



Biography of Dr. Jack Lechelt

Fun information about PLS at NOVA-LO, along with other advice, and reading and watching recommendations [at my website HERE](#).

I was born and raised in Edison, NJ. On June 30, 1969, my birthday, the country was led by President Richard Nixon, and it was just weeks before Neil Armstrong walked on the moon, and months before the New York Mets won their first World Series. Growing up, I enjoyed collecting baseball cards, watching Star Trek shows, going to Star Wars movies, and loving James Bond. I always had a special interest in George Washington, the American Revolution, and the Presidency. In high school, I was a 185lb-to-heavyweight wrestler.

As a senior in high school, it became increasingly clear to me that I had no idea what career I wanted to pursue, so I enlisted in the US Air Force as an Airman in March 1988. I wanted to see the world, but instead, I was sent to Cheyenne, Wyoming to become a Missile Handling Specialist at FE Warren Air Force Base. My commitment was for four years of service, but halfway through that term the Cold War ended and President GHW Bush decided to shrink the size of the military. This provided me with an opportunity to go back to college, and I wanted to take my education more seriously.

While living in Edison, NJ, I went to Kean University in Union, NJ. Here I encountered the topic of political science and fell in love with the discipline. I also fell in love in a much more important way: I met my future wife, Melissagale. She, too, was a political science major, but she also made wiser financial decisions and eventually entered the world of hotel management. After graduating with a bachelor's degree in political science, I took a full-time position as a property manager at a large apartment complex. Even though I learned some valuable lessons and met wonderful people in this job, I knew it wasn't for me. I started going to Rutgers University in Newark, NJ at night to get my master's degree in political science. Having a supportive wife

made all the difference. And when I finished that degree, I was accepted into the PhD program in political science at the University of South Carolina, in Columbia, SC. GO COCKS!

A completely new world awaited us in South Carolina: Melissa and I loved the weather and the pleasant personalities, and Melissa was able to continue her hotel career in Columbia, which really helped us thrive (along with the lower cost of living). Another great assist in moving to SC and feeling loved in a strange place was our three ferrets, Felix, Lloyd, and Scout. Ferrets aren't for everyone, but our three were perfect for us. We also brought an angry Chihuahua into our lives, Cocoa. She loved us intensely and hated the rest of the world with the same passion. We lived in SC for about seven wonderful years, and I was able to complete my dissertation and graduate.

My dissertation analyzed the increasing role of the vice presidency in foreign policy, with particular focus on Vice President Mondale (under President Carter) through Vice President Cheney (under President GW Bush). I learned a lot about myself in researching and writing that dissertation: apparently, I had the self-discipline to get something massive done. The dissertation was eventually published in book form by a tiny publishing company.

With fortuitous timing, Melissa was hired to open a new hotel in northern Virginia, and I found out there was an opening for a political science professor position at Northern Virginia Community College. Melissa and I moved into Leesburg and awaited the birth of our daughter. The hiring process at NOVA took some time, so I worked for several months at a consulting business, helping to write grants for government contracts. But when I was formally offered the job of professor for NOVA, I JUMPED AT IT! I started in August 2006. A few other side gigs I had after moving to Leesburg but before working at NOVA include the following: cashier at Borders Books; adjunct professor at Mary Washington University; and adjunct professor for graduate classes at George Mason University's School of Public Policy. From 2006 to 2021, I taught at the NOVA-Alexandria Campus. I loved it there, but since I live in Leesburg, it was a heck of a commute. When my beloved colleague at NOVA-Loudoun Campus announced her retirement, I applied to transfer. Since 2021 I have been happily working at the Loudoun Campus. Also, I am pretty active with NOVA's shared governance system, the College Forum, and I have been the Chair of the College Senate from May 2023 until April 2025, and I have been the Secretary of the College Senate since then. If anyone, student or employee of NOVA, wants to know how to get more involved, please let me know; I'm happy to help.

With the birth of our daughter in 2007 and our son in 2009, we settled in nicely with our careers and family, and since our ferrets and Cocoa have passed away, we brought into the family two mini-Schnauzers, Bean and Fala. Adulting with kids and dogs is not easy, but it's the greatest thing in my life.

Beyond family and work, I have something of a life in other areas. I like reading about presidents and history, with an occasional thriller or sci-fi excursion. College football is my favorite TV sport (Go Gamecocks and Scarlet Knights!). I generally like New York City pro-sports teams, with some passionate exceptions: since I love the Mets, that means I hate the

Yankees; and since I love the Jets and Dallas Cowboys, that means I don't care for the Giants; and since I love the NJ Devils, that means I don't like the Rangers and Islanders; but I do love both the Knicks and Nets. Movies and TV shows help me unwind, and I enjoy a pretty broad array of genres. Classic Will Ferrell movies are my go-to for escapism. As a family, we're rabid Disney fans, so we visit Orlando often and watch every movie they make. This love of Disney, of course, means we also love Star Wars, Marvel movies, and just about anything else they produce. I have the tattoos to prove this love. I am also happy to share that I visited all 50 states in America. In May 2019 I hit the last one with a visit to Alaska. I made it to all 50 states before I turned 50! And when I get the time, I love taking my kids to various historical sites, particularly anything having to do with presidential history.

I left out a few key, embarrassing details from this short biography, so you'll just have to imagine what those details could be.



Curriculum Vita (CV):

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1yVRkNroMrf7GaOfdy4sl0r6jpLPVQq2xKXLvEP_eF0/edit?usp=sharing