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Update from new WGS assistant director

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New online ‘zine highlights feminist activism for social justice

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Devin Rae Hartwig ‘14 is a correspondent for the Aavaux Foundation, an online social justice organization. Hartwig is also expecting a baby (Josephine Jane) with her partner, Will, on June 8. They are living in St. Louis, Mo., and love it. She wears her WGS pin proudly on her favorite jacket.

Sarah Ehlers ’04 is happy to announce that her dissertation “Theorizing an Apparent Feminism in Technical Communication” was awarded the 2015 CCCC Outstanding Dissertation Award in Technical Communication. See www.ncte.org/cccc/awards/techcommunication. She said her WGS graduate certificate work heavily influenced the dissertation and is grateful for her time at ISU.

Danny Mathews ’11 is a Redbird who came back home. After a year of serving the Virginia Tech campus community as LGBTQI+ coordinator, he is now the specialist for advising and leadership development in ISU’s Diversity Advocacy office. Mathews enjoys advising the Association of Latin American Students, Asian Pacific American Coalition, Black Student Union, and PRIDE. He loves his work, and being a part of the WGS family again.

Julia Drauden O’Dell ’10 was promoted to associate editor of the Business, Marketing, and Career Education Department at Goodheart-Willcox publishing. In November, she returned to ISU to present “Skills for a Publishing Career” at the Publications Unit Professional Speaker Series. Drauden also gave birth to a son in February. Congrats!

Kathy Erick ’10 is in her “all-fout-out” stage in the Rhetorics, Communication and Information Design program at Clemson University. Erick has been a graduate teacher of rhetoric, teaching Accelerated Composition for three years. She made a few public research presentations and has submitted a chapter to Inny and Postmodernism.

Annaliisa Alman ’08 has been promoted. She is teaching more theatre classes and directing more productions at Niles North High School, where she has been since 2009. In January she coordinated the box office at the annual Illinois High School Theatre Festival. She is working on her master’s degree in theatre directing at Roosevelt University in Chicago. She and her partner, Georgette Kell, are engaged to be married next year.

Stephanie Braun ’07 is beginning her doctoral program in education at the University of St. Francis this summer. Her kids are growing Xander starts first grade in the fall; Sebastian starts preschool, and Axel and Zackary (twins!) will be two years old. Her husband, Andrew, is working as a home health nurse.

Andrew Anastasia ’06 successfully defended his dissertation in April. On March 24, he and his partner welcomed into the world their daughter, Isadora Sempos Anastasia. They live in Frontenac, Mo., where Anastasia is an assistant professor of Rhetoric and Composition. He will be presenting at the 2015 NSWA conference this fall.

Sarah Ehlers ’04 relocated to Houston, Texas, this year to start a new job as an assistant professor in the English Department at the University of Houston. She specializes in 20th century American literature, poetry, and poetics and is in the process of finishing her first book manuscript, a study of Depression-era poetic culture.

WGS staff assists with ISU’s inaugural Lavender Graduation

ISU is proud to join the list of over 80 U.S. college campuses holding Lavender Graduation ceremonies. Lavender Graduation is a pre-commencement ceremony, celebrating the accomplishments and successes of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer (LGBTQ) and allied college students. The event was originally created by Ronni Sanlo, a Jewish lesbian who was denied the chance to attend her biological children’s commencement because of her sexual orientation. As a result, she worked with the University of Michigan to design the first Lavender Graduation Ceremony in 1995. Thanks to Mandy Dardt, office manager, and Arie Faulkner, graduate assistant, for their work on the organization committee that brought this event to our campus.

WGS program celebrates scholarship recipients at symposium

The Anne M. Semaik Memorial Scholarship was awarded to Cynthia Jagodzinski, who is working towards her master’s degree in social work and her WGS graduate certificate. She also received the 2014 WINGSS award from the Bloomington/Normal YWCA. With a passion for social justice and promoting the advancement of women, she hopes to work as a victim’s advocate for sexual assault and domestic violence survivors.

The Dorothy E. Lee Scholarship was awarded to Cara Kerchner, a senior majoring in fine art with a minor in art history. As a founding member of the Inter [D]isciplinary Enrichment of the Arts (I.D.E.A.), a registered student organization at ISU, she works to bring together artists working in all mediums for interdisciplinary critiques. Kerchner plans to earn her master’s degree and be involved in nonprofit arts and community-based organizations.

The Luellen Laurenti Scholarship was awarded to Kevin Mell, a junior majoring in political science with a WGS minor. Mell was drawn to the richness of ideas in the WGS Program and plans to go to graduate school to study political theory with an emphasis on gender studies. He will continue to be an advocate for social justice.

Emma Beale was honored with the WGS Achievement Award. Beale is a senior majoring in community health education with the WGS minor. Her passion and commitment to women’s health and reproductive justice began at age 14. She was part of the Planned Parenthood Team Awareness Group in Bloomington, Ill. She served as president of the Feminist Led Activist Movement to Empower (F.L.A.M.E.) and volunteered as a member of the Student Wellness Ambassador Team (S.W.A.T.).

WGS staff members celebrate at the Symposium keynote engages #BlackLivesMatter campaign

What if we thought about #BlackLivesMatter intersectionally? Thinking about the lives of young black girls the same way we think about the lives of young black boys like Tamir Rice? How about the lives of black women like Miriam Carey? Or black transwomen like Niaah Morris? What about the police who beat Pearl Pearson for disbelieving he could not hear because he was deaf?

Jennifer Lata Vosi’s keynote speech focused on performance “Peculiar Requests for Peculiar Bodies: Black Lives Matter, Transgender Violence, Disability, and Women in a Post-Racial, ‘Post-Sexist’ Present” asked audience members to mindful consider how sexuality, gender, and ability intersect with race in cases of police violence. As one faculty member remarked, “This was one of the most powerful keynote speeches I’ve ever heard (and I’ve heard a lot!). Really a truly phenomenal event.”

Vosi is a mixed-race queer, philosopher, poet and spoken word artist. Vosi had many opportunities to interact with our students. She gave a Phi Alpha Theta class, a poetry reading at University Galleries, recorded some of her work for WGLT’s Poetry Radio, and guest lectured in Angela Haas’s Native Rhetorics class.

This year we welcomed student presenters from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Toby Beauschamp moderated the “Queering Bodies-Blurring Boundaries” panel with two presentations. Stephanie Skora spoke on Australia’s use of third-option gender markers, and Matthew Speck offered a comparison between transgender pornography and freak shows.

A morning panel focused on disability and acceptance. Amy Fitzjarrald presented “Being Overweight and the College Environment,” and Dalton Stevens presented his work on disabled masculinities. Topics addressed in other morning panels included sexuality, challenging social norms, and testimonies. A Salish Kootenai writing student presented their latest work on creative writing resistant to dominant disability discourses.

Pamela Twyman-Hoff moderated the afternoon panel “The Reconceptualization and Reclamation of Black Motherhood as a Site for Transformative Resistance.” The panel included three student reflections on the unique and challenging experiences of black women as mothers. Florence Richardson’s presentation addressed reclaiming one’s own identity as a black woman; Tiawana Wingfield shared her work on resistance of women and children of African descent in a post-racial society; and Venise Keys presented her artwork focusing on African-American maternal aesthetics.

Other panels focused on misogyny in video gaming culture, queer bodies, theater and literature, and the intersections of gender with law and public policy.

F.L.A.M.E. keeps feminism alive on campus

The students in F.L.A.M.E. continue to impress us. As usual our annual Take Back the Night march kicked off the fall semester. This year ISU President Larry Dietz attended the event and encouraged the student ochestral to, “I could have been anywhere tonight, but I chose to be here.” The Clotheline Project graced our Quad twice this year, once in preparation for the march and again in April for Sexual Assault Awareness Month. Other highlights include F.L.A.M.E.’s spring production of Eve Ensler’s The Vagina Monologues. The troupe performed the play for the 2015 Midwest Bisexual Lesbian Gay Transgender Ally College Conference (MBLGTACC) in February. And, there was a community performance in March. Proceeds from the event were donated to the YWCA’s Stepping Stones program and the Neville House. F.L.A.M.E. also hosted “Life Interrupted: Women Incarcerated,” a panel discussion of the truths of the criminal justice system and its effects on women during and after their stays.