

INNOVATIONS

A NEWSLETTER FOR THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY

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In This Issue

Message from the Dean

Visibility Conferences

Initiatives on Interdisciplinarity

Presidential Fellows

Alumni Association Awards

Community Building

Diversity Initiatives

External Fellowship Winners

NU Beginnings:
TGS Orientation

The Genius of the People New Perspectives on the American Revolution

Over the weekend of April 28–29 Northwestern hosted its second “Visibility Conference.” These conferences highlight The Graduate School’s top interdisciplinary programs and promote their excellence by providing a forum for Northwestern graduate students and faculty to interact with graduate students and faculty from around the world. Sponsored by The Graduate School and presented by the history department, “The Genius of the People: New Perspectives on the American Revolution” brought together leading scholars in early American history with junior faculty and graduate students.

Coordinated by Professors Timothy Breen and Sarah Pearsall and doctoral candidate David Davidson, the conference by all accounts successfully fulfilled its mission to explore new directions in the field.

One of the conference’s major innovations was its pairing of graduate students and professors from universities across America. On April 29 the audience enjoyed a succession of three panels, each featuring a visiting professor and a Northwestern doctoral candidate. The

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5

Strengthening Interdisciplinary Connections Enhancing Doctoral Study in the Humanities

When Andrew Wachtel became dean of The Graduate School in 2004, he did so with a mandate to bring change and improvement institutionally and intellectually. As Provost Lawrence Dumas said at the time of the appointment, “President Bienen and I are pleased to be able to add a distinguished academic humanist to the University’s administrative team, and we very much look forward to working with Wachtel in fulfilling our shared commitment to strengthening further graduate study at Northwestern.” Dean Wachtel — a Northwestern faculty member since 1991, Bertha and Max Dressler Professor in the Humanities, director of the Center for International and Comparative Studies (CICS), and former chair of the

Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures — takes this mandate very seriously. This fall he has begun to implement his plan to improve the area he knows best: the humanities.

“How should graduate study in the humanities be organized at U.S. institutions? This isn’t a topic that has been discussed in any comprehensive way for many years,” says Wachtel of his plan. “Despite exceptional changes in the way we pursue research in the humanities, changes that have made the current system more and more obsolete and have contributed to a general feeling that the humanities are failing to serve many of their traditional constituencies, the departmental units that provide graduate

education have, in the vast majority of universities, changed little or not at all in over 50 years.” The problems with humanities education, it should be emphasized, are shared by most if not all American institutions. For a variety of reasons, however, Northwestern is in a position to take a leadership role in reorganizing graduate education in the humanities. Handled in an intelligent way, the changes we propose to implement can allow us to take a leadership position in humanities education nationally, attract and retain the most interesting humanities faculty, and train the next generation of leading humanists.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

Message from the Dean

It is with great pleasure and enthusiasm that we present to you — prospect, current student, alumnus, faculty member, and University staff member — the first issue of The Graduate School newsletter: *Innovations*. I have been the dean of The Graduate School for just over two years now, and the time finally seems right to begin to tell the members of our community just what exciting, novel things are happening to, for, and with members of our community. When I became dean, I re-imagined the school as a service organization — a medium-sized business that serves its many constituents with a focus on responsiveness, collaboration, and quality. I see this new publication as an extension of this provision of service, and we look forward to bringing you a lively twice-a-year report on all the innovations in curriculum, research, and student service that are afoot across the school.

In this first issue you will find stories on varied topics: an initiative to enhance our doctoral programs in the humanities, the research of our Presidential Fellows, the successes of our diversity recruitment and retention programs, the details of our first community-building grant competition, a report on our second “Visibility Conference” (the first was in fall 2005), and the first Graduate School Alumni Merit Award winner, theater director Mary Zimmerman. The common theme of these stories is continuous improvement. I stress with my staff and colleagues the need for our graduate programs and our service to students and faculty to always be better, and I am certain that this newsletter will be a venue by which you can track this positive change. For our alumni, I expect that much of what you will find in these and upcoming pages will be a bit of a surprise. The Graduate School has traditionally been more of a bureaucratic edifice and academic police officer, a place to have your margins measured when you submit your dissertation. Well, I am pleased to say that with the advent of the electronic dissertation, we have thrown away our rulers.



At the same time, we have not forsaken our key role in the University as the guarantors of overall program and student quality. We are now simply taking a more active role in this quality assurance.

In future issues, in addition to stories about the research and successes of our students and alumni, you will see reports on our efforts to improve our health insurance subsidy to students, to develop interdisciplinary degree programs across schools, to create useful and relevant professional development programming for students in all disciplines, to move all paper-based student transactions to an integrated self-service system, to increase diversity among our population, and to offer community-building opportunities to ensure that our students get out of the lab and library for a time — time that will inevitably give them a needed break from the pressure to innovate and will, in turn, allow them to do so.

I thank you for your interest in The Graduate School and look forward to our ongoing conversation.

Andrew B. Wachtel
Dean

Presidential Fellows: Six Scholars Elected to the Society

Last spring The Graduate School announced the 2006–08 Presidential Fellowships. Conferred by The Graduate School and funded by the president of the University, the Presidential Fellowship is a 12-month award for MFA students and a 24-month award for PhD students. This highly competitive honor is the most prestigious fellowship awarded by Northwestern.

The Presidential Fellowship is presented to candidates who combine outstanding intellectual or creative ability with the capacity to play an active part in the life of the Society of Fellows, to which recipients are appointed. Facilitating interdisciplinary interactions among stellar students from across the University, the Society of Fellows meets twice each quarter and participates in an annual retreat. Its goal is to create future leaders who are enthusiastic and literate about the broad scholarship of the University.

In addition to this active academic and intellectual engagement, the leadership of The Graduate School also engages the Society of Fellows in discussions about improving the lot of all graduate students across campus. The varied perspectives of these students from diverse disciplines are reflected in a report generated at each annual retreat that states the wants and needs of current students. In this way, fellows are engaged in the service element that is critical to the making of a well-rounded member of the University community. Our current junior fellows demonstrate the breadth of research excellence at the University.

Spring 2005 Inductees

Alan Brothers (materials science and engineering) works with incompatible alloys in an attempt to create a new type of strong but lightweight foam that may



From left: Tomasz Strzalecki, Carmen Niekrasz, Lee Seymour, Yael Katz, Paul Cadden-Zimansky, Alan Brothers, Benjamin Ponder, Benjamin Chen, Kristen Syrett, Christopher Campbell, Tobin Shearer

have myriad possible applications in fields ranging from aerospace to medicine.

Christopher Campbell (chemical and biological engineering) conducts research that involves combining a new technique called wet stamping with the reaction-diffusion process to produce three-dimensional patterns throughout a substance on a very small scale.

Carmen Niekrasz (art history) studies 16th-century Flemish zoological tapestry, which came into vogue in the middle of the 16th century when the study of natural history became popular among European princes and nobles.

Benjamin Ponder (communication studies) works at the intersection of history and language from a new angle. His research asks why Thomas Paine's incendiary pamphlet *Common Sense* had the power to change the tenor of political discourse in colonial America "from aimless consternation to concerted revolution."

Rhiannon Stevens (history) combines historical linguistics, ethnography, and oral and archival history to explore how political discourse, agricultural change, and motherhood shaped each other in east-central Uganda from ca. 1000 to ca. 1860 CE.

Kristen Syrett (linguistics) is interested in how the overlap in semantic concepts among languages enables investigations of English-speaking children to hypothesize about children learning other languages. Her findings may also be useful for studying children with

linguistic and cognitive disorders and for helping educators to develop curricula.

Spring 2006 Inductees

Paul Cadden-Zimansky (physics and astronomy) makes and examines devices that lie between the classical (big) and quantum (small) worlds, mostly working with superconductors.

Benjamin Chen (interdepartmental biological sciences) is interested in enveloped virus assembly and budding. Specifically, he studies how influenza viruses assemble at the cell membrane and then escape from the host cell.

Yael Katz (interdepartmental biological sciences) seeks to understand the input-output relationship of information in neurons and small neuron networks. The neurons she studies are in a part of the brain responsible for learning and short-term memory.

Lee Seymour (political science) examines separatist conflict and asks why some groups achieve their goals of independence and autonomy while many others struggle in vain.

Tobin Shearer (history and religion) is examining issues of religious purity by researching the interactions of white and African American Mennonites in the middle three decades of the 20th century.

Tomasz Strzalecki (economics) is interested in enriching economic models with insights from psychology and other social sciences. ■

Building Community among Students

Taking a leadership role in creating community among graduate students, Dean Andrew Wachtel initiated The Graduate School's Community-Building Grants, a plan to stem the isolation often felt by Northwestern graduate students. "This is particularly true in those fields where research is produced by individuals thinking and writing alone (most humanities fields, a good portion of the social sciences, and mathematics)," explains Wachtel. "Even in fields where most research is collaborative, the atmosphere of an individual laboratory, no matter how well managed, can become claustrophobic."

To allow students an opportunity to develop their own programming, Dean Wachtel announced a call for community-building grant proposals last spring. He was inspired by a successful community-building program that

began five years ago at Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Our first round of grant winners are:

- *Chicago Campus Students of Color Outings*, activities to bond graduate students of color on the Chicago campus
- *Curling (Teflon soles and brooms)*, a sport that graduate students from all disciplines and their families can enjoy at any level of skill, commitment, athleticism, or competitiveness
- *Entrepreneurship and Innovation at McCormick*, activities (design competition, technopreneurial seminars, dinner with guests) that encourage participation among nine McCormick programs
- *European Graduate Student Association Activities*, annual/quarterly gatherings, invited guest speakers, cultural events, and other

activities to bond students across both campuses who are originally from Europe or interested in European culture

- *Informal meetings with visiting professors*, casual get-togethers for graduate students from different departments with distinguished visiting faculty from various disciplines
- *International Humanities and Social Science Student Socials*, activities (soccer, dining, info network, movie night) to bond international graduate students in the humanities
- *MYOM: Make Your Own Maki*, a Chicago-campus culinary adventure of making your own sushi
- *Swing Dancing Syndicate*, a new community of monthly social dancers, including School of Music students, that involves BLAST (Ballroom, Latin, and Swing Thing) and other existing dance classes. ■

Theatre Artist Mary Zimmerman Accepts Alumni Merit Award

On April 1 the Northwestern Alumni Association and The Graduate School honored performance studies professor Mary Zimmerman (C82, GC85, GC94) with an Alumni Merit Award at the 74th Northwestern Alumni Awards presentation, held in the ballroom of Chicago's Hotel InterContinental. Hosted by CBS News correspondent Joie Chen (J82, GJ83), the event drew an audience of 400 alumni and their guests.

A winner of the prestigious John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Fellowship, Zimmerman achieved nationwide recognition when she won a 2002 Tony Award for directing her own play *Metamorphoses*. Chicago's Joseph Jefferson

Awards have also honored her work on many occasions. Zimmerman was the first-ever candidate for this award nominated by The Graduate School.

Northwestern graduate students in performance studies are fortunate to have an artist of Zimmerman's caliber as teacher and mentor. As a theater professional at the peak of her powers, she continues to create groundbreaking works that bring worldwide attention to both Chicago theater and Northwestern. Her unique take on classic texts and myths produces luminous productions based on exhaustive analysis, giving audiences a visceral look into what topnotch scholarship can achieve. As



Dean Andrew Wachtel and Professor Mary Zimmerman

an adapter and director of new works, Zimmerman continues the creative process in the rehearsal phase, sometimes using different casts and theater spaces as her theatrical storytelling evolves.

With a personal philosophy of "no fear," Zimmerman continues to invite audiences, performers, and students to expand their horizons. ■

2006 Summer Research Opportunity Program (SROP)

The 2006 Summer Research Opportunity Program (SROP) was a huge success. Administered by The Graduate School's Office of Student Life and Multicultural Affairs, SROP gives sophomores and juniors in any discipline an opportunity for direct involvement in research. Throughout its 21-year history, SROP has increased diversity among students who are considering graduate education and provided a valuable academic experience for many students who might not otherwise have access to such opportunities. The eight-week program includes faculty-supervised research, enrichment activities that prepare undergraduates for graduate school (such as a graduate school application workshop, writing workshops, etc.), and an off-campus research conference.

The 2006 SROP participants — all eager to pursue their research questions with the help of Northwestern faculty mentors — came from 12 undergraduate institutions as far away as Connecticut and Louisiana. The participants spent 30 to 40 hours per week conducting research, completing assignments, and participating in enrichment activities designed to give them a taste of graduate school life.

In addition to research activities, each participant prepared a formal presentation and offered preliminary findings at the 2006 CIC SROP Research Conference, held at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign July 21–23. The conference also provided an opportunity for participants to network with students from other SROP programs around the



Assistant dean Penny Warren, student Mesfin Geteneh, coordinator of multicultural affairs Mario Craigen

country and participate in professional and academic enrichment sessions.

As the participants said their goodbyes to The Graduate School staff members at the end of the summer, several indicated that they were seriously considering applying to Northwestern for graduate school because of the wonderful SROP experience. Such feedback underscores the program's critical role in diversifying the incoming population of graduate students. ■

The Genius of the People CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

first panel, "Cultures of Revolution," explored the literary dimension of the period. The second, "Untold Stories from the Revolution," featured a paper about Abigail Adams's bond speculation and an essay on loyalist politics. The third and final panel addressed the role of African Americans in the Revolution. Contributing graduate papers were Christopher Sparshott, Chernoh Sesay, and Heidi Kim.

Breen and Pearsall were pleased with the format's success. "Thanks to the exceptionally generous support of The Graduate School," Pearsall explained, "we were able to create a vibrant forum for the exchange of ideas among senior scholars, junior scholars, and graduate students, from both Northwestern and universities around the country." Breen added, "The blending of graduate

students and leading research professors sparked a remarkable two-day conversation about the major questions in our field." Both professors were on hand throughout the conference, offering opening and closing remarks with professors Laurel Ulrich of Harvard and Alfred Young of the Newberry Library.

On a social level, the conference provided a friendly environment for extending conversations beyond the meeting room, which was filled to capacity throughout the weekend. Catered dinners and receptions gave students and professors further opportunities to discuss their research. Testifying to the lavishness of The Graduate School's efforts, one visiting professor claimed that the event was "like a resort conference." At the first dinner Davidson acknowledged The Graduate School staff member Maggie Wildman,

whose able support was vital to the conference's success. Also in attendance were Dean Andrew Wachtel, whose initial vision prompted the event, and associate dean Simon Greenwold, who generously provided assistance throughout the planning stages.

In summary, said Pearsall, "The attendance was excellent, the atmosphere convivial, and the conversations on this vital topic stimulating. Those in attendance were impressed by the resources, intellectual and otherwise, of Northwestern and especially The Graduate School. All in all, it was a great success." Breen concurred, declaring that "the conference more than fulfilled our expectations. The Graduate School has created an innovative framework that should become a model for other universities." ■

Interdisciplinary Connections CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

The reason Northwestern is in a unique position to lead this change is its traditional focus on interdisciplinary study and research. The University's strategic plan describes interdisciplinary study as a hallmark of Northwestern's excellence, and faculty and students across the humanities (and Northwestern's Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences, School of Communication, and School of Music) are already working together in a variety of ways. However, much of this collaborative work is happening in an ad hoc, somewhat haphazard manner. Students of the Renaissance find each other in art history, English, history,

departments of art history, English, philosophy, etc.), but they will also take a series of courses with students in their cluster cohort. Thus students admitted to a cluster program in gender studies, for example, might be sitting in cluster classes with students from the English, performance studies, or history departments, among many others. Classes would be team taught by faculty from the various departments so that students learn the vocabulary of cognate disciplines and how to approach intellectual problems from different critical angles. Furthermore, students would gain a cohort of colleagues beyond those

programs in Screen Cultures, African American and Postcolonial Studies, and Theater and Drama. Programs in Latin American Studies and Performance and Ethnographic Studies have been approved for launch in fall 2007. The school will make another call for proposals this winter, and by fall 2008 all new students in the humanities should enter Northwestern with dual affiliations.

"Nobody comes to Northwestern by accident," says Wachtel. "Students might end up at other schools by accident, but students come to Northwestern for a specific reason. The purpose of our plan to re-imagine doctoral study in the humanities is to highlight what Northwestern is already good at doing — to make more reasons for dedicated, driven students to come here, study, and ultimately be successful graduates." ■

"Dissertation writing can be lonely business, so the more people you have to support your work, the better. With this plan, students will know more people who have similar research interests to their own, and the network will be that much stronger and the chances for success that much greater."

and music classes, but they do so largely by luck. Why, Wachtel asks, shouldn't Northwestern play to its own strengths and formalize, to some extent, the interdisciplinary study already happening on campus?

The plan, in essence, is relatively simple. Wachtel wants to create interdisciplinary clusters that will coexist with traditional disciplinary and departmental structures. Students will still apply to traditional departments, but they will concurrently apply to one of these cluster programs as well. In this way, students will arrive at Northwestern with a "dual citizenship" in both a department and a cluster. Students will still take a number of classes in their own discipline and receive a degree in that discipline (students will, after all, still need to get jobs in

provided by their home department, giving them a broader community base and support network. As Wachtel says, "Dissertation writing can be lonely business, so the more people you have to support your work, the better. With this plan, students will know more people who have similar research interests to their own, and the network will be that much stronger and the chances for success that much greater."

This plan to formalize interdisciplinary study will be implemented in stages. The first call for proposals was made last winter, and four programs were approved for launch this fall: Critical Theory, Gender Studies, Rhetoric and Public Discourse, and Slavic, Jewish, and Eastern European Studies. These complement existing interdisciplinary

In future issues of *Innovations*, we will bring you updates on student research and awards, increasing diversity in our student population, and efforts to build community and improve the quality of life for graduate students. If you would like to give us your feedback on our first issue, please contact innovations@northwestern.edu. If you would like to contribute to these initiatives in the form of a donation, please visit www.development.northwestern.edu/opportunities/schools.php.

External Funding Awards A Snapshot of Student Success

Applying for external funding awards provides graduate students with the opportunity to hone their grant-writing skills, conceptualize and communicate their research projects, and work closely with faculty mentors. The receipt of such an award is a great honor for both the student and the University, constituting not merely financial support but a tangible endorsement of one's research project. As part of our commitment to the benefits of a collaborative approach to funding graduate education, The Graduate School is proud to recognize Northwestern graduate students who have been awarded fellowships from outside sources.

American Academy in Rome Exchange Fellowship at Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa
Peter Mazur

American Association of University Women American Fellowship
Anh Ly
Catherine Schmidt
Judith Singleton

American Psychological Association Student Travel Award
Rachel Jacob

American Sociological Association General Minority Fellowship
Zandria Robinson

Alisa Mellon Bruce Predoctoral Fellowship for Travel Abroad
Lily Woodruff

DAAD Study Scholarship
Alan Brothers
Jessica Keating
Jonathon Mathys

Diversifying Higher Education Faculty in Illinois Fellowship
Janaka Bowman

English-Speaking Union Scholarship
Jeffrey Knight

English-Speaking Union Travel Grant
Shalini Seshadri

Environmental Protection Agency Science to Achieve Results Fellowship
Amanda Mifflin

Ford Foundation Diversity Fellowship
Zandria Robinson

Patricia and Philip Frost Fellowship at the Smithsonian American Art Museum
Sarah Blackwood

Fulbright Grant (IIE/USIA)
Elizabeth Casteen
Shawn Clybor
Jessica Keating
Jonathon Mathys
Meghann Pytka

Fulbright-Hays Dissertation Grant
Shawn Clybor
Nicole Fabricant
Christina McMahon

Helmholtz-DAAD Fellowships for Doctoral and Postdoctoral Students
Alan Brothers

Huntington Library Mayers Fellowship
Gayle Rogers

Huntington Library Short-Term Fellowship
Joanne Diaz

Institute of Historical Research Mellon Fellowship in the Humanities
Darcy Heuring

International Research and Exchanges Board Individual Advanced Research Opportunity Fellowship
Shawn Clybor
Meghann Pytka

Jacob K. Javits Fellowship
Emily Callaci

Samuel H. Kress Foreign Institutional Fellowship at the Zentralinstitut für Kunstgeschichte
Jessica Keating

Louisville Institute Dissertation Fellowship
Tobin Shearer

Bourse Marandon Fellowship
Justine DeYoung

Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art Junior Fellowship
Shalini Seshadri

Harry Middleton Fellowship in Presidential Studies (Lyndon Baines Johnson Library)
Charlotte Cahill

National Aeronautics and Space Administration Earth System Science Fellowship
Andrea Voges

National Defense Science and Engineering Graduate Fellowship
Gloria Emberger
Sina Yeganeh

National Institutes of Health Ruth L. Kirchstein Individual National Research Service Award
Anne Koenig
Jonathan Sutton

National Institutes of Health National Research Service Award Individual Fellowship
Rachel Jacobs

National Science Foundation Fellowship
Kent Lansing
Gale Lucas
Stacey Pace
Emily Pentzer
Nicola Perry
Elizabeth Quinn
Brian Quist
Yolanda Rankin
John Rudoy
Justin Scott
Brandon Tefft
Thomas Vose

Charlotte W. Newcombe Doctoral Dissertation Fellowship
Jeremy Berndt
Christopher Skeaff

Presidential Management Fellowship
Brittany Brown

Smithsonian Institute Predoctoral Fellowship
Leslie Urena

Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada Grant
David Steinberg

Paul and Daisy Soros Fellowship for New Americans
Amit Bouri

U.S. Department of State Critical Language Scholarship
Jason Sparapani

Robert R. Wark Fellowship
Shalini Seshadri

Jane and Morgan Whitney Art History Fellowship
Justine DeYoung

A New Beginning for Graduate Student Orientation

Orientation for new graduate students has steadily evolved over the years to meet the ever-changing needs and concerns of the incoming graduate student population. A committee comprised of the school's Student Services section, Northwestern's Student Affairs Office (including the New Student Orientation unit), and interested members of our current student population plans and presents this important annual offering. Yearly new-student feedback obtained via voluntary survey has given the committee a mandate for continuing and substantive change.

Motivated by student requests for more extensive programming and spurred by record attendance at last year's orientation, this year The Graduate School adopted a new name for the program — NU Beginnings — and for the first time expanded it to a full-day, conference-style event. On Monday, September 11, incoming 2006–07 graduate students enjoyed an ideal opportunity to recognize and connect with their membership in the greater Northwestern University community.

	Applicants	Admitted	Enrolled
Doctoral Total	7181	1148	507
Masters Total	1458	514	254
International Total	44%	27%	27%
Countries Represented	117	70	45
Minority*	5%	8%	8%
Male	54%	48%	47%
Female	46%	52%	53%

*African American, Mexican American, Native American, and Puerto Rican

The opening assembly, held in Pick-Staiger Concert Hall, included a welcome from Dean Andrew B. Wachtel, gentle advice to experience the great cities of Evanston and Chicago by President Henry Bienen, and lively counsel by panelists from the major Northwestern service units. The incoming class then went to Norris University Center to enjoy a mix of both academic and Student Affairs break-out sessions, including several student panels. A communal lunch was served, and current students presented campus tours. The Resource Fair enjoyed its usual success, and at the end of the day the new students were given an opportunity to congregate and compare notes at a local pub. ■

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