Letter From The Chair

Greetings to you from the Sociology and Social Work team here on the Mountain Campus.

Yes, a year has gone by since our last newsletter made its way to you. It has been a busy, challenging, productive and stable year in the midst of many changes at Northern Arizona University. Our department seems to thrive as we welcome more majors in both Sociology and Social Work while graduating more students from our programs, especially a record number of graduate students who earned their M.A. in Applied Sociology. We congratulate and salute our graduates and welcome our new cohort of students.

I am happy to report the establishment of our student research training arm, the Laboratory for Applied Social Research (LASR). The lab will provide hands-on experience in all steps of the social research process for our students while serving the larger community with surveys, program evaluation and needs assessment (www.lasr.nau.edu).

With the leadership of our Graduate Coordinator, Michelle Harris, we have also established new ties in the international arena for the benefit of our students at home and overseas.

In April, we celebrated David Mckell’s retirement after thirty-six years of service to our program by honoring him at a familiar spot to most of you, the Zane Grey Ballroom at the historic Weatherford Hotel. Dave now joins the distinguished circle of the Professors Emeriti in our extended family.

In closing, I join my colleagues to extend to you a renewed invitation to write to us, let us know of your recent adventures, and keep in touch. We would love to hear from you. Your reflections on the time you spent with us and thereafter are always cherished. We wish you success in all your endeavors.

Best wishes,
Kooros Mahmoudi
Department Chair
The 2009-10 school year was an exciting one for our graduate program. We were lucky enough to have Dr. Evan Poata-Smith visit our department as a Fulbright Scholar-in-Residence for the entire academic year. Evan was on loan to us from the Department of Social Sciences at Auckland University of Technology, New Zealand. In addition to teaching two graduate courses on Global Race and Ethnic Relations and The Sociology of Popular Music, Evan taught a couple of undergraduate courses as well. Evan’s expertise in these areas, as well as in Maori politics and society, enriched our course offerings and allowed our students to be exposed to knowledge and points of views that they do not often experience. While we miss his presence, we will continue to count him as a colleague and friend.

Another exciting international link was made during this academic year. On May 21, 2010 an agreement was signed that authorized a new dual master’s degree program. The initiative is between NAU’s graduate program in Sociology and the graduate program in Development Studies at the University of Botswana (UB). This will afford NAU sociology students the opportunity to spend one year in our department doing graduate work, and a second year at UB. A similar provision exists for UB students – they will spend the first year pursuing the development studies degree at their home institution and the second year in our sociology program. At the end of the two years, students will earn two (2) masters degrees – one from NAU in sociology and one from UB in development studies. This exciting new initiative is unique; you will not find another like it in the country!

Applications for this wonderful opportunity will be accepted after students are admitted to our program, and after making good progress in course work in their first semester. We look forward to strengthening ties with UB over time with the exchange of both students and faculty.

Closer to home, we again had a strong Sociology grad program contingent at the Pacific Sociological Association annual meeting in Oakland, CA in April. Eight students presented papers, and all were well received. We also admitted a new class; we are very much looking forward to their presence in the fall even as we are sad to say goodbye to some wonderful graduates.

In closing, I want to say that our graduate program is moving in new and exciting directions. We are doing this with the leadership and support of our chair, faculty, and administrative staff. Together, we stay committed to training scholars and practitioners of the highest caliber.

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Social Work Program News

by Rebecca Garrison, Program Coordinator

Growth and change continues to be the norm for the Social Work Program. Our program’s founding father, Dave McKell, retired this May after 36 years in the department. We shall miss him and his dedicated service to the program.

Our students continue to make a difference in our communities through service learning opportunities. I have enjoyed visiting with students in their field placements this past spring in Flagstaff and communities throughout the state. Our usual Social Work Field Coordinator, Mary Damskey, has pursued an active spring semester sabbatical researching death and bereavement.

For a second time, the Social Work Program received the Seal of Excellence from the University Assessment Committee for our program assessment plan. Another assessment is also underway as I am currently overseeing the program’s self study as a part of the reaccreditation process.

Our achievements this year were possible because of the partnership, dedication, inspiration, passion, energy, and contribution of our students, graduates, field instructors, advisory board members, community agencies, and faculty. Thank you all for pulling together in these challenging times to enable us to continue preparing and providing competent generalist social workers to meet the growing needs of our communities, country, and world.

by Bill Pederson

Yuma BSW Site Coordinator

The popularity and growth of our Yuma program has resulted in two milestones. Social work has become the third largest program at the NAU Yuma Branch Campus and we have a projected fall 2010 enrollment of 55 social work students.

This growth resulted in the hiring Dr. Cordelia Holbert in January 2010 as our second social work faculty in residence at the NAU Yuma Branch Campus. Please join us in welcoming Dr. Holbert to our social work faculty!

Our social work program at the NAU Yuma Branch Campus continues to accomplish remarkable achievements. During the fall semester five seniors (Laura Marquez, Peggy Owen, Nancy Rivera, Nancy Sanabria, and Alma Urquidez) developed and implemented a community change project that provided a Social Activities Group for the homebound elderly in Yuma. These women accomplished a remarkable feat in that they raised over $3,000 in cash and in-kind donations to fund the project. In addition, they engaged the homebound elderly in community service through activities including a food drive for the Yuma Community Food Bank. Donors and the elderly were honored by the students at the Annual BSW Community Potluck held on April 29, 2010 at the Yuma Community Food Bank.
David McKell Retires

On April 18, 2010, over 100 colleagues, family and friends gathered at the Zane Grey Ballroom at the Historic Weatherford Hotel to celebrate Professor David McKell’s 36 years of service.

Dave joined the department in 1974. His early years focused on establishing the social work program, which began as an emphasis area within the applied sociology program. He regularly taught courses in the areas of corrections, social policy, community development and religion. His recent research and frequent presentations have dealt with observations of the Christian Sabeel community in Palestine.

McKell was an active member of the university community. He served in the Faculty Senate from 1987 until his retirement and was recognized for Distinctive Service each year from 2002 to 2005. From 1987 to 2005, he served as the Coordinator for our Corrections Program. He coordinated the Social Work program from 1995 to 1998. In 1987 until 2000, he worked on the College Interdisciplinary Committee’s Working Group on Latin American Studies.

Also active in the community, McKell is currently a board member of Flagstaff Catholic Social Services and the Social Welfare Action Alliance. He served as chair of Coconino County Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee from 2002-2005 and the Northern Chapter of the Arizona Probation Parole Corrections Association from 1994 to 2006. In the past decade he was a member of the Governor’s Task Force on Juvenile Corrections Reform, the Coconino County Jail Task Force, and the Northern Arizona Interfaith Steering Committee.

The Department of Sociology and Social Work granted McKell Emeritus status. We would say that we will miss Dave greatly, but we know that we will continue to enjoy his company here at NAU.

Thanks to Our Recent Donors!


To donate, please visit: https://alumni.nau.edu/giving.aspx

Publications and Presentations

Sociological Inquiry, by Kooros Mahmoudi and Bradley Parlin (Utah State), published its tenth edition this year by Kendall Hunt Publishing. First published in 1973, this reader is used in introductory sociology programs throughout the world.

“Single Welfare Mothers’ Resistance” by Yvonne Luna was published in Journal of Poverty: Innovations on Social, Political & Economic Inequalities.

Karla Hackstaff’s “Family Genealogy: A Sociological Imagination Reveals Intersectional Relations” has been accepted for publication in Sociology Compass.

Janine Schipper delivered two keynote addresses this past academic year. She presented “Where We Stand: Suburban Sprawl and the Present” at the Ninth Annual Arizona Parks and Recreation Association Conference on Open Space, in August, 2009, in Scottsdale. At the Coconino Coalition for Children and Youth Annual Meeting, in May, 2010, she delivered “Collective Wisdom: Deep Listening and Deep Dialogue.”

NAU Prominent at PSA Annual Meeting

Nine faculty members and eight graduate students attended the 81st Annual Meeting of the Pacific Sociological Association, in Oakland, California this past April. Our faculty served as panel discussants and organized seven sessions. In addition, the following papers were presented by faculty and graduate students:

- “Hidden Proclamations: A Content Analysis of Homeless-Space Graffiti” by Dick Skees & Michael Van Ness
- “Applying Sociological Theory in Everyday Life Settings” by Douglas Degher, Richard Fernandez & Yvonne M. Luna
- “Qualitative Research on Single Welfare Mothers” by Yvonne Luna
- “A Faith-Based Palestinian Community Caught in the Crossfire” by Dave McKell
- “Re-Birthing Myself: Perceptions of Coming Out & the Interplay between Personal & Social” by Linda Barker
- “The Re-Socialization of Military Veterans & Deviant Behavior as a Civilian” by Nicole Beach
- “Characterizing a Paradigm Shift: The U.N. Construction of Sustainable Development & the Greening of Globalism” by Ben Brucato
- “An Unlikely Narrative: The Sociological Imagination & the Reinvention of the Self in an Age of Uncertainty” by Damien Contessa, MA (2009 alumn)
- “On the Rails: A Look at the Sub-Culture of Freight Train Riding” and “On the Sharp End: An In-Depth Look at the Sport of Rock Climbing” by Rocco Mastrantoni
- “Psychological Challenges of HIV/AIDS in Southern Africa: Why Behavioral Change Is So Difficult to Achieve” by Esther Nkhukhu-Orlando
- “Where Are the Birds & the Bees? Discourse Around Sex Ed in Arizona Schools” by Sarah Spring
- “Professional Athletes: Wrong-Doing & Public Perceptions” by Jessica Wood
Student Profile: Kimberly Moore

I am going into my fifth year at NAU working to get my bachelors degree with a double major in International Affairs and Social Work. For the past eight months, I have been a part of the Global Leadership Development Program at Far East University in South Korea. This school is working towards an English efficient internationally accepted accreditation, and is beginning to offer classes to their Korean students that are taught only in English. As the first non-Asian exchange student here, I have helped and worked with the professors as a teaching assistant for several classes including an introductory social work class and a social work policy class. I have also worked as a teaching fellow for both the winter and summer English intensive programs this past year. This program is open to not only the university students but the communities as well. With the assistance of another Korean agency we have had the privilege to help teach a handful of North Korean defectors. This has been an interesting semester as it was my first experience living in a country where I didn’t speak the language. I have traveled to many parts of Korea and Japan and have even enjoyed a short trip to the DMZ. I would recommend others to study abroad and see Asia.

Undergraduate Awards

Virginia Rae Kurner Memorial Scholarship
Kalie Berve, Randi Cooper

Marie Adell Monbleau Memorial Scholarship
Shea Dodson, Sarah Papajohn

Vicki K. Brown-Carpenter Memorial Scholarship
Megan Gregory, Taelor Johnson, Jill Miller, David Watts (Yuma)

Sociology Department Scholarship
Chelsey Burden

Kanan Family Endowment Scholarship
Nathania Garcia

Edward E. Walker Sociology Scholarship
Kaileen Martin

Louise Child Spence Scholarship
Jayleen Johnson

Outstanding Social Work Student
Tam Bui, Marlene James (Tuba City)
David Watts (Yuma)

Outstanding Social Work Senior
Jessica Dademasch, Nancy Rivera (Yuma)

Outstanding Sociology Student
Erika Bielenstein, Margo Nelson

Outstanding Sociology Senior
Mary Glennon, Kara Miller

Jessica Dademasch, Tam Bui, and Natalie Cawood at the Celebrating Student Achievement Awards Ceremony, April 23, 2010.