



## Letter from the Chair

Dear **UK Political Science Alumni and Friends**,

We are at the end of what has been an exciting year in the **Department of Political Science**. As department chair, it is my pleasure to offer some updates as PS looks forward to the year ahead.

Our students continue to achieve incredible things. We now have nearly 500 students majoring in **Political Science**, and our **Law and Justice** program, in only its second year of existence, has grown to 177 majors and 91 minors. With this growth, students have been exposed to new courses and opportunities.

This academic year, for the first time, we have been able to offer courses in **Interest Groups and Courts**, **Law and Justice Research**, and the **Geopolitics of International Relations**, to name a few.

On the internship front, PS students have been busy in the **WildCats at the Capitol** program and in law-adjacent internships. In the spring, we will have one of our largest classes on record participating in the **Kentucky Legislative Internship Program** (KLIP) in Frankfort. As the semester winds down, students have been busy taking part in lawmaking, redistricting, **Model UN**, and legal simulation exercises; attending a session of the **Kentucky Supreme Court**; conducting original research and writing thesis papers; and learning new data and analytics skills.

We are lucky to be a part of a vibrant community. At the beginning of the school year, the department connected with undergraduates and students from local high schools at the **Research and Creative Exposition**, showing opportunities for research in Political Science. In September, the

**PS Alumni Board** held its bi-annual meeting, strategizing on important issues and growth opportunities for the department and its students. We also hosted our **annual Alumni Reception**, getting to see many familiar faces and re-acquainting with others. Most recently, we have been busy interviewing candidates for two new faculty positions in Comparative Politics, which will allow us to offer new courses to undergraduates looking to gain a more global perspective.

On behalf of the Department of Political Science, I am thankful for your friendship and support. We look forward to seeing and connecting with you in the future. Wishing you a wonderful 2026.

Sincerely,  
**Michael A. Zilis**  
Professor and Chair

## **Make A Difference**

Above all, the mission of Political Science is to serve students and prepare them for a better future. Our students achieve outstanding things. Yet many also face personal and financial challenges. The department offers direct support for students facing financial hardships. We also extend support to facilitate high impact experiences like internships.

Please consider making a donation to the Political Science Development Fund to support our students. No amount is too small, and a little support can make a huge difference.

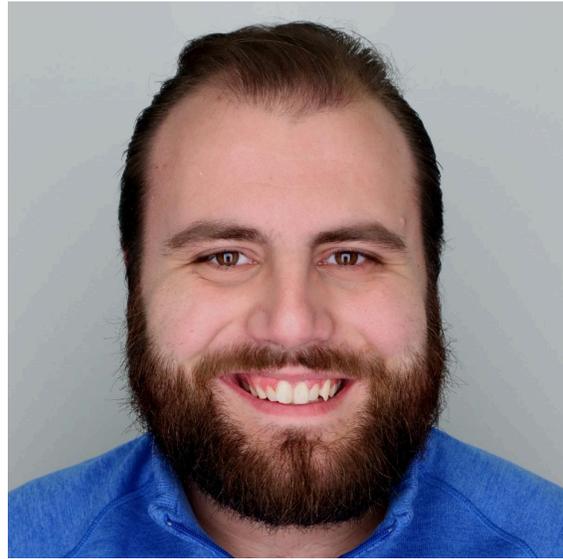
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## **Student Spotlight**



**Abrielle Ballard**

Abrielle Ballard is a second year student majoring in Political Science. On the path to law school, Abrielle is a part of the **UK BLUE program**, which is an accelerated opportunity that gives outstanding undergraduates the chance to get a bachelor's and law degree within 6 years. Abrielle is a mixed race child of deaf parents and her professional plans are to work in child custody law and family law related issues. In addition, she has made the most of her PS coursework, learning R to pursue a research paper and examining how political messaging makes its way into film and media. Abrielle has benefitted greatly from support from the F. Chris Gorman Pre-Law Scholarship, established to support outstanding students who are interested in pursuing a legal career.



**John Gantner**

John Gantner is a fourth year Ph.D. student focusing on International Relations. This past summer, John worked as a summer associate for RAND. He was assigned to two projects, both of which dealt with the optimization of sortie (fighter jet flights) generation for the U.S. Air Force. These projects analyzed problems such as base layout and personnel training, and offered substantive policy recommendations to the director of logistics for the USAF. John's dissertation examines the geographic characteristics of international conflict. During his time in the program, John has benefitted from support through the Kenneth and Mary Sue Coleman, Chris and Vicki Gorman, and Penny Miller Graduate Student Summer Fellowship, the Ken Griffin Graduate Research Fund, and the Political Science Endowed Doctoral Research and Travel Award.

## Faculty Spotlight

### Laura Huber

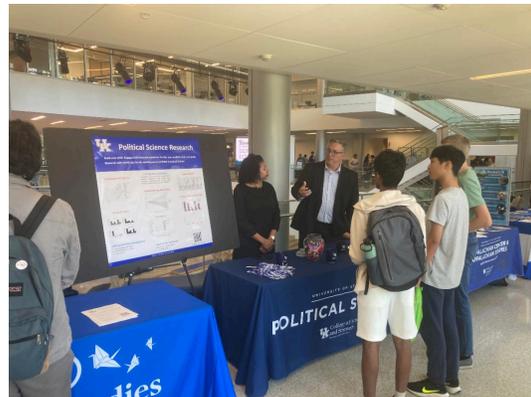
Dr. Laura Huber is our newest Assistant Professor, having come to UK after 4 years as a faculty member at the University of Mississippi. A specialist in International Relations, Dr. Huber focuses her research on security sector reform, conflict, gender, peacekeeping and political violence. One theme of her research focuses on the causes and consequences of women's integration into police and military forces worldwide. In addition to many important research publications, Dr. Huber has also amassed a distinguished teaching record. Her courses feature 2-month long simulations in which the students, acting as countries, have to navigate various security and political challenges, such as international war, nuclear politics, alliance building, and terrorism. Dr. Huber will continue to advance education by teaching in UK's **Collaborative Online International Learning program** (COIL) next academic year.



## Fall 2025 in Review



Political Science Alumni Reception



2025 Research and Creative Expo



PS alumni and students at Dean's Lunch



PS 465 visits the KY Supreme Court



PS 465 simulation moot court exercise



PS Grad students at the 16th floor holiday lunch

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