



# The Arthur Levitt Public Affairs Center Hamilton College

2001-2002 Annual Report

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Christopher Viapiano and Prof. Lisa Trivedi pose in front of the British Library. A Levitt Fellow, Chris pursued research here on public welfare versus private rights in Great Britain.

## Levitt Fellows research current issues

### The working poor contend with welfare reform

How do the working poor in Utica survive? In what ways have the changes in welfare laws affected them and how do they feel about the services available to them? These were some of the questions asked by Hamilton senior **Karen Pogonowski**.

Karen was one of six students selected as Levitt Fellows to do research work in conjunction with faculty members and in preparation for work on their senior theses. This is a new program of the Levitt Center which was instituted in the summer of 2002.

Working with **Judy Owens-**

**Manley**, the Center's Associate Director for Community Research and using a questionnaire developed by the Children's Defense Fund, Karen went to welfare offices and food banks in Utica to interview clients. She also analyzed the results of surveys of Head Start families conducted in the spring by **Erin Reid '01**.

Karen presented the results of her research to an assembly of students and faculty in November. Some of the stories she described were heart-rending. Surprisingly, most people she spoke with were not angry, though they were often depressed about their circumstances. Women in particular found it difficult to find jobs that were

stable, or that provided sufficient income to support their families.

### British leaders struggle to govern a multi-cultural society

Senior **Christopher Viapiano** chose to study the British government's struggle to govern a widely divergent population through the past century. In collaboration with history professor **Lisa Trivedi**, Chris focused on the boundaries between "public welfare" and the "private rights of individuals."

Chris actually traveled to Great Britain to pursue research in the British Library and the Public Records Office. He studied the

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## Levitt Fellows research current issues continued

relationship between contemporary struggles and similar problems in the colonial world, particularly as these relate to racial and cultural differences.

### Financial institutions affect severity of business cycles

The interaction between financial sectors and macroeconomic volatility is a complex one. **Marcus Loveland '02** determined to study this link with the help of economics professor **Ann Owen**. Marc studied electronic data from the International Monetary Fund which required learning a variety of computer applications and skills such as: advanced functions of Excel spreadsheets, manipulation of data and programming in *Stata* statistical software, and economic skills.

This study is an on-going part of Marc's senior project. He will continue to collect relevant data, consider variations over time, and develop more variables. The latter will include the length of recovery times from recession, a topic relevant to today's world. His results will be given at a public presentation to the College community.

### Local business firms rely on technology

Computers and similar information technologies have become an integral part of today's business world. Have firms in central New York State kept up with the trend? In what ways is this technology used, and has it been beneficial for business productivity? These are some of the questions asked by senior Farah Zakir in her work with economics professor Jeffrey Pliskin.

Part of the study involved a survey of local firms, based upon the major survey of 600 firms being conducted by Professor Derek Jones with the support of the Levitt Center. Since few studies have been done on the effect of information technology, the results of this on-going study may have important implications.

### Benin embraces democracy in its own way

Benin was one of the first African countries to fully embrace democracy, and celebrated its 41<sup>st</sup> year of independence in August 2001. In order to study the attitudes of the Beninoise to democratic principles, **Veronique Gbado** developed a questionnaire with the assistance of government professor **Steve Orvis**.

While spending a month in Benin, Veronique surveyed almost 200 people who represented various ethnic, gender, education, age and economic groups. She discovered

that the people are very aware of, and understand, their government, but in a different way than people in other countries. She will continue to analyze the results and compare them to a study of six African countries completed by Michael Bratton.

### Russia and China form strategic alliances

Working with **Prof. Cheng Li** on a senior thesis in East Asian Studies, **Brenda Van Deusen**, is studying attempts by Russian and Chinese leaders to cooperate. The Chinese leaders are concerned about the United States plan to establish a National Missile Defense system and thus China is purchasing \$20 billion worth of weapons from Russia.

Brenda is applying her seven years of training in the Chinese language in order to analyze Chinese publications and learn more about the far-reaching implications for U.S. foreign policy of a Sino-Russian alliance.

## Faculty members share research work



*Social science faculty members lunch together several times a month to discuss current research projects. Above, Prof. Steve Orvis (Government) describes "Civil Society in a New Democracy" as Prof. Dennis Gilbert (Sociology), Prof. Paul Hagstrom (Economics and Director of the Levitt Center) and Prof. Christopher Georges (Economics) listen.*



*Students Paul Jones '03 and Kristen Schaefer '02 make last minute changes before they present the results of a poll on "Youth attitudes toward gays" at a press conference held at the Princeton Club in New York City. The survey was sponsored by the Levitt Center, conducted in conjunction with Zogby International and publicized on MTV. The results were widely reported in the media including: the New York Times, USA Today, the New York Daily News and Reuters News Service.*

## High School seniors more liberal than adults on gay issues

*Excerpts from an article in the Spectator by Sarah Karalunas '04*

Things may be looking up for gay and lesbian students in the United States. According to a poll of 1,003 high school seniors conducted by Hamilton students and Zogby International, average 18-year-olds hold much more liberal views on gay and lesbian issues than their adult counterparts. The survey was formally released at a press conference in New York City by representatives from Hamilton College and MTV News.

Seventy-one percent of students said that sexual relations between members of the same sex should be legal; only 54 percent of adults would agree. The survey also showed that 63 percent of students would be comfortable with a gay, male math teacher and seven in ten said gay men should be allowed to serve as Boy Scout leaders.

"We were surprised by how liberal these kids were," said Paul

Jones '03, one of the students who designed and administered the poll.

Jones, along with Kristen Schaefer '02 and Professor of Sociology Dennis Gilbert spoke at the press release. "Eighteen-year-olds are a lot more open as compared to actual adults," said Co-coordinator of the Rainbow Alliance Eric Nuñez '04.

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*"We were surprised by how liberal these kids were."*

*- Paul Jones '03*

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One of the survey's biggest surprises was that eight out of ten Catholic students supported recognition of same-sex marriages. "I have no idea how (they can support same-sex marriages)," said Gilbert, who helped develop the survey. "I

can only say that they really aren't listening to the church." ...Despite some optimistic data, the poll also revealed the extent to which discrimination persists in high schools.

The survey initially rose out of a sociology class project entitled "Using Survey Research" said Gilbert, who suggested the topic to the class. "No one's ever asked kids those kinds of questions before," said Jones. Each student in the class helped formulate questions for a pilot survey, then the group collectively called 215 students to test what worked and what didn't. After adding questions regarding education and making minor word changes to a few questions, [Zogby International conducted the more-extensive poll]. Throughout the class students focused on the research, not their personal feelings, said Gilbert.

## Fall Scholars ready to present

The following students were nominated by faculty members from all disciplines of the College to be Levitt Scholars. They completed a course in communication skills with Prof. Susan Mason and will be speaking at high schools during the winter about their research. Another group will present during the Spring 2002 semester. (See page 5)



*Stacey spoke to three classes at her alma mater, New Rochelle High School, in New Rochelle, New York.*

### **Stacey Stump '02 (Government)**

#### **Do we own our identity?**

As a result of the terrorist attacks, the conflict between privacy and the public's need to know has come to the forefront. In what ways does technology threaten our right to privacy and what can be done about it?

### **Jason Rogers '02 (International Relations)**

#### **Can economic development promote growth and alleviate inequality at the same time?**

First Jason defines economic development and shows where the need is greatest. Using Harlem as a case study, he demonstrates how the policies of local economic development organizations can greatly influence results. Why are some neighborhoods caught in a continual prison of poverty, while others are able to raise their standard of living? What are the factors that make a difference and how can these principles apply to our local area?

### **Elizabeth Evans '02 (English)**

#### **Sacred Land: Yosemite is much more than a vacationland.**

By looking in-depth at the artistic, historical, national, cultural and religious value of Yosemite National Park, Elizabeth gets the students thinking about the value of the land beyond aesthetics. She includes the religious views of indigenous people regarding this sacred ground, the history of the park, the pollution caused by tourists, as well as the industries spawned by the many visitors to this national treasure.



*Elizabeth Evans spoke to classes at her home school, the University School of Milwaukee, Wisconsin.*



### **James Reagan '03 (Economics)**

#### **What is the best way to invest in shaky economic times?**

Jamie explains some of the rules of effective investing, including the categories of mutual funds, stocks, bonds, and money market accounts. What impact do lower interest rates have on investments?

### **Krista Hall '02 (Economics)**

#### **How do we achieve empowerment and what is the Empowerment Zone?**

Krista tells students about her research at the New York Empowerment Zone (EZ). She analyzes and evaluates the success of the EZ and gives recommendations for improvement. These techniques can be applied to student organizations and clubs in order to make them more effective.

## Timothy Fossett '02 (Public Policy)

### How can you build in a way that is friendly to both the pocketbook and the environment?

Tim discusses the financial aspects of commercial real estate, and describes construction practices that are not only environmentally friendly, but cost-effective as well. He also explains ways to invest in environmentally friendly real estate ventures.

## Seniors pursue public policy projects

by Prof. Paul Gary Wyckoff

**Matthew Eng '02** is doing a project on **wage determination in local governments** in the local area. The study would help academics to figure out what factors affect wages (size of jurisdiction, income of jurisdiction, etc.) and would help communities to determine fair wages for their municipal employees.

The sponsor of the project is technically the Cornell Cooperative Extension Service, but Matt is meeting on a regular basis with a committee representing a number of local governments in our area. Matt is collecting his data through interviews and a survey of municipal workers, and is beginning a statistical analysis of the data.

**Cristina Freyre '02** and **Nikie Sarris '02** are doing **an evaluation of the Weed and Seed Program** in Utica. Their sponsor is Gene Allen of the Utica Neighborhood Housing Service. "Weed and Seed" is a comprehensive program that combines intensive police actions (weed) with social services like housing repair (seed).

Cristina and Nikie are comparing Utica with other cities in the Northeast and Midwest to see if cities that have Weed and Seed have lower crime rates than cities that don't have this program.

**Tim Fossett** and **Henry Hornblower** are working under a contract with the New York Department of State, Codes Division. Their project is to develop a comprehensive and **detailed plan for transforming the former Delta Kappa Epsilon house into an environmentally friendly building.**

Their final plan will include detailed recommendations for heating, lighting, insulation, interior layout, wiring, and landscape design. The goal of the project is to find out how difficult it is for non-technical laypersons (such as Tim and Henry) to figure out how to renovate residential structures to save energy.

## Spring Levitt Scholar group is largest ever

*The following students have been selected from all majors at the College as Levitt Scholars for the spring semester in 2002. They were nominated by faculty members for their research and communication ability. They will be taking a course in Public Discourse with Prof. Susan Mason, and then giving their presentations at local high schools and their alma maters back home. Each Scholar agrees to give at least two presentations.*

Jessica Ambrose '02	Sociology
Julian Baer '02	Government
Camille Begawen '02	World Politics
Sage Bissell '02	Communication Studies
Jessica Bloom '02	Art/Economics
Owen Charles '02	Economics
Dana Cook '02	Communication Studies
Mike D'Alessandro '02	English
Joseph Dougherty '02	Government
Matthew Eng '02	Public Policy
Colleen Fenity '02	English/Dance
Jacob Heyman-Kantor '02	Sociology/Spanish
Alexandra Jackson '02	Neuroscience
Cameron Johnson '03	Religious Studies
Rebecca Karb '02	Public Policy/ Economics
Joe Livingston '02	Government
Kurt Mangold '02	Psychology
Molly McKnight '02	Sociology/Spanish
Carrie McNeil '02	Psychology
Byron Miller '02	Government
Leanne Miller '02	Computer Science
Christine Palumbo '02	Government
Karen Pogonowski '02	Public Policy
Lindy Roath '02	Government/ Communication Studies
Erin Root '02	Government/ Economics
Erin Ryan '02	Government/Spanish
Jessica Sherman '02	Government
Shauna Sweet '03	Sociology
Erin Thorkilsen '02	English
Christopher Viapiano '02	History
Rebecca Walker '02	Geology
Sara Weinstein '02	Government/Women's Studies
Kirsten Westerland '02	Psychology
Nicole Wright '02	Government

# Community involvement expands



Judith Owens-Manley

## Communities that Care

Judy Owens-Manley, Associate Director of Community Research in the Levitt Center, initiated and coordinated nearly two years of planning efforts with key leaders in the Oneida County for Communities That Care, a research-based prevention project implemented in the County. Dr. Owens-Manley will now serve as the Chair of the Assessment & Evaluation Committee of the Communities That Care initiative.

The intent of the Assessment Committee in producing community-level information is to involve students and/or faculty at Hamilton and other local colleges in community research projects that fill gaps in information, which is needed for planning and influencing outcomes in the human services. Communities that implement CTC develop a community profile of risk and protective factors and prioritize interventions based on that information. In Oneida County, the prioritized risk factors are Economic Deprivation, Early & Persistent Anti-Social Behavior (elementary school), Alienation or Rebelliousness (middle & high school), and Family Management.

Students have been active over the past year with CTC-related research projects. The related studies completed by **Erin Reid**

'01 and **Karen Pogonowski** '02 gave some clarification to what is happening with local residents who live in or near the edge of poverty and who have children enrolled in Headstart Programs or used Food Bank services. Karen's work was recently presented to the Utica Food Coalition to help understand factors that keep families in poverty.

**LeeAnn Atkinson** '02 worked with Utica Neighborhood Housing Services to finish a comprehensive study of one census tract neighborhood in Utica, a valuable addition to the Weed & Seed Project in Utica.

**Karen Pogonowski** also worked on an Independent Study in the Fall with a Communities That Care team, Strengthening Families, to do a literature search and develop focus groups to clarify direction and vision for the team's efforts.

Student Research Assistants in the Levitt Center are working on updating a Community Profile for the newly-formed Board of Communities That Care, as well as a new project for the Women's Fund of Oneida-Herkimer Counties.

**Millie Ramirez** '02 has worked on updating the Community Profile information for CTC, and a newly hired student, **Alexander (Sandy) Webb** '05 has just begun to add his energies to the project.

## Women's Fund

The Levitt Center will be working with the Women's Fund over the next three years to do a State of Women study for the two county area. **Rebecca Karb** '02, together with Dr. Owens-Manley, presented the first stage of this research to the Women's Fund's Board recently to give the overall demographic picture available with

Census 2000 information and a summary of statistical information available from surveys completed with nearly 6,000 teens in Oneida County in April of 1999. The second step will be to work with an already-established group of faculty who are interested in the study to determine gaps in information and to set next steps for faculty-student collaborations. They have applied for one grant and are researching others to support a fuller approach to the data collection and analysis for the Women's Fund.

## Program Evaluation

The Program Evaluation Seminar this Spring is also relating to research needed by the Communities That Care Board. Students will be addressing a needs analysis, program description and outcome evaluation for a small alternative school program offered at the Salvation Army in Utica for elementary school children who are being suspended or expelled from their home school.

A second focus will be to evaluate The Journaling Project, which was initiated and implemented with middle school girls in several area schools by a Hamilton College student, **Jessica Ambrose** '02. The students in the course will produce a document for the programs and give a public presentation of their findings.

Dr. Owens-Manley is also available for students and faculty who want to establish contacts in the surrounding communities for their thesis work, research, or just to explore their own interests. Call 859-4486 or email: [jowens@hamilton.edu](mailto:jowens@hamilton.edu) to schedule an appointment.

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# Speakers cover current issues

**“The War in Afghanistan and the Global Refugee Crisis”** was addressed by Lavinia Limon, Interim Executive Director of Immigration and Refugee Services of America, at a luncheon sponsored by the Levitt Center in November. “The refugee situation is in crisis,” she said. “Between one-half to one million people will die from exposure if something is not done.” She described tent camps along the borders of Afghanistan with horrific conditions, and neighboring Pakistan overloaded with refugees.

“It is important in the court of world opinion that the U.S. not be seen as callous,” she stated. The three possible solutions she outlined were: 1) allowing refugees to return home whenever it becomes safe, 2) resettlement in another place with a similar culture and language such as in Africa or Latin America, or 3) resettlement in the United States, Scandinavia, Australia or Canada.

*During the fall semester the following speakers were sponsored by other departments (in parentheses) with additional support of the Levitt Center:*

Stephen Gill (*Department of Government*) - **“Global Capitalism”**

Serrin Foster (*Department of History*) - **“The Feminist Case Against Abortion”**

Prof. Anyidoho (*Department of English*) - **“Slave Routes: A Trial So Long Gone.”**

Margo Anderson '00 (*Department of Government*) - **“The Future of Privacy”**

Elizabeth Watkins (*Department of Sociology and The Kirkland Project*) - **“Birth Control and Controlling Birth: Struggles over Reproductive Rights in the 20th Century”**

Zillah Eisenstein (*Womyn's Center*) - **“Women in Afghanistan”**

This year the theme was open. The theme for 2002-2003 will be: Immigration and Global Citizenship. Past themes have included: Poverty and Inequality, Race and Ethnicity and Religion and Public Affairs.



*Lavinia Limon, Interim Executive Director of Immigration and Refugee Services of America, describes the plight of refugees around the world at a luncheon for Hamilton College students, faculty and employees.*

## Public Affairs Journalism

*This lecture series was organized by English Professor Catherine Kodat with support from the Department of Communications Studies. It served as an adjunct to her course Public Affairs Journalism. Attendees filled the Chapel as the speakers gave students insight into press ethics, responsibility to readers and First Amendment concerns.*

**Sam Fulwood III** - Columnist, *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, and author of *Waking from the Dream: My Life in the Black Middle Class* discussed the importance of objectivity in journalism.

**Bernard Lefkowitz** - Prof. of Journalism at Columbia University, former reporter for the *New York Post* and *New York Newsday* and author of *Our Guys: The Glen Ridge Rape and the Secret Life of the Perfect Suburb* talked about the way in which the weak and vulnerable in society are often marginalized.

**Mark Hertsgaard** - independent journalist and author of *Nuclear, Inc.: The Men and the Money Behind Nuclear Energy* presented his views on **“How to Save the World: Real Solutions to the Global Environmental Crisis.”**

## Center director discusses future plans

The Levitt Center has from its inception strived to connect Hamilton students with the non-Hamilton community. Whether by bringing highly qualified speakers to campus or by matching students with the research needs of the surrounding community, the Levitt Center has expanded the learning opportunities for our students. This fall the Levitt Center redirected resources to respond to the campus' needs after the September terrorist attacks. In the coming years Levitt will continue to improve its programs and find new ways to improve the educational experience.

As we look to the future, several key objectives will shape future planning for the Center. First, we will be working to strengthen and expand relationships between the College and off-campus agencies that form the laboratories and topics for student projects. Second, we will provide faculty support for innovative teaching and research of

### ***Students invite faculty speakers for Think Tank debates***

Mimi Barrett '02 and Amanda Taylor '02 organize a weekly lunch sponsored by the Levitt Center, to discuss current affairs. Wide-ranging topics in the fall have included: ***"Disaster, Public Grief, and Memorial"*** led by Professor of English Dana Luciano, a standing room only discussion by Professor of English John O'Neill entitled: ***"The Reel Jane Austen: Learning About the Novel from the Movies"*** and a discussion on the ***"Conflict between immigration policy and welfare policy"*** by Professor of Economics Paul Hagstrom.

public affairs issues. Third, we will seek to bring off-campus experts with ranging perspectives to our students. Fourth, we will expand student opportunities to discuss current issues, research topics of public concern, and present their own research both on and off campus.

To meet these objectives requires constant monitoring of student, faculty, and community needs. Levitt programming must complement the curricular offerings of the college. And, to be most effective, students must be convinced that the applied research they conduct truly meets community needs. Judy Owens-Manley, the Levitt Center's Associate Director of Community Research, works tirelessly to foster relationships between Hamilton College and our local community and to supervise student projects that meet real community needs. We

look forward to assisting faculty to increase the experiential learning content of courses across the college.

Next year, the Levitt Center will conduct part of its programming around the theme, "Immigration and Global Citizenship." Through the theme we encourage faculty and students to consider the impact of immigration on all facets of life in the United States and the impact that immigration policies have on our role in the world community. In the spring semester we will accept applications for speakers, survey projects, and programs around the immigration theme.

The Levitt Center is always changing, but the commitment to improve the educational experience of Hamilton students remains strong. I look forward to the challenge of leading the center through future changes.

*The Arthur Levitt Public Affairs Center is made possible by the generous support of Hamilton College, the Winston Foundation and others. The mission of the Levitt Center is to strengthen and promote the role played by public affairs in the liberal arts education of every student at Hamilton College.*

*The staff includes; Prof. Paul A. Hagstrom, Director and Associate Professor of Economics; Dr. Judith Owens-Manley, Associate Director of Community Research; and Sally Carman, Administrator and Editor of the Annual Report/Newsletter. The Levitt Council, providing direction for special programs and projects, consists of Prof. Doug Ambrose, History Department; Prof. Carol Drogus, Government Department; Prof. Dennis Gilbert, Sociology Department; Prof. Derek Jones, Economics Department; Prof. Ann Owen, Economics Department; Prof. Robert Simon, Philosophy Department; Prof. Gary Wyckoff, Government Department (Public Policy) and Prof. Paul Hagstrom, Director and Economics Department.*

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