LDCW Celebrated Women’s History Month in March with a Lecture by Dr. Haleh Esfandiari; and Honored Dr. Brenda Powell on her Retirement from UST

In 2013-2014 we anchored our programs and events on the theme, “International Feminism and Diverse Women’s Life Stories.” Under this aegis, we focused on raising awareness of a variety of economic, political, and social situations of women locally, nationally, and internationally, and how we could work towards a more equitable and just future for them. Issues the LDCW addressed ranged from the health situations of girls and women on the African continent to refugee women’s situations in Asia and Eastern Europe, to targeted killings of women in Mexico and Latin America and the grass-roots movements against such violence, and to the prevention of and shelters for domestic violence in the Twin Cities.

Our educational program culminated in the 2014 Women’s History month lecture by Dr. Haleh Esfandiari, an Iranian-American public intellectual working at the Woodrow Wilson Center. Dr. Esfandiari became a face of the courageous political prisoners in 2007 under Iran’s Ahmadinejad regime, and her lecture, “The Women’s Movement in Iran and the Middle East,” interwove her personal experiences with a political history of the region and addressed the current and changing situations from an international feminist perspective. The lecture attracted a broad spectrum of attendees, about 350, filling the balcony seats as well as the main floor of the OEC Auditorium. The students’ presence was substantial, and the lecture was an inspiring and moving one. Guided by the late Dr. Luann Dummer’s founding spirit, the March lecture continues to be an extraordinary opportunity for LDCW constituents and for the whole UST community (and even the broader community) to be educated on gender and social justice issues.

Dr. Esfandiari’s visit occasioned the LDCW’s collaborations with other branches such as Student Diversity and Inclusion Services and International Student Services. The Center coordinated our efforts in educating and raising awareness about the significance of Islamic history, culture, and politics, in relation to women’s lives and rights. Dr. Esfandiari’s lecture resonated with the International Student Services lecture on “Women and Islam” by Imani Jafaar Mohammad, and the Office of Student Diversity and Inclusion Services’ April speaker, Roxana Saberi.
The Director’s Notes:  
(Continued from the front page) 

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“Looking Ahead to the Year of Women and Environmental Sustainability”

Our book club discussions delved into a variety of multi-faceted topics and subject matters related to the LDCW theme, ranging from the twelfth-century intellectual Hildegard von Bingen to the sitting Supreme Court justice Sonya Sotomayor, and from the Mirabel sisters of the Dominican Republic to Buddhist nuns in Japan. We had remarkable opportunities educating ourselves and making connections. One example was the “Butterfly Project,” involving the Yarn Tamers’ knitting skills and passions, the book club members’ discussion, and the UST communities’ (in both St. Paul and Minneapolis) eager participation in the campaign for the prevention of sexual violence against women. We were able to raise money and awareness to be able to support Alexandra House, a local shelter for the victims of domestic violence.

To highlight the leadership role the LDCW takes on feminism and gender equity issues, we organized a celebratory forum to recognize the accomplishment of the second director of the Center (1996-2000), Dr. Brenda Powell. This provided a wonderful occasion to affirm and honor the mission of the LDCW and its work, as well as the legacy Dr. Powell leaves to the Center and the University. The reception brought many guests—about 90—including two UST presidents (Fr. Dease and Dr. Sullivan), administrators, colleagues, staff, and students, who came to give thanks to Dr. Powell. With her 30 years’ teaching and work at St. Thomas, she has touched so many lives and made an extraordinary mark on the campus community. Her speech at the reception is included in this issue.

With the rich experience of the 2013-14 year behind us, I look forward to the new academic year. Our theme for 2014-15 is “Women and Environmental Sustainability,” a topic that resonates in multiple and urgent ways in our lives.

Women and nature have been tied to (or identified with) each other in our imagination and thinking for thousands of years. From myth to literature and to everyday vocabulary, we witness such traditions, exemplified in figures like Gaia (the ancient Greek goddess of the earth) and Ceres (the Roman goddess of agriculture), and in our everyday phrases like “Mother Nature.”

In a seminal analysis of myth and culture (“Elementary Structures of Kinship”), the anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss examined how women’s gender identity was embedded in the structural axis of western thought, which also influenced their social position. He explained how nature was seen as a passive (stable, organized, and cohesive) body upon which culture worked, with (masculine) cultural productivity superseding and overtaking (female) natural production. This view, which captures the underlying philosophical and societal assumptions of many centuries, also provoked feminist responses, including those by Simone de Beauvoir, Luce Irigaray, and Judith Butler.

On the other hand, some feminists embraced the affinity between women and nature and highlighted women’s life-preserving and life-giving role. In fact, “ecofeminists” advocate for women-centered non-violent action against domination models (including patriarchy). While critiquing the “essentialist” assumption in equating women and nature, other feminists (“ecological feminists”) suggested that the division of labor along gender lines generated the material condition of power imbalance in men and women, for example, in their access to resources and land, as well as in the the legal and policy-making processes.

As shown in this brief sketch above, there have been very vigorous debates on gender and ecology, and this is true as well with the many fields of studies that are now exploring issues involving nature and the environment with regard to the future of humanity. What is so wonderful about these developments is that scholars in the humanities, arts, and sciences are teaming together to figure out what is happening and what we can do for our lives and for the planet, at the local and global levels. And women are integrated into these endeavors, helping formulate new perspectives on the intersection
of gender and the environment. St. Thomas has been in sync with such developments, especially with our interdisciplinary programs such as Environmental Studies, Women’s Studies, and Justice and Peace Studies. In fact, in 2001, Environmental Studies and Women’s Studies collaborated on a conference on “Women and Environment.” Organizing the event, Dr. Steve Hoffman noted how women were playing an increasingly important role in the environmental movement, mentioning authors such as Annie Dillard and Carolyn Merchant, explorers such as Anne Bancroft, and other women leaders.

So, this year’s activities at the LDCW are intended both to take stock of all the work that has been done in these areas, and to look ahead. Our activities surrounding this theme will culminate on March 10, 2015, when our Women’s History month speaker, Winona LaDuke, will deliver the keynote address. She was here at the 2001 conference, and it will be wonderful to welcome her back. As a Native-American thinker, writer, activist, and civic organizer-political candidate, LaDuke will illuminate our theme from the point of view of a life-long activist-leader.

Feminist Friday’s talks will correlate with our 2013-14 theme, covering a variety of topics such as women’s body and sustainability, women’s leadership in the environmental movement, and a closer look into a social initiative to preserve the Minnesotan-Canadian environment. The LDCW book club has chosen a variety of books to correspond with this year’s theme. Please refer to the announcement of Feminist Friday speakers and topics in this issue.

In addition to all these programs centering on “Women and Environmental Sustainability,” the LDCW will continue to build on our work for students, faculty, and staff: for example, we will support and encourage students’ initiatives, especially the FemCom group’s, and we will collaborate with other branches to co-sponsor a broad range of events. We will also be a catalyst for discussions and conversations on important issues on campus. For example, we plan to have a conversation on gender and adjunct faculty work and childcare issues for working mothers. We will collect many voices and work toward building “one university” that we can all be proud of. I thank the Advisory Board, the LDCW team, and the community that make the LDCW what it is today and what it will become.
As we begin a new academic year, I want to pause and look back to celebrate the seven fabulous women who graduated with minors in Women’s Studies during the 2013-2014 academic year. Megan Buelow finished in December with a major in Sociology; the other six all graduated in the spring. Maddie Hodapp is currently working with Lasallian Volunteers in Portland, Oregon; Natalie Ionescu comments that she wants to continue to move the fight for gender equality forward; Emily Kindelspire spent the summer camping and backpacking in the Big Horn Mountains, after delivering a thought-provoking student graduation address last May; Kelsey Reisdorph hopes to work with an AmeriCorps program before going on to graduate school; Melissa Seymour is working as a book editor at American Girl while continuing to work on her comic book publications, including a book about Somaliland medical pioneer Edna Adan; and Laura Vance is moving to London for graduate school. Warm congratulations to all of them as they go forth to change lives and change the world!

Two highlights of the program last spring were a visit from Dr. Michele Berger, the vice president of the National Women’s Studies Association and author of a study on careers for Women’s Studies graduates; and the ACTC Women’s Studies student conference. Both were a huge success. Dr. Berger gave a public address on how Women’s Studies graduates are transforming themselves and the world, and conducted a workshop to help current students communicate their skills and knowledge. At the Women’s Studies conference, five UST students presented their research, and the keynote speaker was our own Dr. Liz Wilkinson from the English Department.

The Women’s Studies program has a new look for the new academic year. Our web page has been entirely re-worked (complete with lots of pictures) and we have colorful new brochures! Check out the changes and let me know (semiers@stthomas.edu) what you think.

This year, we are undergoing a program review so that we can learn where our strengths are and find ways to improve the Women’s Studies program. I think I have finally figured out what I am doing as program director (well, most of the time) and am excited to learn where we can take the program in the future. We’ll bring an external consultant to campus and get feedback from alums and others who are involved with the program.

Women’s Studies is an interdisciplinary area of study that builds on the work of so many people in various fields. We learn from psychologists how an unrealistic beauty ideal affects the self-esteem of adolescent girls; from historians, we learn how to expand our understanding of world history to include those groups who have been ignored or trivialized in the past; from sociologists, we learn to look at the intersecting systems of inequality and oppression that affect individuals and groups. (And many other fields could be mentioned!) But there is also a practical element to the field of Women’s Studies; we not only learn about the realities around us, but we also celebrate our achievements and our connectedness and work to bring about justice where it is lacking.

The National Women’s Studies Association annual meeting will be held this fall (Nov. 13-16, 2014) in sunny San Juan, Puerto Rico! Some funding is available for students to attend; students who wish to be considered for funding should contact me as soon as possible (semiers@stthomas.edu).

As part of that active element of Women’s Studies, I had the opportunity this past summer to participate in training for Green Dot, a program to respond to and reduce violent behaviors. As someone with extensive experience as an advocate for victims of sexual assault and domestic violence, I gained further insight into practical ways to involve an entire community in the battle against abusive and violent actions. With renewed interest throughout the country in combatting the shameful reality of sexual violence on college campuses, St. Thomas will be implementing new protocols for addressing violent acts. We’ll also explore creative ways in which each one of us can intervene to prevent violence from happening. I’m excited and proud to be part of a movement to make our campus safer for everyone.
The University Advocates for Women and Equity

The UAWE (formerly called the University Committee on Women) is the oldest organization at St. Thomas that deals explicitly with needs and concerns of women. The UAWE was formed in 1990, after the first climate survey at UST demonstrated a chilly climate for women. We continue to work toward a more inclusive and welcoming climate, and to advocate for women at the university. All members of the university community who share concerns about women are eligible to be members of the UAWE, while a coordinating council plans events, speakers, and other projects to support women on campus.

Each year, we hold two campus-wide receptions, one in the Fall (9/23/14) to welcome new female employees, and one in the spring (4/9/15 – mark your calendars!) to celebrate our accomplishments and to give awards to those members of the community who have distinguished themselves in their work for women, both locally and in the wider community. This year, our fall reception is in late September:

**UAWE Fall Welcome Reception**

Tuesday Sept. 23, 3:30-5 p.m.

McNeely 100 (Great Room)

All members of the UST community are welcome to attend, but new female employees and their immediate supervisors are especially invited.

Want to be involved in the UAWE coordinating council? We’ll be holding elections at the reception on September 23rd. If you’d like to be on the ballot but are unable to attend the reception, please send us a note: uawe@stthomas.edu.

The UAWE also regularly hosts several events and speakers of interest, including an annual panel on Women’s Leadership Skills (Nov. 12).

The UAWE wants to recognize Dr. Sue Myers for her many years of leadership. In addition to her work as a faculty member in the department of Theology and her role as Director of Women’s Studies, Sue has also made time to chair the UAWE coordinating council since 2006. After the elections at the fall reception, Liz Dussol from Academic Counseling & Support will be the new chair of the coordinating council.

LDCW Feminist Fridays

**Sept. 20 (F), 12-1 p.m.**

**Speaker: Dr. Britain Scott**

**Title: “Babes and the Woods: The Feminine Beauty Ideal as an Ecological Hazard”**

Self-objectification preoccupies women with chronic body surveillance and shame as they evaluate the extent to which they fall short of the feminine beauty ideal portrayed in popular media—an artificial standard that requires substantial modification of the natural body. Dr. Scott will explore far-reaching negative implications of women’s self-objectification of their bodies, degrading their sense of connectedness to nature, the sensorial perception through which one perceives oneself as part of the larger ecological system. Dr. Scott’s talk will also examine correlational and experimental data supporting this theoretical model linking higher self-objectification to less ecologically responsible behavior.

Dr. Britain Scott has been teaching in Psychology, Women’s Studies, and Environmental Studies since 1996. She enthusiastically advocates curricular integration of psychology and environmental education and has published a web site to encourage it: www.teachgreenspsych.com. She is first author on an upcoming textbook on the psychology of sustainability. Presently, she serves as President of the Society for Environmental, Population and Conservation Psychology (Division 34 of the American Psychological Association).
This talk will examine some of the social and environmental consequences associated with the massive increase in the production and export of tar sands-based crude oil, drawing particular attention to the destructive impacts on Canadian Aboriginal communities and the women and children residing in those communities. The talk will also highlight Minnesota’s long-standing and largely unacknowledged links to the exploitation of tar sands oil, a linkage which is enabling this most dirty of fossil fuels to become a primary means of powering the world’s petroleum-based economy.

Joining St. Thomas in 1987, Dr. Steve Hoffman has been teaching in the Dept. of Political Sciences, currently serving as chair. Dr. Hoffman has previously served as director of the Environmental Studies Program from 1992 to 2004. He has taught courses in a variety of fields, including environmental and energy policy, urban studies, comparative politics, and public administration. Dr. Hoffman’s research broadly covers two areas: energy and environmental policy and national identities in the post-Soviet countries of East and Central Europe. Dr. Hoffman has served as a director for a number of local and state-wide environmental organizations, including Friends of the Boundary Water Canoe Area Wilderness; Minnesotans for an Energy Efficient Economy (now Fresh Energy); and Clean Water Action, Minnesota.

Dr. Maria Dahmus will discuss women’s leadership and social activism in the U.S. environmental movement and social and political changes that resulted from their efforts.

Dr. Dahmus received her Ph.D. from the Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies at the University of Wisconsin and completed her postdoctoral research on social dimensions of urban ecosystems at the University of Minnesota. The courses she teaches at St. Thomas include Society and Sustainability, the Environmental Studies Field Seminar, Theology and the Environment, and Dogs! Environment, Society, and Representation. Her research interests center on the interdisciplinary study of coupled social systems and ecosystems, social dimensions of environmental change, environmental movements, and sustainability in higher education.
Dr. Brenda Powell Speaks of Her Feminist Journey at UST at the Reception (April 25, 2014)

Above the computer monitor in my office I have a 1977 quote from Jill Ruckleshaus at the National Women’s Political Caucus that reads, in part, “We are in for a very, very long haul… I am asking you for everything you have to give…. In return I have nothing to offer you but your pride in being a woman, and all your dreams you’ve ever had for your daughters, and nieces, and granddaughters.” And, in my case, my dreams for my students and my colleagues.

Now, I’m tempted to see this 1977 quote as excessively pessimistic. The climate for women at UST has improved; I have no doubt about that. But I hear a short-hand version of Ruckleshaus’ call for perseverance in a phrase coined by some of my colleagues: “bitch fatigue.” There can be a weariness that comes with always being the one to say “as we consider this policy (fill in the blank), can we examine how it is likely to affect women/GLBT students/colleagues of color…etc.” and the eye-rolls, the moans, and even the backlash that follow.

So at the end of my career, I’d like to offer two strategies that are perhaps terribly obvious, but that I’ve found helpful. One is to gather regularly with like-minded friends and colleagues. Hopefully you will not experience as I have being labeled the Anti-Christ, or being taken for a walk by an administrator to “unofficially” share anonymously reported concerns that you - I - have lost my objectivity and become “feministic.” But, just in case, surround yourself with people to whom you can turn after you’ve been blindsided by the intensity, nastiness, or source of criticism for standing up for women.

My opening line when I gather with these like-minded friends is often, “Am I crazy, or is there something wrong with this picture?” They don’t need extensive background context; they get it; this is the reality in which we live. But you’ll notice that I’ve said “like-minded” not identically minded. Because equally importantly, these friends also help me take the crucial next step from grousing to strategizing. They help me think about my choices for action within this reality of ours.

The second strategy is to be open to unexpected allies. I know this is a flaw, but sometimes I categorize people (“the like-minded” versus the “like-minded”). And sometimes the un-like-minded surprise me. I don’t want to betray any confidentiality agreements, but let me just point out that I was only one member of the Presidential search committee. So my second piece of advice is to be ready to be surprised; people are truly amazing.

Serving on the presidential search committee was, in so many ways, a wonderful culmination of my career at St. Thomas. If anyone had told me 30 years ago that I would step up for such service, and that I would be selected for such service, let alone that the result would be a phenomenal new president who, by the way, is a woman - well, I would have responded, “no way.”

So I’d like to end with this. In any community—a group of friends, a class, a university, the world—there needs to be a delicate dance of people stepping up and stepping back. Now as I prepare to step back, it is with great hope for the future of UST because I watch with enthusiasm the many colleagues and students who have and I know will continue to step up, and with confidence the many more who will increasingly step up with energy and compassion and conviction.
The five-part series is broken up into the following segments:

- LGBTQQIAA 101: Definitions and Dynamics
- Allyship 101: Developing an Awareness
- Transgender 101
- Allyship 201: Becoming a Change Agent
- Intersectionality 101

This five-part training series offers participants an introduction and opportunity to deepen knowledge, skills, awareness, resources, and strategies for engaging and responding to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, asexual, and allied (LGBTQQIAA) people and topics. Each module builds upon the content of the previous. With this in mind, we recommend that participants attend all five sessions; if not, participants should know that foundational information would have been previously covered. Each of these sessions will be facilitated with attention to fostering a relatively safe and courageous space. Participants will be encouraged to share, listen, ask questions, reflect, and engage with transparency, a willingness to experience discomfort through the learning process, and the responsibility to co-create a respectful and confidential space. Participants will engage in reflection and action planning relevant to themselves, their workgroups, and the University community.

This series will engage participants in further development of an empowered LGBTQQIAA community at St. Thomas. Participants will walk away with increased knowledge and skills to serve as agents of change in improving the climate for St. Thomas’s LGBTQ community.

Devin Taylor (2014, MA in English) talks of Allies First-ever “Night of Noise at UST”

“Day of Silence” has long been a tradition on college campuses, aimed at raising awareness of the silencing effect of violence and discrimination directed toward the LGBTQ population. This year, however, UST campus allies asked if there wasn’t more to the fight than symbolic silence.

What if the St. Thomas community rose to combat the silence with informative and celebratory noise?

In years past, other institutions observing Day of Silence have interrogated the event in this same way, leading to the conception of the more independently localized event: Night of Noise. And so, in the spring of 2014, with the help of multiple UST resources, St. Thomas Allies mounted the first-ever Night of Noise at UST. At four o’clock on April 10th, students and faculty began to filter into the Woulfe room at Anderson Student Cen-
Fast-forward a few years: After I transferred to St. Thomas as my sophomore year of college, I began to attend Allies meetings. I was content with the name because I thought it was great and seemed like Allies was an all-encompassing term. I thought that if a person identified as queer, it was kind of like being an Ally to themselves. When the group brought up changing the name, I supported the decision but didn’t think too much of it. I wasn’t dating anyone at the time. I was still an Ally.

I am now a twenty-two year old, on the brink of college graduation. And now, I date a woman. I am not an Ally. I am Queer. Some people may call me a lesbian, or gay, the list goes on. Whatever I am, I no longer identify myself as an Ally.

Allies are essential to any minority community. But they are only part of a minority community. To identify as an Ally is to say, “Yes, I support you and will help in any way I can, whether that be rallying, donating, discussing, or even just listening. But I realize that I come from a place of privilege, a place of safety, and a place where my identity is accepted.”

A person who identifies as non-straight, as somewhere on the queer spectrum, lives a day-to-day life that is vastly different. There are hidden anxieties and fears, from being unsure about what classmates will think if the conversation were to involve my girlfriend, to being worried about negative stereotypes being associated with me at my nanny job and preschool job. My worries are only the tip of the iceberg, and many struggle with much more.

In changing the name to Queer-Straight Alliance, our group recognizes that queer people need to be reflected in our community. We need to be seen in language, in programming, in curriculum, in space, in conversation, in the UST community. When we are constantly struggling to be visible, it’s important that we try to make it as clear as possible: we are a group of both queer people and Allies. With the name Queer-Straight Alliance, we acknowledge and celebrate the queer community alongside the ally community.

A Reflection on Visibility: UST Student Group Allies Changes Its Name to Queer-Straight Alliance (QSA)
By Lauren Schufman, 2014 QSA President

The student group formerly known as Allies will officially take on its new name Queer-Straight Alliance (QSA) this fall. After a lot of reflection and discussion among students about changing our name, the same natural question of, “Why?” has emerged in the greater UST community. I would like to take this opportunity to share my answer.

The question of why we changed Allies to QSA is one that is answered, for me, with my experience beginning as an Ally in high school to identifying as a queer woman in college. I used to go to my high-school’s Growing Seeds of Alliance group, where I sat and attentively listened to the struggles of my queer classmates, helped with bake sales, and planned LGBTQ related events. I dated men, and I was an Ally.

The student-led musical act provided mood music, while the tech-savvy student Allies group enabled students to twitter their photo booth pics and public thoughts on Day of Silence/Night of Noise onto a projection screen. Joining the students were three guest performers from the Twin Cities-based 20% Theatre Company. Through monologues and spoken word, these performers addressed the lesser-heard issues of transgender aging, fluidity of identity, and transgender feminism. What began as a day of quiet introspection blossomed into an evening of discussion, celebration, and an invitation to make noise and be seen.
Reports from the LDCW Professional Grants Recipients:

Prof. Jessica Lane of Biology Speaks of The Influence of Female Genital Cutting on Refugee Women in the United States.

The World Health Organization estimates that approximately 132 million women have undergone Female Genital Cutting (FGC). Many of the women who have undergone FGC emigrate from Africa, where the practice is most common, to the United States every year. FGC is a traditional cultural practice which is generally performed without anesthesia to remove portions of the external female genitalia, and there are four different classifications. Type 1 is the removal of the clitoris. Type 2 is the removal of the clitoris and the labia minora. Type 3, also known as infibulation, involves the removal of part or all of the external genitalia as well as the creation of raw edges on the labia majora, which are then sutured together to fuse the vulva, leaving only a small opening of about 1cm in diameter for urination and menstruation. Lastly, Type 4 is any other alteration of the female genitilia, such as piercings, tattoos, etc. Several studies indicate that women who have undergone FGC, specifically Type 3, “represent a high-risk group in obstetrics.”

In a previous study I conducted investigating barriers to prenatal care among resettled African refugee women in Utah, I found that most women believe that reproductive and prenatal health visits are important but find there are barriers to seeking care. While some of the barriers identified were expected, such as language and culture, more than half the women who had undergone FGC said that this was one of the main reasons they did not want to seek gynecological care. They felt that their healthcare practitioners would be judgmental and would not know how to treat them since they had undergone FGC. Other research studies have found that those who have undergone FGC often describe their Western healthcare providers as “harsh, offensive, and disrespectful” during pregnancy, childbirth, and other obstetric/gynecological appointments.

As a follow-up, I designed and conducted a national survey of health providers, including obstetricians, gynecologists, nurse practitioners, midwives, and family practitioners, based upon the comments previously made by the refugee women. The purpose of this study was to determine if those practitioners had been trained on how to treat patients who had undergone FGC, and if they felt competent treating them. My findings were presented at the North American Refugee Health Conference in Rochester, New York, this past June, and not unexpectedly, the results call for significant improvements to be made.

The data showed that only 28% of Obstetricians/Gynecologists could correctly identify all three types of FGC, while even fewer Midwives (19%) could correctly identify all three types. Nurse Practitioners and Family Practice Physicians scored the lowest in identifying all three types correctly: only 10% of Nurse Practitioners and 5% of Family Practice Physicians could do so. Alarmingly, while most providers could not correctly identify the different types of FGC, the majority of participants (60%, n=306) reported having previously provided care to a woman who had undergone FGC, and approximately 62% of those participants (n=191) reported having seen one or more women affected by FGC in the past year. And sadly, only 26% (n=134) had hands-on training with a FGC patient during their medical training.

Unfortunately, these study results confirm that some of the assumptions the refugee women made about their healthcare practitioners are partially true: many of these practitioners were not trained and may not be competent in treating FGC. The good news is that there is room for improvement, and most respondents (81%) reported a desire for additional education on FGC, specifically, counseling guidelines and technical guidelines on the clinical/surgical management of complications. Approximately one-fifth of respondents wrote that they were eager to learn of the study results, as they felt FGC is an important topic that is not adequately addressed, if at all, in today’s reproductive health practice. And as a substantial influx of women refugees and immigrants who have had FGC continues in the United States, such education has become necessary from both a medical and public health perspective.


Beth Cotton, RN, of Health Services Speaks of Student Health on College Campuses

I was fortunate to attend the annual
American College Health Association (ACHA) meeting May 27 – 31, 2014, in San Antonio, Texas. My fees for the conference were partially funded through the generosity of a LDCW professional development award. Close to 2,000 college health professionals attended from institutions across the United States and Canada, ranging from colleges of a few hundred to universities with greater than 50,000 students.

I was able to collaborate with many college health professionals from across the United States and attended several conference sessions on students and college health. In the opening keynote session, “Fostering Student Success,” Dr. Amelia Arrand, an epidemiologist from Maryland, presented on ways university communities could assist students at a higher level by having coaching models in place instead of training models. According to the latest statistics, 1 in 10 students have a mood disorder. Students taking stimulant medications to aid studying and increase grades are at an alarming increase on our campuses. There should be increased diligence on campuses to provide assistance for these students as there is a large correlation of stimulation medication use to use of marijuana as well as other drugs. Since most illegal purchases of stimulant mediations take place in the late evening or at night, many institutions are having training courses for the staff of campus libraries, coffee shops, and late night venues where students may likely be purchasing stimulants. There are campaigns on campuses promoting “I study clear” or “I study naked (or natural)” with photos of students. Some universities are asking students to sign an agreement stating they won’t use any medications not prescribed to them, misuse their medications, or sell any of their medication to others. (Stimulation medication or “study drugs” can sell on the black market for $10 per pill or more.) It’s important for college communities to educate students that any chemical use can increase disruption to their sleep by 25% or more, which further hinders their performance in the classroom. The drug-taking culture of the United States often promotes self-diagnosing and self-medicating, but stressing the importance of using resource centers, tutoring, and study groups can go a long way in assisting our students to study well without stimulant medications. This keynote speaker gave a terrific presentation with current data that engaged the audience and was a great kick-off for the conference. Thank you LDCW for your generosity in awarding me the professional development award. I was able to gain a great deal of knowledge!

Gender Matters

The Departments of Campus Life, Student Engagement, Residence Life and Anderson Student Center will host a signature student leadership program this fall, Gender Matters. This program provides a short series of conversations that focus on understanding gender as it relates to the undergraduate student experience and the broader community. Participants meet once a week for seven weeks and have dinner and discussion. Conversations focus on a variety of topic areas including gender identity and expression, socialization, media influence, the gender gap, and how to use this knowledge to address gender inequities. Each session will feature topic related activities and individual opportunities to reflect upon and share one’s own experiences. One session will also feature a guest panel of colleagues from around campus.

In debriefing the program, past participants expressed learning a great deal from discussions with peers and facilitators:

- “Thinking critically about gender and how it impacts me every day.”
- “Being a part of this made me more confident in myself as well as my abilities to affect change.”
- “I really like the discussion about the gender spectrum. It put the concept into a new formulation of thought that I had never imagined.”
- “I learned a lot of gender terminology, stereotypes and lots more. I find myself critically thinking about movies, TV shows, ads, etc and the message they are conveying and the gender roles that they are portraying.”
- “I didn’t necessarily take away any new ways of thinking, but realized how essential it is to take action in a way that is compassionate instead of condescending.”

Past participants in the program brainstormed pages of brilliant ideas for addressing the gender gap in their spheres of influence:

- “Tell girls they are smart or good at something, not just pretty.”
- “Raise my children to not perpetrate gender biases.”
- “Limit my media intake to only sources that encourage and empower women.”
- “Education on micro-aggressions.”
- “Donate to organizations focuses on empowering women.”
- “Call people out who make sexist jokes/comments.”
- “Not be afraid to say “I love you.”
- “I am going to vote for a female Tommie Award recipient.”
- “I am going to learn more about the outside forces of the binary gender and help my family and friends learn more about it as well.”
- “I want to start activities for women/girls in science and make that a part of my career as a scientist.”

If you know of students who may be interested in participating in “Gender Matters,” please contact Vern Klobassa (651-962-6464; klob6303@stthomas.edu).
LDCW Book Club
2014-2015
Women & Environmental Sustainability

September: 
*Silent Spring* (1962) by Rachel Carson (Non-fiction)
First published serially in the *New Yorker* in June of 1962, *Silent Spring* appeared in book form that September. The outcry that followed forced the banning of DDT and spurred revolutionary changes in the laws affecting our air, land, and water. Carson’s passionate concern for our planet’s future reverberated throughout the world, and her eloquent book was instrumental in launching the environmental movement.

October: 
Best known for fundamentally changing our views of primates and our relationship with the animal kingdom, scientist Jane Goodall now turns her attention to taking a stand for a more sustainable world. In this provocative and encouraging book, Goodall sounds a clarion call to Western society, urging us to take a hard look at the food we produce and consume. Arguing that each individual can make a difference, she offers simple strategies each of us can employ to foster a sustainable society. Brilliant, empowering, and irrepressibly optimistic, *Harvest for Hope* is one of the most crucial works of our age.

November: 
*Parable of the Sower* (1993) by Octavia Butler (Fiction)
*Parable of the Sower* is set in a future where government has all but collapsed and civil society has reverted to relative anarchy due to resource scarcity and poverty. Lauren Olamina, a young woman who possesses what Butler dubbed hyperempathy—the ability to feel the perceived pain and sensations of others—develops a benign philosophical and religious system during her childhood in a gated community in Los Angeles. When her home is destroyed and her family murdered, Lauren travels north with some survivors to start a community where her religion, *Earthseed*, can grow.

December:
Month Off

January: 
*Wild: From Lost to Found on the Pacific Crest Trail* (2012) by Cheryl Strayed (Memoir)
At twenty-two, Cheryl Strayed thought she had lost everything: her mother passed away, her family scattered, and her own marriage was destroyed. Four years later, she made the most impulsive decision of her life. With no experience or training, driven only by blind will, she would hike more than a thousand miles of the Pacific Crest Trail from the Mojave Desert through California and Oregon to Washington State—alone. Told with suspense and style, sparkling with warmth and humor, *Wild* captures the terrors and pleasures of one young woman forging ahead against all odds on a journey that maddened, strengthened, and ultimately healed her.

February: 
*All Our Relations: Native Struggles for Land and Life* (1999) by Winona LaDuke (Non-fiction)
Winona LaDuke gives this thoughtful, in-depth account of Native resistance to environmental and cultural degradation through examples from communities such as the Seminoles, the Anishinaabeg, the Innu, the Northern Cheyenne, and the Mohawks, among others. LaDuke’s unique understanding of Native ideas and people is born from years of experience and activism, and inspiring testimonies by local Native activists sharing the struggle for survival deepen her analysis. LaDuke speaks forcefully for self-determination and community and offers a beautiful and daring vision of political, spiritual, and ecological transformation.

March & April: 
*Flight Behavior* (2012) by Barbara Kingsolver (Fiction)
The *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Lacuna* and *The Poisonwood Bible*, Barbara Kingsolver returns with a truly stunning and unforgettable work—arguably her most thrilling novel to date. Set in present day Appalachia, *Flight Behavior* is a breathtaking-
ing parable of catastrophe and denial that explores how the complexities we encounter in life lead us to believe in our particular chosen truths. Kingsolver’s riveting story concerns a young wife and mother on a failing farm in Tennessee who experiences something she cannot explain. Her discovery energizes various competing factions—religious leaders, climate scientists, environmentalists, politicians—trapping her in the center of the conflict and ultimately opening up her world.

**May:**

*Sacred Wilderness (2014)* by Susan Power (Susan may also come talk about the book.) *(Fiction)*

*Sacred Wilderness* explores the lives of four Clan Mothers of different eras and backgrounds who come together to restore foundation to a mixed-up, mixed-blood woman who had been living the American dream and found it a great maw of emptiness. These wisdom-keepers are women of joy and grief, risking their hearts and sometimes their lives for those they love. The novel moves from present-day Minnesota to the Mohawk territory of the 1620s, to the ancient biblical world, brought to life by an indigenous woman who would come to be known as the Virgin Mary. Through Power’s lyrical, lushly imagined prose, the Clan Mothers reveal secrets, prophetic insights, and stories that are by turns comic, so painful they can break your heart, and perhaps even powerful enough to save the world.

**June:**

*Destroyer Angel* by Nevada Barr *(Fiction; Mystery)*

Anna Pigeon, a U.S. Park Services ranger, sets off on vacation—an autumn canoe trip in the Iron Range in upstate Minnesota—accompanied by her friend Heath, a paraplegic; Heath’s fifteen-year-old daughter, Elizabeth; Leah, a wealthy designer of outdoor equipment; and Leah’s thirteen-year-old daughter, Katie. For Heath and Leah, this is a shakedown cruise to test the new cutting edge line of camping equipment Leah has designed, which will make camping and canoeing more accessible to disabled outdoorsmen. When Anna returns from a solo float on the Fox River, she finds that four heavily armed thugs have taken her companions captive. With limited resources and no access to the outside world, Anna has only two days to rescue her friends before they are killed or flown out of the country.

**July:**

*The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History (2014)* by Elizabeth Kolbert *(Non-fiction)*

In *The Sixth Extinction*, two-time winner of the National Magazine Award and *New Yorker* writer Elizabeth Kolbert blends intellectual and natural history and field reporting into a powerful account of the mass extinction unfolding before our eyes. Over the last half a billion years, there have been five mass extinctions, when the diversity of life on earth suddenly and dramatically contracted. Scientists are currently monitoring the sixth extinction, predicted to be the most devastating extinction event since the asteroid impact that wiped out the dinosaurs. Kolbert draws on the work of researchers in half a dozen disciplines—including geologists, botanists, and marine biologists, accompanying many of them into the field. She introduces us to several species, some already gone, and others facing extinction, including the Panamanian golden frog, staghorn coral, the great auk, and the Sumatran rhino. Kolbert traces the evolution of extinction as a concept, from its first articulation by Georges Cuvier in revolutionary Paris up through the present day. Likely to be mankind’s most lasting legacy, the sixth extinction, as Kolbert observes, compels us to rethink the fundamental question of what it means to be human.

**August:**

*My Year of Meats (1998)* by Ruth Ozeki *(Fiction)*

Japanese-American documentary filmmaker Jane Takagi-Little suddenly receives a job producing *My American Wife!*, a Japanese cooking show sponsored by BEEF-EX, a Texas-based meat industry lobby organization intent on selling American beef to Japanese housewives. Jane journeys with her television crew into the nation’s heartlands in search of America’s most winning wives and their most mouth-watering recipes for meats. On the road, she falls in love and makes some heartbreaking discoveries about love, meat, honor, and DES, a hormone once used to promote growth in cows and to prevent miscarriages in women, which has irrevocably altered Jane’s future. Meanwhile, an ocean away, Akiko Ueno watches *My American Wife!* and dutifully cooks dishes like Coca Cola Roast and Beef Fudge for her husband, Joichi Ueno (BEEF-EX’s Tokyo PR rep), rating each show in Authenticity, Wholesomeness, and Deliciousness of Meat.
Yarn Tamers
Susan Anderson-Benson, Program Manager, The Selim Center for Learning in Later Years

Yarn Tamers, a service-oriented group of the LDCW, is growing and thriving! We met on Monahan Plaza (outside the Anderson Student Center) over the summer months, drawing in crafters and non-crafters alike, and doubling our usual attendance numbers.

Our members include students, staff, faculty, UST retirees, and community members, and our “regulars” include men and women. Our mission is to complete at least one significant service project each year to share our love of crafting to meet the needs of a specific group. At the beginning of summer, we donated three prayer shawls to a local hospice ministry. We are currently working on “Brave Bundles” and already have three blankets ready to donate. The mission of Brave Bundles “is to provide baby blankets for military families who have babies while overseas and to U.S. families who have a baby while a spouse is deployed.” Ideas for groups to assist come from our members. One of our Yarn Tamers “regulars” is the spouse of a veteran, and Brave Bundles was adopted as this year’s primary service project at her recommendation. We will continue to work on blankets for this project through the fall with our donation going in before the December holidays. In addition, we are working on a blanket to donate to the Office of Mission for its annual appeal campaign.

Because we work together on our service projects, there’s always time to work on personal projects as well.

We welcome new members, and enjoy teaching interested persons how to knit and crochet. We are currently meeting on our school year schedule, Tuesdays from 12-1 p.m., in the Luann Dummer Center for Women. We hope you’ll join us for some service and socializing!”

The Green Dot Program
Jessie McShane, LDCW; Green Dot Violence Prevention Liaison

This past summer, thanks to UST, I was fortunate enough to attend an intensive 32-hour Green Dot Violence Prevention course sponsored by Hamline University. The training provided valuable information as well as important resources and tools to implement Green Dot violence prevention strategies on our campus. What exactly is a Green Dot? A Green Dot is any action that reduces the risk of violence in the moment, supports survivors, or creates a culture less tolerant of power-based personal violence. A Green Dot is your individual choice to make our campus safer. The Green Dot movement is about gaining a critical mass of students, staff, and faculty who are each willing to do a small part to actively and visibly reduce power-based personal violence at the University of St. Thomas. Since the training, I have been actively pursuing Green Dot acts, becoming more and more involved with Green Dot here on campus. I was eager to learn about the possibility of taking on the role of UST Green Dot liaison under the Dean of Students Office, and after expressing my enthusiasm, it was decided that having a Green Dot liaison here at UST would help advance our Green Dot strategy. I’m excited to take on the role of UST Green Dot liaison, and I look forward to advancing our Green Dot Violence Prevention strategy here on campus. I will be taking care of the administrative aspects of Green Dot: sending out bi-weekly emails, scheduling bystander and overview speeches, updating our social media and website (sthomas.edu/greendot), and more. If you or someone you know is interested in getting involved in Green Dot, please email Greendot@stthomas.edu today to learn more!
2nd Annual
“Tommie Talks”:
Speed Mentoring for Female Students

Morgan Schreurs ’15, Co-facilitator of FemCom; Political Science and Women’s Studies Major, English Minor

The Luann Dummer Center for Women and student group FemCom are excited to announce the upcoming Second Annual “Tommie Talks,” Tuesday September 30th from 5:30-8 p.m. Back by popular demand, “Tommie Talks” is a speed mentoring event for UST women students, where they may learn the unique rewards, challenges, and benefits of a woman in the workplace from UST alumnae and faculty. This year, participants can expect an even more diverse set of mentor backgrounds and, of course, just as much FUN! See the LDCW Upcoming Events webpage for details and to reserve your spot—see you there!

Tommie Talks

Fall 2014 Calendar of Events

We welcome you to any or all of our regular programs and co-sponsored events.

See the LDCW website for information on additional events and activities. (All events are held at the LDCW, OEC 103, unless otherwise noted.)

Sept. 19 (F).............. Feminist Friday, Dr. Britain Scott, Dept. of Psychology, 12-1 p.m.
Sept. 19 (F).............. Open House/Chocolate Reception, 2-4 p.m.
Sept. 22 (M).............. History Dept. Lecture: Clifton Ross and Marcy Rein 7 p.m. (North Woulfe Hall)
Sept. 23 (T).............. UAWF: Fall Welcome Reception, 3-4:30 p.m. (McNeely 100)
Sept. 24 (W).............. LDCW Book Club, Silent Spring by Rachel Carson, 12-1 p.m.
Sept. 30 (T).............. Second Annual Tommie Talks, Speed Mentoring, (ASC Woulfe North) 5:30-8 p.m.
Oct. 3 (F).............. Family Weekend! “Tommie Tea,” 4-5:30 p.m.
Oct. 9 (Th).............. Hispanic Heritage Month, And Still We Rise, Women Having Conversations about Diversity, 5:30 p.m. (ASC Hearth Room)
Oct. 17 (F).............. Feminist Friday, Dr. Steven Hoffman, 12-1 p.m.
Oct. 29 (W).............. LDCW Book Club, Harvest for Hope by Jane Goodall, 12-1 p.m.
Oct. 31 (F).............. Allies Workshop: “LGBTQQIAA 101: Definitions and Dynamics,” 1:30-4:30 p.m.
Nov. 11 (T).............. Fired Up: Survivors Stories of Trauma, HOPE, and Change. 7 p.m., (OEC Auditorium)
Nov. 21 (F).............. Feminist Friday, Dr. Maria Dahmus, 12-1 p.m.
Nov. 21 (F).............. Allies Workshop: “Allyship 101: Developing an Awareness,” 1:30-4:30 p.m.
Nov. 26 (W).............. LDCW Book Club, Parable of the Sower by Octavia Butler, 12-1 p.m.
Dec. 5 (F).............. Artist’s Talk: Jane Wunrow 12-1 p.m.

Save the Date! 2015 – Women’s History Month Lecture by Winona LaDuke (OEC Auditorium)
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