Sheila Ronis, Ph.D.
Director, MBA and Master of Science in Strategic Leadership programs
Walsh College

By Chad Halcom

Sheila Ronis has been dividing her time for months between heading a program for graduate students at Troy-based Walsh College and trying to make a safer nation for her students to live and work.

Ronis, 58, director of MBA and MSSL programs at Walsh, has been commuting between Southeast Michigan and Washington to serve as chairwoman of the Vision Working Group for the Project on National Security Reform.

The group is one of 10 addressing ways to update the National Security Act of 1947 to address 21st century global security concerns.

Ronis, a sometime consultant for the U.S. Department of Defense, was recruited in late 2006 based on her background in organizational behavior and strategic and systems thinking. She is the only person outside Washington to participate.

"Organizations all fundamentally operate the same way in a social structure sense," she said. "Even if they're each unique in form or purposes, and can have complex structure like the military’s structure, they are still subject to the same principles of social science."

After working at the University of Detroit Mercy in 1985-88, Ronis was president of Birmingham-based University Group Inc. from 1988 to 2005 and did some advisory work for the U.S. Army War College in Carlisle, Pa., and for the office of the secretary of defense. The company continues as a part-time operation in her home, but she has worked full-time at Walsh since 2005.

Biggest lesson learned in the past year:

"Visionary" people aren’t always born that way, and the right education can teach anyone that skill.

If she could take a class in anything, it would be:

History of the U.S. Constitution.