Economics students gain unique experience

By Brooke Olster
Staff Writer

A research-oriented seminar intended for students interested in economics or the health care industry is in its second year at Rider and is led by Dr. Kelly Noonan, an assistant professor of economics. This year, the seminar is working on a large scale project with the Home Health Care Program of Mercer Street Friends (MSF), a local non-profit human services agency.

The purpose of the seminar is to help someone in the pharmacy while guiding students in doing meaningful research," said Noonan.

Students hope to determine by the end of the semester if the evaluations of the patients that they are given by MSF predict the patient's length of care, and other outcomes, such as use of medication and use of other health care providers. In order to do this, students focus on collecting and analyzing data from patient evaluations, organizing these findings in a statistical program that allows for future examination, and researching the background of Medicare and the home health care industry, including laws that regulate the business.

"It gives us an opportunity to test new waters — to experiment with a new academic field," said senior Jarrod Coburn. "We have the ability to focus more on academics, and less on policy, which is rewarding."

Students work in small groups on a single aspect of this project which permits every student to specialize in a specific area of home health care. By the end of the course, the students will have collaboratively written an extensive research paper that will be presented by each at a seminar in the fall.

"I find the class to be a truly unique experience that both helps the community and gives its students significant experience, beyond the norm of typical college work," said junior Brian Gallo.

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The semester allows us to develop individual study skills in a less structured manner while receiving direct feedback, which means that I am expecting from a career," said senior Dan Dintino.

Senior Roxana Garcia agreed, adding that the amount of hands-on experience the job provides makes it unique.

"The class has a different perspective than other class and it actually teaches skills needed for a future job — how to work with statistics, do widespread research, and others," she said.

Some students, however, credit the success of the class to the professor.

"It’s the only class where you want to do your homework," said senior Kerry Johannesen. "I've changed my whole schedule around so I could take this class. Any class with Dr. Noonan, you can't pass up!"