The meeting consisted of three parts. First, Dr. Jason Pedicone, President of the Paideia Institute for Humanistic Study, presented on the ongoing Legion Project, which tracks the careers of former graduate students in Classics. Second, representatives of Fordham’s humanities departments discussed the career preparation they provide for their graduate students. Finally, participants divided into three groups to discuss our existing connections to alumni from Fordham’s GSAS and to local organizations in the New York area to forge a strong network for humanities graduates to find fruitful careers.

Part I: Presentation by Dr. Jason Pedicone, President of the Paideia Institute for Humanistic Study

Pedicone realized while in graduate school that the job market was terrible and that a tenure-track academic position was not a good fit for him. He started the Paideia Institute as a study-abroad program. He sees it as a humanities start-up that shows the value of the humanities, as people are willing to spend money on the Institute’s development.

Once the Institute was solvent, he started investing revenue in outreach projects like the Legion Project, which aims to solve the alt-ac “problem” for Classics Ph.D.s.

About the Legion Project:

- Pedicone wanted to debunk the myth that humanities Ph.D.s either become professors or end up living under a bridge.
- Universities refused to provide cohort lists to the Paideia Institute, as some students might not want to be contacted and the universities didn’t want to reveal their rates of attrition. So Pedicone asked interns to use Google and LinkedIn to track all recipients of Classics Ph.D.s at particular institutions, then email these individuals and ask for their stories.
- The MLA and the AHA focus on data to track Ph.D. graduates, but the Legion Project is more human – it includes a photo and a small bio for each person in the project and shows the professional success and applicability of a humanities Ph.D. through their stories.
- People can also nominate legionnaires for the Project, including those who began a Classics Ph.D. but did not complete it.
• The Project has now tracked everyone who’s done a Ph.D. in Classics [probably in the U.S.] since 1980, with an 87% success rate.

Through the Legion Project, Pedicone also found ways to make valuable connections, e.g. Matthew Levine, a financial writer with a Classics degree, is now on the board of the Paideia Institute.

The Legion Project also provided a lot of data:
• It tracks Ph.D. output by program, and can debunk some statistics being spread by departments and give actual contours for the Classics discipline.
• It provides hard numbers for each university’s placement rate, which has produced unexpected findings – some elite universities have low placement and some lower-ranked universities have great placement.
• Also shows what graduates do when they don’t go into academia; for instance, 29% become K-12 teachers.
• Pedicone considered the ethics of making the information available to the public; it’s important for students to know this material, but it could also be dangerous for the status of Classics programs, which are already under threat.

The Project is also encouraging legionnaires to develop relationships with one another: not just a data set, but also a growing community. Many members are angry at the situation in higher education.

This year, the Paideia Institute is bringing the Legion Project to the Society for Classical Studies annual meeting, bringing legionnaires for networking opportunities with students but also hosting a “re-training” event for Directors of Graduate Studies, which will discuss ways to address the issue of placement/career preparedness, show statistics, and also talk about successful outcomes for a Classics Ph.D.

Part II: Fordham’s Initiatives for Career Preparation, both Inside and Outside Academia

John Drummond, Robert Southwell, S.J. Distinguished Professor in the Humanities and Chair of the Philosophy Department:

Emphasized mentoring in the Philosophy department, with students taking three courses to encourage relationships with faculty mentors.

First Course: Introducing students to the department and the profession:
• Focus on department culture, how students can get involved
• Discussions of job prospects and how to create a dossier, starting at the beginning of the degree rather than only in preparation to enter the academic job market.
• How to start presenting at conferences and publishing

Second Course: Writing Workshop
• Informal, driven by students’ concerns and questions.
• Taught by the Placement Director, focusing on many types of writing – the dissertation, teaching/research statements, job talks, articles, the dossier.

Third Course: Teaching Seminar:
• Prepares students to teach core courses in Philosophy.
• Also teaches how to work with different types of students, as well as the mechanics of teaching (e.g. creating a good syllabus).

Job of the Placement Director was expanded under Prof. Nathan Ballantyne, who broadened the position to include non-academic placement.
• Teaches difference between a CV and a resume
• Highlights the transferability of skills to non-academic contexts
• This year, non-academic placement has been separated from academic placement.
• Panel discussions are now held for non-academic positions, with new initiatives in the works like a summer camp for high-school students that will be taught by Ph.D. students to provide new teaching experience.
• Highlights range of careers students have gone to – publishing, IT (programming and web design).

Nathan Ballantyne on the Writing Seminar:
• We have to get students to rethink writing – have to take your readers very seriously, think of what your obligation is to them.
• Need to develop skills like writing a resubmission to an article or a cover letter to a journal.
• Create a community of writers, who can share their frustrations and questions.

Julie Kim, Acting Chair of the English Department and former Director of Placement and Professional Development

In the English Department, we’re very aware of the limitations of the academic job market, but we’re still committed to helping students get those academic positions. According to a survey in 2014, 84% of Fordham English graduates are in academic teaching positions, with just over 50% in tenure-track jobs.

Resources for academic jobs:
• The Director of Placement and Professional Development’s responsibility is for the academic job market. S/he works with students to edit their job market materials and maintains the job market handbook.
• Job Placement Committee assists the DPPD with the above responsibilities, and also provided students with a wider range of teaching experience, e.g. at a community college.
Many students are now incorporating community college into their job searches, and these colleges require different materials and a different teaching style.

Resources for non-academic jobs:

- We have been encouraging students to consider positions at independent and private high schools. These schools are a fulfilling and available choice for Ph.D. graduates, with opportunities to publish and to attend conferences.
- Planning to create a new community based on high school and alternative teaching experiences.
- Focus on “alt-teaching” jobs in community college and high school. English graduates are good at teaching and it’s a skill they often carry to alternate careers.
  - Ph.D. graduate Julie Fifelski now works as an urban park ranger and noted in a recent survey that her pedagogical training helps her to explain things and really contributed to her interview process as good interpersonal experience.
  - Ph.D. graduate Melissa Whalen liked how the Peace Corps saw the value of her teaching experience.
- Teaching can also help graduates answer questions about the value of their Ph.D. on the non-academic job market.
- Another key skill is writing and editing, e.g. Kevin Stevens now works as a Grants Manager.
- English department is also now encouraging students to pursue internships – they’ve created a new course called the Graduate Internship Seminar which will allow students to pursue these internships during the academic year.

Lenny Cassuto, Professor of English and Former Director of Placement and Professional Development:

- Has never been happy with the designation of “alt” careers – prefers the AHA term, “career diversity.”
- “Alt” careers suggests that these careers are less likely, when actually the professoriate is the less likely career.
- Why not just shrink Ph.D. cohorts to fit the job market? Turns the academy even more into a cloister – academics have to engage with the world outside. Not only does society support the university, but it is also a key part of the university’s mission – to engage productively with society at large.
- So if Ph.D. graduates enter the non-academic job market angry about being lied to about their job prospects, they’re not fulfilling the mission of the university.
- Instead, universities should aim for a cohort size that allows for personal engagement with each student, helping all students to meet their individual goals.
• Departments should check in with students after two years in the Ph.D. program to find out what their career goals are and ensure that the dissertation will fit this career path, and that the rest of their course of study is compatible.
• Can even consider graduate internships instead of teaching.
• Encourage faculty support of a range of careers – students should be able to discuss where they’re looking with their advisors and know that these choices are approved.
  o James Van Wyck highlighted how Lenny Cassuto (his dissertation advisor) supported him in seeking his GSAS internship, which empowered him to get new mentors, not just his dissertation advisor.

Patrick Hornbeck, Chair of the Theology Department and Former Placement Director:

• Theology has a natural alt-ac path: religious professional careers. The academic career is sometimes the path that’s seen as “lesser than” – it’s only in the last sixty or seventy years that religious scholarship has taken place primarily in secular institutions.
• In the last five years, non-tenure-track jobs have become as likely as tenure-track jobs for theology Ph.D. graduates in academic career paths. So the Theology department had to widen the lens of placement.
• The department looked at the last five years and noticed that Fordham students who take a postdoc often end up with a tenure-track job down the line.
• The department created a reading group around Lenny Cassuto’s book, *The Graduate School Mess*.
• Agreed with Lenny that “alt-ac” as a term builds the idea that this path is second best to the academic path.
• Emphasized that we need to teach faculty to see non-academic jobs as equally as attractive, which could then trickle down to students entering the programs. We’re now questioning the idea that a tenure-track job is normative.
• Addressing rates of attrition –
  o Suggested having a hard conversation with students who are struggling to give options for leaving. Not just a punitive measure – asking if the Ph.D. is the right path for the student and presenting alternatives.
  o Looking at when things go wrong for students through student records, and the correlation between their success and their identity/life experiences.
• Suggested that placement officers get together and discuss techniques and resources (which is already happening in other departments; for instance, Nathan Ballantyne in Philosophy talked to John Bugg in English and has a copy of the English Department’s Job Market Handbook).
• Discussed spreading the work for non-academic placement around the department – the burden can’t fall only on the Placement Director; it should be shared among the department from day 1 of a Ph.D. program. Faculty should plan at the end of the first
semester to ask students to reflect on their potential career paths and refer to such career preparedness in performance assessments each year.

- Also looking at grants from institutions on theology outside Fordham, e.g. Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion will interview recent alumni about their training and then compile a report for the university to help improve.

Nicholas Paul, Associate Professor of History and Associate Chair for Graduate Studies

- In terms of “compatible careers,” History has a lot of work to do.
- Plans to tailor a survey for the department based on what other professors have discussed at the meeting to incorporate other trajectories than academia.
- Emphasis on creating an “outward-facing” portfolio during the coursework stage – e.g. a website, a video.
- Leans heavily on Laura Morreale’s work in Medieval Studies on compatible careers – panels with alumni about the process, the anxieties of a non-academic job search.
- Now focusing on networking and alumni, sending recent graduates to a network of graduates outside academia.

Laura Morreale, Associate Director of the Center for Medieval Studies

- Excited that these discussions are happening; it means we are thinking of the value of a Ph.D. graduate as a person in the world.
- Hosting the fifth “Compatible Careers” panel in April this year, with alumni from the M.A. in Medieval Studies and others.
- Insights from previous panels: You just have to get that first job and demonstrate that graduate school skills can be applied in many ways.
- As an M.A. program, Medieval Studies gives students two years to decide what they’ll do. It succeeds in getting students to stop and think before going into the Ph.D., turning this process into an informed decision based on career outcomes.

Dewis Shallcross, GSAS Director of Student Development and Special Events

- Highlights how the “Compatible Careers” panels (and the term itself) don’t come at non-academic jobs from a deficit perspective – it’s not setting up a dichotomy between tenure-track jobs and “other” careers, as all career paths are presented as equal.