

Spring 2014

Mary Malone, Associate Professor of Political Science, UNH Durham

Jennifer Lee

University of New Hampshire - Main Campus

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholars.unh.edu/inquiry_2014



Part of the [Political Science Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Lee, Jennifer, "Mary Malone, Associate Professor of Political Science, UNH Durham" (2014). Inquiry Journal 2014.
<http://www.unh.edu/inquiryjournal/inquiry-2014/mary-malone>

This Mentor Highlights is brought to you for free and open access by the Inquiry Journal at University of New Hampshire Scholars' Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Inquiry Journal 2014 by an authorized administrator of University of New Hampshire Scholars' Repository. For more information, please contact nicole.hentz@unh.edu.

Inquiry Journal

Undergraduate Research Journal : Spring 2014

Mentor Highlights

Mary Malone

—Jennifer Lee

Dr. Mary Malone is an associate professor in the Department of Political Science, where she has been for ten years.

Below is a correspondence with Dr. Malone about her own research and her mentoring experiences with undergraduate students.

Inquiry: What is your current research? Did your undergraduate studies point you toward it? What interests you most about it?

MM: I study contemporary Latin American politics, and I'm particularly interested in how the current crime wave influences democratic development in the region. When I was an undergrad, most of the countries in Latin America were discarding their dictators in favor of democratically elected governments. I was fascinated by these developments, particularly since it meant that average citizens no longer had to live in fear of their governments, and respect for human rights would be the norm.

As I continued my work in the region throughout the 1990s and 2000s, however, it became obvious that many citizens still lived in fear because of high rates of violent crime. To put this in perspective, the homicide rate in the United States tends to be about 5 per 100,000, while in Honduras it has reached 89 per 100,000. Much of the violence is driven by the illegal drug trade. My research examines how states can respond to the violence in ways that don't jeopardize democracy.

Inquiry: What is the purpose of a mentoring relationship? What should the student and you gain from it?

MM: The goal of mentoring is to give students the individual attention they



Dr. Mary Malone, associate professor of political science, University of New Hampshire

need to discover their interests and then gain the skills they need to focus their academic and professional careers on these interests. It is always rewarding to see students identify an issue or topic that really motivates them, and then chart out ways they can engage in this area in their studies and work.

Inquiry: Please describe some positive, memorable mentoring experiences or mentees.

MM: One of my students won an award to travel to Costa Rica and interview women in parliament about their political careers. When I saw the photograph of the student in the Costa Rican parliament, engaged in her research, it was wonderful. To see a student's work grow from a few ideas in an outline to actual field research abroad is an incredibly rewarding experience.

A second moment that sticks out was at the Undergraduate Research Conference in 2012. One of my sophomore students gave a ten-minute presentation on her research of Central American migration trends; when she finished, I realized that her presentation was of the caliber I would expect at a professional conference. It was clear that she was going to have an incredible career in front of her, and it has been wonderful to see it develop.

Inquiry: Please describe any difficulties or problems you have had in mentoring undergraduates.

MM: There are two key areas in which I have seen students struggle: stamina and professionalization. Sometimes students are interested in a topic, but then burn out after going through the stages of developing a proposal, collecting data, and writing up the final report. I have had students say that once they complete the final report, they feel "done" with the project. Really, that should be the beginning. The first report should be one stepping stone, and students should build upon this foundation with additional classes, research, and practical experience.

The second area is in professionalization. When students engage in research on their own, they are often contacting academics and professionals who are experts in their fields. Students sometimes struggle with the appropriate way to address and interact with these experts, and can become too casual in written and oral communications.

Inquiry: What advice or tips would you give a faculty member new to undergraduate mentoring?

MM: Each mentoring experience I have had is very different, so I suppose the key is to work with the student to map out a research design and time table, and then provide all the support possible for the student to meet his or her goals.

Dr. Malone has mentored Inquiry authors Ian Pajer-Rogers (2005) and Amanda Diegel (2008).

[Top of Page >>](#)

Copyright 2014, Jennifer Lee