FROM THE DEPARTMENT HEAD

It has been a stormy spring in more senses than one but we seem to have come out better than we had feared. As for the budget cuts, the news is not great but at least we now know with certainty that we get to keep Laura Stolle Schmidt, our Executive Office and Administrative Specialist (who does so much more than mere secretarial things: “ambassadress” would be more like it). The deal is this: Laura gets to work 15 hours per week in the Women’s Studies Department and 15 hours in the American Indian Studies department. For one year (≈10 months).

This is the only sharing of staff by departments in the College of Liberal Arts (CLA). The other proposed department cluster plans have been taken off the agenda. The mandated system cuts have been met, but how the chips will fall for the entire University of Minnesota system in terms of tuition hikes, etc., for this and the next biennium may not be known until late June.

About 20 women, representing as many organizations in the Twin Ports participated in the February community meeting, held in the beautiful conference room at Women’s Community Development Organization. The conversation centered on the impending cuts at UMD and the threats to the Women’s Studies Department. It is truly heartwarming for all of us to know how much support we get from the community. We do our best to reciprocate in any way we can. Our interns have created sturdy bridges and all of us are personally involved in one or more of these feminist path breaking organizations and thus: community we do build! At our most recent meeting on Friday May 1, at Duluth’s very own Building for Women, we had great conversations about what people are doing for women and girls in the Twin Ports and where some of the needs lie in this community.

Last but not least, here is some news that gives us all cause for celebration: Susana Pelayo-Woodward, faculty member in Women’s Studies and Director of the UMD multicultural Center, received the prestigious Josie R. Johnson Human Rights and Social Justice Award in Minneapolis last week. Also, Micca Leider, WS major, was selected to teach English in a Kurdish city in Northern Iraq, as part of a peace delegation.

Finally, it is time again to congratulate our fabulous graduating WS majors. We wish each one of them a good and rewarding post college life. They represent the best of all we do in Women’s Studies. We are proud of their accomplishments and reluctant to let them go. Read their words in this issue about their plans and check our website next Fall for their updates.

Tineke Ritmeester, WS Department Head
Women’s Studies faculty member and Director of the UMD Multicultural Center, Susana Pelayo-Woodward received the 2009 Josie R. Johnson Human Rights and Social Justice Award on April 20, at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis. She is the first person at UMD to receive this award. Susana was described as "the consummate advocate for human rights." Her leadership in the WRAC office and the Multicultural center, her involvement in the UMD commission on Women, her activism in the Duluth community and her contributions to the WS department have been phenomenal.

The prestigious Josie R. Johnson Award honors University of Minnesota faculty, staff, and students who, through their principles and practices, exemplify Dr. Johnson’s standard of excellence in creating respectful and inclusive living, learning, and working environments.

The award was established in honor of Dr. Josie R. Johnson in recognition of her lifelong contributions to human rights and social justice, which guided her work with the civil rights movement, years of community service, and tenure at the University of Minnesota.

Susana’s work and advocacy in the Twin Ports have resulted in a number of awards in the past 11 years! Susana is also the recipient of the City of Duluth, Peacemaker Award (1998), UMD Outstanding Service Award (1999), University of Minnesota President’s Award for Outstanding Service (2002), UMD College of Liberal Arts Teaching Award (2004), the UMD Commission on Women Linda M. Larson Women of the Year Award (2004), and the YWCA Women of Distinction Award (2007).

Katie Peacock, WS UMD Alumna, 2001, completed her Masters in Public Policy at the Humphrey Institute in the summer of 2008 with a concentration in Women and Public Policy. One of the highlights of her graduate experience was taking a course that allowed her to serve on a board of a feminist organizations in the Twin Cities to develop skills in non-profit governance and leadership. She was fortunate to be placed with Planned Parenthood Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota where she served for two years. During her time as a graduate student, she continued her full time work at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities campus as a Service-Learning Coordinator. The position focuses on building partnerships with community organizations to enhance student learning while providing important work to non-profit organizations. This month, she celebrates her fifth year in the position.

Kristin Thompson, WS UMD Alumna, 2006, has just been named Exhibitions Director for Altered Esthetics, a gallery in Northeast Minneapolis. Check it out at www.alteredesthetics.org. She is also working as an Americorps volunteer in the Minnesota Reading Corps at Cityview Performing Arts Magnet school in Minneapolis. Kristin tutors kids in reading and tries to find ways to connect children’s interests to a love of reading. She was on campus last week to speak to classes about Americorps. If you have interest in Americorps or would like information on this great opportunity to do real world work on justice issues contact Kristin at Kristin.r.thompson@gmail.com.

(Continued on page 7)
Students in Beth Bartlett’s “Women, Peace, and War” class, WS3250, knitted pink squares to be part of a banner for the Code Pink for Peace Mother’s Day demonstration in Washington, D.C. on Mother’s Day. The banner will be made of pink and green knitted squares, and will spell out the message, “We will not raise our children to kill another mother’s child.” The message is based on the World War II anti-war hit song “I Didn’t Raise My Son To Be a Soldier.” (See text below.) In addition, we will be adding our class photo to an online “Virtual Mother’s Day Quilt” – a photomosaic with the same message as the banner.

“I Didn’t Raise My Son To Be a Soldier”
Words by Alfred Bryan

Verse 1:
Ten million soldiers to the war have gone,
Who may never return again.
Ten million mother’s hearts must break
For the ones who died in vain.

Head bowed down in sorrow
In her lonely years,
I heard a mother murmur thro’ her tears:

CHORUS
“I didn’t raise my boy to be a soldier,
I brought him up to be my pride and joy,
Who dares to place a musket on his shoulder,
To shoot some other mother’s darling boy?
Let nations arbitrate their future troubles,
It’s time to lay the sword and gun away,
There’d be no war today,
If mother’s all would say,
“I didn’t raise my boy to be a soldier.”

Verse 2:
What victory can cheer a mother’s heart, When she looks at her blighted home?
What victory can bring her back All she cared to call her own.
Let each mother answer In the years to be,
Remember that my boy belongs to me!

Watching my dog play beneath the sun on a recent glorious spring day in Duluth’s Leif Erikson Park, I couldn’t help but wonder how much my life is going to change after my upcoming trip. In one month’s time I will be heading to the Kurdistan region of Northeastern Iraq to teach for the Prestige Institute for Education. This private institute is located in the sprawling city of Sulaimenyia; one of the most secular, liberal, and pro-western cities in Iraq. I will be teaching conversational English to children as well as adults from June 1st through August 31st, 2009. As a longtime peace activist, volunteer, and worldwide traveler, this opportunity encompasses all of those passions.

The Kurdistan region has been one of the most peaceful regions since March 2003 due to cooperation between the Kurdistan Region’s security forces and the Kurdish people themselves. As an educator I feel that submerging myself in this culture, a culture many people have misconceptions about, will help bring more understanding and unity to our very small and precious planet.

My goals are to fully connect with the Sulaimenyia community and work to have a symbiotic relationship with the men, women, and children who live there. It is in this small way I feel we can help bridge the gap between our two countries and start a healing process that is long overdue. Or, as Mahatma Gandhi says, "You must be the change you want to see in the world."

Peace,
Micca Leider, WS major
I plan on working in the realms of reproductive health care and women's health care. I have always been intrigued and amazed by motherhood, pregnancy, childbirth and female biology. I currently volunteer at Planned Parenthood and PAVSA so I would hope to continue working for great organizations like these that work to improve the state of reproductive health care and the lives of women. Maybe on the side I'll take up some midwifery as well :)  

Simply put, Women's Studies is my way of understanding the world from a loving, all accepting perspective. I hope to see Women's Studies more global recognized as more essential to receiving a full education in colleges like UMD, because now that I have taken women's studies courses I realize how much I have learned about the world and about myself that I would have never considered without women's studies to open my mind and open my eyes. -- Jessica Beckman

What to love about WS... well, I'd have to say that love is the overall theme! My favorite things about my WS education are the people I have met (teachers and students), the blossoming relationships and realizing that I am not crazy for the way I think about life and the world. People always look at me funny when I tell them I am a Women’s Studies major with a Math minor, but somehow I have managed to make it a practical pair that will empower women and girls.

After leaving Duluth I plan to move to the Twin Cities area where, starting this summer, I will be tutoring math and reading comprehension at an all girls school, Laura Jeffery Academy. I am so excited to not only be putting my math skills to work, but also all the female solidarity practices and methods I’ve learned about over the years. I will also be continuing my pursuit of rugby, playing with the Twin Cities Amazons Rugby Club in the USA Rugby Women’s Premier League. I want to thank all the teachers and classmates I have been with over the years and all your different perspectives that have enlightened me. When I leave Duluth I know there will be two things I will miss, the lake and the WS community, oh one more, and the rugby community!

In Love and Solidarity,
Nicole “Carni” Benjamin

While nothing is complete in regard to my actual graduation I sit here in a meditation of my UMD Women’s Studies career realizing that nothing is ever really complete.

Over the last four years I have learned an important lesson about process. Although a lot of the work we do in college seems rushed at times, it is the evolution of my ideas that is the real accomplishment. I am endlessly grateful to my professors for directing and facilitating this evolution. I’m also dearly appreciative and hopeful in considering all of my amazing classmates.

For as long as it has taken me to learn and navigate this process, I am elated at the possibility to read books and tend to life on my own pace.

-- Birch Cappetta

(Continued on page 5)
Congratulations to all the Women’s Studies Graduates!

Nicole Benjamin
Jessica Beckman
Jennifer Smith
Chere Suzette
Birch Cappetta
Melissa Sobotta

2009 Graduates Continued

Women's Studies has provided me with the tools to raise my consciousness, a place to comfortably and freely explore those new ideas, and most importantly amazing friends, both professors and classmates, who were always there to provide me with a lot of love and support in my journey. I am so grateful to everyone who made my experience so meaningful!

After graduation I am moving to Montana to work in Glacier National Park for the summer. I hope to someday find a job where I can combine my love for feminism, photography, and traveling.

-- Jennifer Smith

I have had the opportunity to acknowledge the misconceptions of racism, sexism, classism, feminism, etc. that lie within me and have been given the tools to begin countering them. I have also been given the great privilege of hearing the voices of those previously silenced and have learned to ask the question, “Who else is not being heard?” I have had beautiful conversations of true solidarity, discussing differences, rather than ignoring them. I am amazed at the women around me and have grown in a special appreciation for circles. Women’s Studies has not just been a subject to study, but a way to live. I now know the steps I need to take to become the woman I want to be.

I have been hired and will serve as a FOCUS missionary, which stands for Fellowship of Catholic University Students. It is a two-year commitment and typically involves sending two men and two women onto a campus to do outreach, lead Bible Studies, share their lives with others, and form student leaders to do the same. I will not know which campus or who my teammates are until staff training in June. I am very excited to have the opportunity to form women and to simply live my job because to be a missionary is to live a life that witnesses to others. Praise God.

-- Melissa Sobotta

Women’s studies has taught me that my own liberation is bound up with the liberation of all oppressed peoples… and that the joy is in the struggle.

-- Chere Suzette
Senior Seminar: (left to right) Nicole ‘Carni’ Benjamin, Birch Cappetta, Jennifer Smith, Melissa Sobotta, Chere Suzette, Jessica Beckman.

Arielle Schnur and Eleni Johnson study in the WS conference room.

Students in Beth Bartlett’s class knit Code Pink squares.


Take Back the Night March, April 30, 2009. Joan Varney, WS faculty member, 2nd from right.
LIBRARY NEWS

Some new materials available at the UMD Library

We will be heard: women’s struggles for political power in the United States by Jo Freeman.
HQ 1236.5 .U6 F746 2008

Just methods: an interdisciplinary feminist reader edited by Alison M. Jaggar.
HQ1180 J87 2008

The subject of gender: daughters and mothers in urban China by Harriet Evans
HQ 1767 .E83 2008

The making of Our bodies, ourselves: how feminism travels across borders by Kathy Davis.
HQ 1154 .D34 2007

The lesbian and gay movements: assimilation or liberation by Craig A. Rimmerman.
HQ 76.8 .U6 R58 2008

DVDs

Yes -- DVD 1725

Greatest Silence: Rape in the Congo—on Order

ALUMNAE NEWS CONTINUED

Susan Meyers, UMD WS graduate, 2006, is currently finishing her Master’s of Liberal Studies degree at UMD with an emphasis on women’s studies and art. More specifically, this project is what Susan likes to call “art enrichment” or Art Therapy. For her Plan “B” project Susan is doing eight weekly 2-hour sessions of “art enrichment” with women staying at the Center Against Sexual and Domestic Abuse (CASDA) shelter and community sessions with survivors of domestic abuse. The title of this project is called “Creating a Journey into Healing”. Susan was awarded this year’s Edward J. Smith Scholarship by the Masters of Liberal Studies Department and will use that scholarship to fund this art project. This project will go on throughout the summer. In the fall, gallery space has been reserved for the final show of work by survivors at the North End Arts Council gallery. The gallery is located at 1323 Broadway, Suite 1, and the show will run September 14th through October 10th, 2009. See her project featured on Fox news at http://fox21online.com/healthreport/domestic-violence-victims-heal-art

STUDY IN MEXICO IN 2010

Are you interested in Social Justice, Human Rights? If the answer is YES Please continue reading! This course will examine the impact of the free trade agreement between a developing country and the world’s largest economy. You will be able to witness the effects of free trade and globalization on women, workers, farmers, indigenous people and the environment in Mexico. You will meet people from Oaxaca and Mexico City working for progressive change. You will also look at the role of Indigenous communities and women in globalization, economic violence, human rights and the environment. You will learn together with people from Mexico and the United States as we challenge economic injustice. This is an educational endeavor that will provide you with face-to-face experiences with people in Mexico.

What makes this class unique? Be able to integrate academic theories with real-life experiences. Get to hear from women and men who are working for better wages and working conditions. Examine the complexity of gender, class and ethnicity in Mexico. Meet diverse speakers who work non-governmental agencies working on social justice, human rights, enviromental, trade and labor issues. Examine the complexity of gender, class and ethnicity in Mexico. Study the connection between conflict in Mexico and globalization of the economy, including trade agreements such as NAFTA.

Travel to Oaxaca and experience life in an indigenous community. If you are interested in this class please contact Susana Pelayo-Woodward at swoodwar@d.umn.edu or 218-726-8444
UMD WS ONLINE

Women’s Studies now has a group on Facebook where we can post events, have discussions, share photos, and stay in touch with alumnae and friends of the department. Find us under groups at “University of Minnesota Duluth Women’s Studies Department”

Check out our website at www.d.umn.edu/ws Especially note our new calendar for UMD and local community events during the school year. Also find this newsletter in color and many back issues.

UMD WS is listed in a feature in the April Ms Magazine about Women’s Studies. See it all at www.nwsa.com/msmag