[New Approaches to Election Polling – A Data+ Project](#)

A team of two undergraduates, led by a political science PhD student mentor, kicked off a ten-week summer research experience on May 23 to explore new possibilities in political polling methodology. Sponsored and conceived by POLIS, the [Data+ Election Polling](#) team will apply machine learning and other data science techniques to analyze data provided by Public Opinion Strategies, a leading professional polling firm. The students will learn about current limitations in election polling performance, conduct proof-of-principle experiments with new techniques, and make a series of recommendations to professionals in the field.

4 DEVELOPING FUTURE LEADERS: PATHWAYS TO POLITICS

If we are to solve the problems of contemporary politics, we need thoughtful, ethical, effective, and informed citizens and political leaders. Our goal is to help *all* Duke students embark on lives of political engagement, and we worked towards accomplishing this through courses, workshops, fellowships, events, career support, and meaningful engagement with alumni.

4.1 POLITICAL LEADERSHIP COUNCIL (PLC)

In an effort to reach a diverse group of Duke students, as well as remain responsive to the needs of students from all political perspectives, we created the [Political Leadership Council](#). This group of undergraduates represents the interests of political and identity groups across Duke, advises POLIS on the types of programming and speakers they'd like to see, and serves as POLIS ambassadors to their respective groups and the broader student body. In return, the students gain opportunities to learn more about politics and the political process through exclusive access to special guests visiting campus, hands-on workshops, and other learning experiences.

In its inaugural year, the PLC was made up of representatives from 10 student groups: Duke College Republicans; Black Student Alliance; Native American Student Alliance; Duke Political Review; Duke NAACP; Public Policy Majors Union; YOUNite; Blue Devils United; Duke Political Union; Duke Democrats; and the Asian American Alliance. We look forward to expanding the council next year to additional undergraduate and graduate student groups.

4.2 POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT PILOT PROJECT (PEPP)

Created by the Hart Leadership Program, in partnership with POLIS, the Political Engagement Pilot Project (PEPP) launched this spring. PEPP is a new political leadership initiative that includes three parts:

1. Spring gateway course on politics, policy, and leadership—PUBPOL 270: “Political Participation and Leadership”—co-taught by Professor Alma Blount and Durham City Council Member Steve Schewel.
2. Summer internship grant for political projects with partner organizations.
3. Capstone project the following academic year.

Sixteen students participated in this pilot course this spring, and they are currently interning in organizations ranging from the Fort Worth City Council to the League of Conservation Voters.

4.3 POLIS/FULL FRAME POLITICS AND FILM FELLOWS PROGRAM

POLIS and the [Full Frame Documentary Film Festival](#), one of the nation’s premier documentary film festivals, teamed up to offer a unique experience to Duke students this year: a fellowship program at the **intersection of politics and documentary film**.



Through workshops, a team-based political documentary film project, and attendance of a politics-themed lineup at the 2016 Full Frame festival, ten [POLIS/Full Frame Fellows](#) developed a deeper understanding of the power of narrative in the political and policy realm, enhanced film production and storytelling skills, gained insight into potential careers in politics and film, and networked with students, faculty, and professionals across and beyond Duke.

4.4 OTHER PROGRAMS AND SPEAKERS

[Duke Embark](#)

In partnership with the Sanford Career Services office, POLIS planned and hosted a three-day policy and politics career networking trip to Washington **for 26 undergraduate juniors and seniors**. Programming included informational interviewing and networking presentations, a Capitol tour, roundtable discussions on DC career options with 21 alumni, and a networking reception at the Duke in DC office with over 40 Washington-area alumni.



[Connect2Politics](#) (supported by a grant from the Hart Leadership Program)

The Connect2Politics political organizing series provided students an opportunity to engage in workshop settings with political practitioners. Each expert hosted a talk or workshop and then shared dinner conversation with a small group of students afterwards. The three C2P topics were;

- Mobilizing Millennials with Heather Smith (T '98), former executive director of Rock the Vote;
- Technology and Citizen Engagement with Macon Phillips (T '01), former director of digital strategy in the Obama



White House and current head of the State Department's bureau of International Information Programs; and

- Political organizing workshop with Andrea LaRue (T '87), principal lobbyist and former Hill staffer and political organizer.

[SiriusXM's Electoral College Tour](#)

On the eve of Super Tuesday, POLIS hosted three talk radio comedian-commentators from SiriusXM for a day-long broadcast from Duke's campus. Programming featured back-to-back discussions with diverse groups of students and faculty on their (often conflicting, yet still civil) perspectives related to the 2016 election. The day was capped off by a political stand-up comedy show that evening, attended by over 500 people.

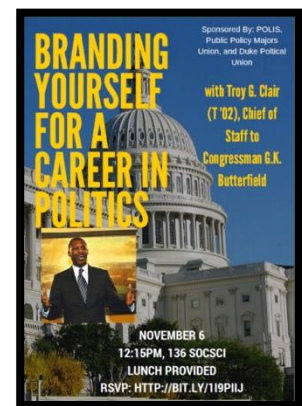


[Campaign Technology and the Future of Polling](#)

POLIS partnered with Microsoft and Duke's DC office to host a multi-site panel [discussion on the future of polling](#). The panel was moderated by Amy Walter, national editor of Cook Political Report, and featured Duke Professor of Political Science Sunshine Hillygus, Neil Newhouse (T '74), partner of Public Opinion Strategies and pollster with the Romney presidential campaign, and Margie Omero, managing director of Purple Insights and Democratic pollster. An audience of 60 students on campus virtually joined an audience of 50 people at Microsoft's DC office, with the students weighing in, in real-time, using Microsoft's online polling technology, Bing Pulse.

[Other Speakers](#)

POLIS sponsored and co-sponsored numerous other speakers to come to campus this past year (**26 in total**), all with the purpose of exposing students to political perspectives, ideas, and careers. These include: Scott Dikkers, founding editor of *The Onion*; Ryan White, director of *The Case Against 8*; Paul Teller, Chief of Staff to Senator Ted Cruz; Troy Clair, Chief of Staff to Congressman GK Butterfield; US Rep. Scott Peters; former US Rep. Bob Inglis (2015 recipient of the JFK Profile in Courage Award); U.S. Rep Daniel Lipinski; Neil Newhouse, prominent Republican pollster; journalist Cokie Roberts; the Durham City Council candidates; Rebecca Blank, former Secretary of Commerce; and Kevin "Kal" Kallaugher, the political cartoonist for the Economist.



5 LOOKING AHEAD

In our first year, POLIS has been able to accomplish a great deal – with minimal resources and staff. But we are just getting started. The year ahead will bring more exciting and substantive programs and initiatives.

Some highlights will include:

- Coordinating campus voter engagement efforts for the 2016 election;
- Hosting the Duke Political Cartoon and Satire Festival, in partnership with the Association of American Editorial Cartoonists and the DeWitt Wallace Center for Media and Democracy;
- Continuing the North Carolina Leadership Forum;
- Continuing Beyond Gerrymandering, including a possible major conference at Duke on political districting;
- Launching *Challenges to American Democracy*, a seminar series featuring engaged scholars working on major issues facing politics, coordinated by Professor Nick Carnes;
- Hosting Duke's election night activities;
- and much more!