Thirty years ago this month, Women’s Studies began officially as a program at UMD. Members of the Women’s Coordinating Committee, led by Bilin Tsai, Mary Zimmerman, Marge Grevatt, and others, had worked for two years to develop a Women’s Studies minor at UMD. Courses like Jane Maddy’s “The Changing Roles of Women,” and Judy Trolander’s “History of Women in America,” were now being offered, and were incorporated into the minor. I had the honor of developing and teaching the first “Introduction to Women’s Studies” in the spring of 1981. This work came into its full fruition in September of 1981, when the Women’s Studies program began with a half-time faculty person and director, Susan Coultrap-McQuin, and a part-time staff person, Randi Freesol, in a small office in the Social Science Building (Cina Hall.) We offered a minor in Women’s Studies, with two Women’s Studies courses, the Intro and a capstone senior seminar, and a dozen or so elective courses in other disciplines, with about 10 students in the first Intro and four students in the first senior seminar.

Today, Women’s Studies has grown into a department with three full-time tenured faculty members, several adjunct faculty, a full-time staff person, graduate research assistant, and student office worker. We offer a major and minor, with nearly 20 Women’s Studies courses, plus internships, independent studies, and field studies, and 18 elective courses in other disciplines. We have strong connections with the community, with civic engagement activities in several of our classes, and about 6-10 students engage in internships every year. Our students, of course, are our lifeblood. We teach hundreds of students every year, and on average we have twenty majors and twenty minors in any given year. But numbers don’t begin to describe the incredible passion, dedication and involvement of our Women’s Studies students, and what a delight it is to have such enthusiastic and engaged students in our classes. Last but not least, our over 300 alumni continue to do good and valuable work in the world.

So, we have much to celebrate, and are looking forward to gathering together with alumni, students, staff, faculty, supporters, and friends who have all been a part of this transformative educational endeavor which is Women’s Studies. We hope you will all be able to join us for our celebration concert on February 11, 2012, at 7:30 in Weber Music Hall. It will be an event to remember.

-Beth Bartlett
THE BUZZ ABOUT CIVIC ENGAGEMENT  BY PAULA TRACEY

Have you heard about efforts to increase civic engagement within the WS department? Some of you may even be wondering what that term "civic engagement" means. Civic engagement is about empowering students to bring about social change. Many are familiar with the term service-learning, but civic engagement is beyond connecting community work to course curriculum. Civic engagement is about moving activism and politics from the sidelines to the center of learning by allowing students to connect themselves to the work in the community and classroom in a substantive way. In 2010, the National Women’s Studies Association in collaboration with the Teagle Foundation developed work groups focusing on a feminist approach to civically engaged learning. The results of their project was to be tested during Spring 2011. This also has been an area our department has wanted to focus more on and in the past year we have been able to do just that!

Last year our department was awarded two grants to deepen our application of civic engagement throughout the WS program and to strengthen our partnerships with feminist organizations and members in the Twin Ports area. The “Engaged Department Grant” funded by the Office of Public Engagement of the University of Minnesota was specifically geared toward making civic engagement a more formally integrated, assessed, supported and rewarded component of our teaching and advocacy work. Our focus is on partnering with feminist community organizations and our students to identify the best ways we can support their work, educate our students, and collaborate to meet shared goals. This grant will come to fruition this spring with the addition of a Feminist Activism course to the WS curriculum that embeds community partners in the course as guest teachers and includes a field component in which students do significant work for and with feminist community organizations. The department was also awarded a mini-grant from UMD’s Office of Civic Engagement to further support the activism course, and provide funding for honoraria for guest teachers and speakers.

Through the Public Engagement Grant, last spring, we hired a research graduate assistant, Paula Tracey, to gather information from students and community members. The Engagement Department Grant Team and Paula facilitated information-gathering sessions with members of several community organization and students. This included two meetings with various community organizations and individual interviews with community members. The community organizations included: Center Against Sexual and Domestic Abuse (CASDA) in Superior, and several other organizations in Duluth such as, Mending the Sacred Hoop, Safe Haven/Family Justice Center, Women’s Health Clinic, HOTDISH (Hand Over The Decision It Should be Hers) Militia, League of Women Voters, Planned Parenthood, Program for Aid to Victims of Sexual Assault (PAVSA), and Domestic Abuse Intervention Program (DAIP).

As the process unfolded, we included members of smaller organizations of organizations involved in grassroots organizing. Among this group, we met with Sue Meyer who is a Women’s Studies alumna and has started an non-profit organization called North Central Windows Program (NCWP) in Superior. NCWP is an art enrichment leadership group that offers creative expression as a healing journey for abused women and their children in area crisis shelters, transitional homes and outreach centers across the northern region of Minnesota, Wisconsin and Michigan. In addition, Paula met with representatives from Community Action Duluth, New Moon Girl Media, Global Initiative, and still continues to meet with more organizations and groups that serve and/or work for justice for women and girls. Some other prospective organizations and members include: Loaves and Fishes, Damiano Center, Grandmothers for Peace, Lifehouse (homeless shelter for youth), Slow Food Duluth, and Women’s Environmental Institute just to name a few. The list continues to grow and efforts are based on community, faculty and student interest. The Twin Ports is uniquely rich with feminist activism which can offer students meaningful learning opportunities and growth, as well as a chance to contribute.

In addition to meeting with community organizations and members, a meeting was held to gather information from students. The meetings identified critical issues and strategies for addressing unmet needs in the community through civic engagement. Students presented many important ideas to make partnerships more formal or more concrete within the department. This includes making partnerships be more intentional and sustained over time.

Based on our research data, the department has started to create a more formalized structure for integrating civic engagement into the WS courses. In addition to the new activism course, our GRA has created resources to assist faculty and students in more fully integrating civic engagement into learning activities. We are piloting a Moodle site for faculty and students allowing them to access detailed information about civic engagement opportunities within the department. This includes site description sheets explaining more about each organization, tasks students would be able to do at their sites and other helpful information the what WS students can expect at each site. The Moodle webpage for students will be open for viewing to all WS majors and minors. This also will include information about internship opportunities.

As a way of gathering data about the effects of integrating civic engagement more fully into the department, students involved in civic engagement can expect to complete a pre and post on-line survey to measure the impact this teaching technique had...
on their overall learning. Courses with civic engagement will also encourage participation in UMDs Kirby Leadership Institute as a way of developing a portfolio of their work and strengthening their leadership skills. Ideas and structure for enhancing civic engagement throughout the program are just in the beginning stages. Paula Tracey is available to hear ideas and to make the experience more meaningful for students, community members and faculty alike. Should you have any suggestions or comments about this process please feel free to contact her at ptracey@d.umn.edu. We are excited about actualizing the many benefits of civic engagement for positive social change in our community.

SOME NEW WOMEN’S STUDIES TITLES IN THE UMD LIBRARY COLLECTION

Books

- Gendered Media: Women, Men, and Identity Politics

- Understanding Social Movements: Theories from the Classical Era to the Present

- Who Do They Think They Are?: Teenage Girls & Their Avatars in Spaces of Social Online Communication
  Peter Lang, 2010, HQ799.2.15 M67 2010

- Inseparable: Desire Between Women in Literature
  Alfred A. Knopf 2010, PR149.L47 D67 2010

- The Politics of Trafficking: The First International Movement to Combat the Sexual Exploitation of Women
  Stanford University Press 2010, HQ281.L55 2010

- Women’s Activism in Latin America and the Caribbean: Engendering Social Justice, Democratizing Citizenship
  Rutgers University Press 2010, HQ1236.5.L37 W665 2010

DVDs

- Vision: aus dem Leben der Hildegard von Bingen = from the life of Hildegard von Bingen
  PN1997.V57 2010 DVD

- Two spirits, E99.N3 T96 2010 DVD

- State of Fear, HV6433.P4 S75 2005b

- Girls Rock! Coming soon

UPCOMING EVENTS

Women’s Resource & Action Center Brown Bag Schedule
Fall 2011 for MC Calendar of Events

°Wednesday, October 5th, 12:00-1:00pm KSC 268
  Brown Bag: Femicide Awareness presented by Maude of Safehaven Shelter for Battered Women

°Wednesday, October 19th, 12:00-1:00pm KSC 268
  Brown Bag: Body Love presented by Linda Gokee-Rindal

°TBA
  Clothesline Project Workshop facilitated by Lexie Generous, WRAC intern

°Wednesday, November 2nd, 12:00-1:00pm KSC 268
  Brown Bag: Natural Birth Options presented by Teri Kesti of Northland Birth Center

°Wednesday, November 16th, 12:00-1:00pm KSC 268
  Brown Bag: Sexual Assault: It’s Not Your Fault presented by Em Westerlund of PAVSA

°Wednesday, November 30th, 12:00-1:00pm KSC 268
  Brown Bag: Human Trafficking presented by Shunu Shrestha of PAVSA

°Wednesday, December 14th, 12:00-1:00pm KSC 268
  Brown Bag: Yoga & Relaxation presented by Molly McManus of Yoga North
SAVE THE DATE!

WOMEN’S STUDIES

30TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION CONCERT

February 11, 2012
7:30 PM
Weber Music Hall

Featuring: The Oshkii Giizhik Singers, Sara Thomsen and Paula Pedersen, Rachel Kilgour, Wild by Nature, and Eleni Johnson

Reception immediately following the concert.