



Women's Studies

UNIVERSITY OF
Nebraska
Lincoln

NEWSLETTER

Spring 2004

From the Director – Joy Ritchie

Feminism provides a critical analysis of gender relations, the conditions that construct them, how we think about them, and how they are experienced by real people in their material lives. It should also help us develop strategies to intervene and take action to change those conditions across different perspectives. *No Limits 2004*, "Imagining Change: Women as Agents of Social Justice," enacted that definition of feminism. The conference showcased the excellent creativity and research of Women's Studies students and the collaborative energy and dedication of the students to move from academic work to action in the university and in the community.

Over 230 people attended the conference and 50 students from UNL, UNO, UNK, and several other colleges and universities presented papers or creative work. Park Middle School students presented their award-winning short film, *Las Quinceañeras*. Lourdes Portillo, Dr. Wendy Smooth, and community panelists Lela Knox Shanks, Shirley Mora James, Amy Miller, and Becca Kaiser all provided tangible advice about how we can go beyond imagining change and become agents for social justice. The Community Activism Information Fair brought together ten groups to join Saturday's event.

Thanks again to Erin Teuber for her dedication to making the conference a great success, and to Carmel Morse, Erika Hamilton, and Glenda Moore who worked for months on conference planning and preparation. Additional appreciation goes to the Hispanic Community Center and Holly Burns and to Dan Ladely and the staff of the Mary Riepma Ross Media Arts Center for their cooperation. We also applaud the Women's Center for its "Everyday Activism" Women's Week events. Finally, I appreciate the support and assistance that Bennie Shobe, Aaron Peeks and the men's group provided.

The media often portrays feminism as dead or irrelevant, but from where I sit in 1209 Oldfather, it couldn't be more alive. As I conduct exit interviews with ten outstanding Women's Studies majors and minors whose graduation we celebrate at the end of April, I have absolute confidence that our students not only imagine a changed world, but are already working to reshape it.



Dr. Wendy Smooth and Lourdes Portillo



Continuing the Spirit of *No Limits*

by Carmel Morse

Coming from a university where untenured professors are afraid to voice their political concerns, my first year at UNL has been a positive, liberating experience. I feel very much at home in this environment where social issues are not only discussed, but acted upon. The *No Limits* Conference was a particularly positive example of this type of political activism.

I have been involved in *No Limits* since my first week as a graduate assistant in the Women's Studies Program. Seeing it unfold and working with so many dedicated people in the advancement of women's issues has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my academic career. During the six months of preparation, I communicated with professors, advisors, and students whose enthusiasm was contagious! The papers and creative topics for *No Limits* covered a vast range of gender issues. I was impressed with the quality of research, writing and preparation that undergraduate and graduate students demonstrated in their presentations. Thanks to all of you for your invaluable input and support.

I was deeply moved, as I'm sure others were, by Lourdes Portillo's poignant presentation and film, *Señorita Extraviada*. The murders of so many young women in Juarez, Mexico left me angered and heartbroken. Wendy Smooth's presentation on the dilemma faced by African American women in political positions revealed another issue of racial and sexual discrimination. The dedication and strength of character in both Wendy and Lourdes motivated in me a desire to do something **now** concerning tragedies that humans and other living things suffer through injustices in society.

Like many of you, I am limited by the typical time constraints of being a full-time student. Women and Men Who Write, a new letter-writing group, allows all members of the UNL community, even those with limited free time, to make their voices heard on relevant issues. Consider for a moment this country's political climate and the basic human rights that are in the process of being eradicated. Being involved in Women and Men Who Write will perpetuate the impassioned spirit of the *No Limits* Conference throughout the year.

Making Activism "Chic"

by Christine Stewart-Nuñez

At the *No Limits* Conference in March, Dr. Wendy Smooth challenged the audience to identify an "issue"—an area in which we personally wish to affect change—and work to make change happen. After her inspiring speech and Lourdes Portillo's film and discussion, I began to brainstorm ways I could make time to handwrite letters concerning my issue (many speakers echoed the importance of this activity) as well as learn about issues of others. Whitney Douglas, my friend and colleague, expressed a similar wish and together we came up with the idea to start Women Who Write! (which we have changed to Women and Men Who Write to be inclusive).

WMWW meets once a month for an hour in the Women's Studies reading room to write letters on issues that group members bring to the table. During our first meeting, we wrote letters to Presidents Vicente Fox and George W. Bush concerning the deaths of almost 400 women in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico. Whitney also brought information about proposed budget cuts for closed captioning services, which we will get to at our next meeting. Despite the serious nature of our issue, we laughed quite a bit over our proposed rhetoric (how we really wished to address President Bush's letter) and discussed various rhetorical strategies we could employ in the letters.

We envision a different facilitator for each meeting—someone who shares information about an issue and provides a contact person to whom the group will write. Participants can also bring their own issue or just show up to help write letters. There are addresses, paper, envelopes and sample letters in a standing file folder in the reading room for those who can't make it to the meetings but who wish to write letters on their own time.

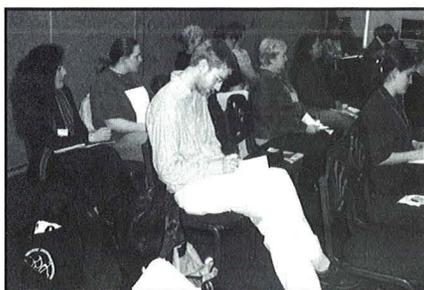
Upcoming meetings are on Wednesday, April 21, 12:30-1:30, and Thursday, May 20, 11:30-12:30.

Christine is a graduate student in English specializing in creative writing (poetry) and Women's Studies.



Volunteers at the *No Limits* registration table.

Friday night's reception after the showing of Lourdes Portillo's film.



Attendance at student presentations.

No Limits Conference 2005

Erasing Borders: Women's Studies in the New Millennium

March 4 - 5, 2005

University of Nebraska - Kearney

This conference is free and open to all.

For more information contact :
Dr. Diane Kholos Wysocki, Director
Women's Studies Program, UNK
Wysockid@unk.edu
308-865-1550

“Women's Studies Faculty Expand and Blur Boundaries of Academic Inquiry”

A Review by Erika Hamilton

Research must always begin with questions. On March 31st, three Women's Studies faculty members gathered with Colloquium participants to share the questions that launched their respective research projects.

Elizabeth Suter, a senior lecturer in Communication Studies, began her research with the question: How do lesbian families communicate family identity to themselves and the community? She worked with a graduate research team to interview several lesbian families in Nebraska. They told her of various ways they show they are a family—by choice of last names, a Sunday walk as a family, and choosing a donor to match the looks and personality of the non-biological mom. They reaffirm their identity by joining parenting and networking groups with other lesbian families. In response to requests from her interviewees, Suter used her research to develop a “Family Diversity” brochure to help educators learn and teach about diverse family situations.

For Wendy Hines, research began early when she wondered why boys received encouragement for advanced math skills while she was brushed aside. Despite the lack of encouragement, she continued her math studies and is now an assistant professor of Mathematics at UNL. Hines answered her question, “how can I encourage and support women and girls in math,” by developing and participating in programs for young women. These programs provide excellent role models (like Hines) and a safe, encouraging space for young women to discuss and pursue their interests in mathematics.

Ruth Heaton's research began with a simple question: “Who am I?” She began her professional career teaching elementary school and was struck by teachers' concerns about how to teach math concepts to children. She went on to graduate school, straddling dual identities as teacher and researcher. Heaton has repeatedly asked herself who she is as a teacher, who she is as a researcher, and who she is as a teacher researching about teaching. She is now an associate professor of Teaching, Learning and Teacher Education and works to help prospective elementary teachers learn how to teach mathematics in meaningful ways to children.



Highlights and Achievements of Women's Studies Faculty

Our Newest Faculty Members

Stephanie Adams, Assistant Professor of Industrial and Management Systems Engineering and the Interim Associate Dean of Graduate Studies, teaches courses in organizational management, team behavior, and leadership. She advises numerous women students in her college and actively recruits women into science, math and engineering. Dr. Adams recently won the Janice A. Lumpkin Educator of the Year award during the 2004 Golden Torch Award Ceremony sponsored by the National Society of Black Engineers.

Ruth Heaton is an Associate Professor in the Department of Teaching, Learning and Teacher Education. Her research interests in mathematics education include pedagogy, teacher learning, and teacher knowledge. Prior to her work in higher education, Dr. Heaton taught elementary school for ten years.

Harriet McLeod, Assistant Professor of Textiles, Clothing and Design, has been at UNL since January 2001. Her recently finished dissertation was a study of the effects of a philanthropic clothing gift program on low-income women who were moving towards greater self-sufficiency. Her research and teaching specifically focuses on the social-psychological aspects of appearance and clothing in society.

Susan Swearer is an Assistant Professor of School Psychology. As a researcher and licensed psychologist, her specific areas of inquiry and clinical expertise are the influence of internalizing problems on externalizing behavior in children and adolescents; bullying and victimization among school-aged youth; and effective training of school psychologists. She has published numerous articles and book chapters, and has served on the State of Nebraska Anti-Bullying Advisory Committee.

Faculty Achievements

Julia McQuillan is part of a seven-member team researching treatments for and outcomes of infertility. The team recently received a major federal grant in the Social Sciences, \$2.5 million from the National Institutes of Health, to help fund their long-term study. Chancellor Harvey Perlman praised the team's research as "an important and groundbreaking study, in part because of its topic and also its methodology. Science has made advances in the treatment of infertility, but those advances sometimes come with great physical and emotional costs. A variety of social and psychological questions are unanswered. This study will attempt to shed light on those issues." Congratulations on the grant, Julia!

Alison Stewart reports that, right before Christmas, the book of essays she co-edited with Jane Carroll of Dartmouth was published. The book, *Saints, Sinners, and Sisters: Gender and Northern Art in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, includes an essay by Alison addressing women and virtue from the perspective of a spinning bee print and how the print was understood within the context of the Lutheran Reformation.

Congratulations to these award winners!

Gwendolyn Foster, Department of English, UNL College Distinguished Teaching Award

Susan Poser, College of Law, UNL College Distinguished Teaching Award

Radha Balasubramanian, Department of Modern Languages, UNL College Distinguished Teaching Award

Susan Rosowski, Adele Hall Distinguished Professor of English, Outstanding Research and Creative Activity Award (conferred by the University of Nebraska system)

Joy Ritchie, Department of English, Outstanding Teaching and Instructional Creativity Award (conferred by the University of Nebraska system)

Check out our web site at:
www.unl.edu/womenssp/wshome.html



“Dialogue on Teaching Diversity”

A Review by Erin Teuber

The January 28th Women’s Studies Colloquium was a sociological discussion of different issues that intersect in the process of teaching diversity as well as issues that affect the researchers themselves while conducting research in this field.

The discussion was led by Drs. Helen Moore and Katherine Acosta, Connie Frey, and Crystal Edwards. Dr. Acosta spoke about the emotional component of teaching diversity and how instructors process their students’ responses to different issues discussed in class while keeping in mind that, within the constructs of the labor force, emotion is often ignored. Connie Frey addressed authority and credibility as issues that arise for instructors teaching a course about a group of people they do not

themselves represent. She also mentioned that diversity courses are often marginalized among other faculty members in their universities and departments. Crystal Edwards then described the various strategies instructors use to maintain their credibility and authority within the classroom, including: preparation (lots and lots of statistics), reflections (transcriptions of classes), behavior modifications, intellectualizing (i.e. ignoring emotion), and/or facing emotion.

It was an incredibly interesting conversation and an excellent way for students who are beginning to do research on their own or have completed research in the past to hear the inner workings and successes of a compelling and important area of research being done by professors and graduate students on our campus.

Erin is a senior majoring in Women’s Studies and Spanish.

News from our Alumni

Kellie Hall, a 2001 graduate, was recently hired as Communications Coordinator for Planned Parenthood of Nebraska and Council Bluffs. Her office is in Omaha.

Gretchen Obrist, a 1999 graduate, was elected to serve as Editor-in-Chief of the Nebraska Law Review for 2004. The Review is a scholarly journal published quarterly by students of the College of Law. It publishes work by professors, judges, student members, and others in the legal profession on a broad range of locally and nationally significant developments in law. As Editor-in-Chief, Gretchen will manage publication, coordinate the work of student editors, work with authors and the printer, and be responsible for final editing. Gretchen looks forward to the challenge of her new position and the experience she will gain in editing and publishing. She plans to graduate from the University of Nebraska College of Law in 2005.

Rachel West, a 2000 graduate and Sexual Violence Prevention Coordinator for the Nebraska Domestic Violence Sexual Assault Coalition, is working on her Master’s degree and has been awarded a Graduate Assistantship in UNL’s Department of Sociology for the fall of 2004.

*Congratulations to the following
Women’s Studies Majors and Minors
who will be graduating in May:*

**Majors: Alaina Bupp
Cheney Luttich
Miranda Swanson
Erin Teuber
Michelle Zych
Jessica Barth (August)
Minors: Andrea Curtis
Benjamin Hamburger
Cori Huenink
Megan Spilinek**

***Graduation Reception
& Awards Ceremony***

***Wednesday, April 28, 2004
3:30 - 5:00 pm
City Campus Union
(Room to be posted)***

Everyone is Invited to Attend!

Be a Friend to the Women's Studies Program!

Yes, I will give to the Women's Studies Development Fund!

- My check for \$100, \$50, \$25, \$10, Other _____, payable to the University of Nebraska Foundation, is enclosed. (Specify account #5285.)
- Please charge my : Visa MasterCard

Card Number _____

Exp. Date _____

Signature if making a pledge or using your credit card. _____

Amount pledged to support the **Women's Studies Development Fund**: \$ _____

Total amount enclosed: \$ _____

- I'd like to fulfill my pledge over a period of _____ years (not to exceed five years) beginning in _____ (month) of _____ (year).

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Please print name and address above.

WS Program Newsletter
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An equal opportunity educator and employer with a comprehensive plan for diversity.

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