Good Morning. It’s an honor to be invited to speak to you on this important day. Congratulations to the seniors, the class of 2009. And a special thanks to your parents, siblings, grandparents, and other family members who have supported you over the last four years. Welcome.

Over the last year I have been off campus on a research leave. My current research examines the care provided to people at the end of their lives. So rather than being on campus during your senior years, I have been sitting at the bedsides of people as they pass out of this world, as they die.

Rather than delivering a first day lecture in the “Human Sexuality” course, or listening to your presentations at the end of the term, I have listened instead to stories at the end of life. You are at the end of a different journey, a journey noteworthy in part for what it leads TO, a journey marked by preparation and anticipation for what comes later—because for all of you, there is much more living still to do.

Yet when I was asked to address you on this, a pivotal Sunday morning, I thought that, if they could, people at the end of their lives would have some worthwhile words for you as you approach this rite of passage. Their advice would be quite specific and unlike what I might say to you as your professor.

For my part, I would say that moments like today and tomorrow— moments similar to those early days at Grinnell when I met many of you in an introductory course, or lost in the hallway, or attending a campus event, are characterized by the ambivalence, joy, grief, and anticipation that accompany transitions from one stage to the next, and these moments are the stuff of life. Such transitions, although scary, are full of possibility and opportunities for self-definition. Seize this opportunity to remain open, raw, and curious.

Open, Raw, Curious. That would be my two cents. But what would people at the end of life say? Those of you who have shared loved ones’ final days will have some ideas of the sorts of memories dying people cherish, as well as the ideas and activities that lose all significance over time. Given what I have observed over the last couple years of doing this research, here are the top five recommendations that I imagine people who are approaching the end of their lives might say to you who are just starting yours.

1) Be truthful and proud about your skills. You did not arrive at Grinnell College accidentally, and now you are leaving with more skills, ideas, and refined gifts. Be honest with yourself and with others about what you do well and what you know you need to improve upon. Surround yourself with people who also move in the world with integrity and whom you admire. This will provide you with a steady touchstone as you further refine and develop your abilities.

2) In friendship, focus on quality not quantity. If you have one person you can call when you need support or to have a good laugh, one good friend, count yourself lucky and care for that friendship during this transition. The old adage that the older you get the more valuable it becomes to know the people who knew you when you were young seems quite apt. Lifelong friendships, when you are lucky enough to build them, are invaluable.

3) Pursue newness and mystery. Keep a healthy dose of newness in your routines. Do you remember how you felt the first day you walked into New Student Orientation? Or your first class during your first year? Remember that feeling of being on edge? Butterflies in your stomach,
I’m sitting on a bench downtown, eating a Tropical Sno. “Miss Robinson! Hi Miss Robinson!” shouts a little voice from across the street. I’m walking to the park. “Hi Miss Robinson! Look at me!” someone calls out from the jungle gym. I’m sitting at a very small desk, checking worksheets. “Look at me!” someone calls out from the jungle gym. I’m sitting at a very small desk, checking worksheets. “Look at me!” someone calls out from the jungle gym.

“Hello! Miss Robinson! How are you?” asks a person half my size. Moments like these are now frequent throughout my daily life, reminding me that the connections I have made over the last four years have moved beyond the boundaries of campus and settled somewhere in the wider community. Consequently, I am not only a student at the college but also a student in first grade.

I began working at Fairview Elementary through the Federal Work Study Community Service Program. Of the many jobs I have held while at Grinnell, this one has been my favorite by far. A typical day at work for me might include helping students write journals, reading with them, doing some sight word testing, and grading math tests. On days when we have indoor recess I often end up being the “spitter” for a Twister tournament. I love working at the school in part because I love working with kids, but also because I feel at home in the classroom and have plans to become a teacher.

It feels a little funny to finally have a career path picked out. When I came to Grinnell, I was still pretty clueless about the type of job I would want after graduation but I knew that I wanted to major in sociology. When I got cut out of the Introduction to Sociology section at fall registration, I signed up for Education 101 instead. I kept taking education courses because the readings and discussions were engaging. For most of these courses, I was required to spend time in Grinnell schools doing research and observations. Being in the schools not only helped me to feel closer to the community, but it also gave me the chance to see what I was reading about in real life. My knowledge in the field of sociology developed alongside my knowledge of the schooling system and pedagogy. Connections arose between the work of Patricia Hill Collins and Gloria Ladson-Billings, Erving Goffman and Lisa Delpit, Karl Marx and Paulo Freire. Research methods were illuminated for me in education courses long before (and after) I took a sociological methods course. Over time I grew more comfortable as a sociologist, having been trained to look carefully at the things we see everyday, analyze social phenomena, and ask questions about macro and micro causes and effects. Grinnell area classrooms became my favorite places to exercise these skills.

Early on, I doubted myself. As I learned more about the gross inequities in American schools, the wide array of societal and individual challenges faced by students, and the total lack of respect experienced by many teachers, I began to understand just how difficult of a job teaching really was. I grew passionate about education issues, but remained apprehensive about going into the field.

It took the support of my professors and the teachers I worked with in the community to convince me that I could also be a teacher. My work with young students at Fairview Elementary School, Grinnell Middle School, Head Start, and the College Preschool solidified my confidence.

Many people may be surprised to find that critical thought, discussion, reflection, reasoning, and theorizing are possible even for our youngest students in school, if only they are supported in the further development of these skills and not discouraged when they engage in these ways. I know that to ensure success for my future students, I will have to learn ways to encourage the young sociologist that is bound to emerge in each of them. Though it will definitely be rewarding, it will also be very difficult, and I will probably experience uncertainty and ambivalence on a fairly regular basis. At those times, I will look to the wisdom of social scientists and educators that have inspired me, even (or perhaps especially) if they happen to be around six-years-old.

“Listening to a white male, the epitome of privilege, speak about gender, race, and feminism, was something that I had never heard before.”

Editor’s Note:

Lindsay Robinson graduated in May 2009, and she is currently serving with AmeriCorps in St. Louis as a literacy tutor and mentor at Hickey Elementary. Ultimately, Lindsay will return to graduate school and get a masters and certification in elementary education.

Every academic discipline has its celebrities. In sociology, Michael Kimmel, leading men’s studies and masculinity scholar, is one such star. Editor or author of over twenty books and anthologies, including his most recent work, Gayland: The Perilous World Where Boys Become Men (2008), Kimmel has appeared on numerous national television shows, radio programs, and college campuses. This past March, Kimmel added Grinnell College to his ever-growing list. While at Grinnell, “Miss mel signed copies of Gayland, spoke to Sociology and Gender and Women’s Studies classes, and gave an all-campus presentation to over 200 students, faculty, and community members.”

“Arts and Venus or Planet Earth: Women and Men in a New Millennium.”

In his humorous and engaging talk, Michael Kimmel entertained as well as the last four years evidenced by the title of his talk, one of the main topics of Kimmel’s presentation was a play on the famous book about the stark differences between men and women—Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus (written by John Gray, Harper-Collins, 1992). Kimmel enthusiastically claimed that men and women are actually far more similar than they are different, but by clinging to this false notion of difference, we impede our ability to work together toward gender equality. Instead of a battle of the sexes, Kimmel advocates for an alliance between the genders. What so few men understand, Kimmel explained, is that “if women win, men win because gender equality is just as good for men as it is for women.” Kimmel also addressed the fact that there are not many feminists who are men. Kimmel challenged men to not just affiliate themselves with the feminist movement but to seek to understand it while furthering its aim of gender equality.

Kimmel also discussed the changes in women’s lives and how they have affected men. In the last forty years, women have not only made gender visible, but they also have increased their involvement in the workforce and publicized the difficulties and rewards in balancing work and family. Women also propelled the sexual revolution, normalizing the belief in a female entitlement for women to gain true equality, Kimmel believes that this must change. Many Introduction to Sociology students were strongly impacted by Kimmel’s speech. As one student explained, “During his speech, chills ran up and down my back, and my friend confessed that she nervously bit her nails every time Kimmel cleverly addressed issues of importance to her.”

Other student said, “Hearing his theories and beliefs has opened my eyes to the importance of understanding gender roles in society and equalizing responsibilities not only in the workplace but also in the household.” One student was most moved by hearing a man talk about gender. “Listening to a white male, the epitome of privilege, speak about gender, race, and feminism, was something that I had never heard before,” this student said. Several students mentioned that Kimmel’s most powerful point was that “privilege is invisible to those who have it.” Kimmel argued that we often make discrimination visible while ignoring privilege. In other words, we talk about the fact that women are disadvantaged in the workplace but we do not acknowledge that this disadvantage is because men are privileged in the workplace. All in all, Kimmel’s visit was a resounding success. Not only did sociology students have the chance to meet a celebrity, but numerous students outside of the discipline were exposed to new ideas that they may have never otherwise considered. In true Grinnell style, the end of Kimmel’s talk was not the end of the discussion. Students are still talking about the impact Kimmel’s speech had on both their academic and personal lives. Kimmel would be proud.
What’s in an Identity?

by Alisha Saville ’09

I have an Asian parent and a Caucasian parent, but being “Asian American” has never been a big part of my identity. I have always felt proud to call myself an Asian American. I am Asian American not because of my appearance, but because of what I stand to refocus the Asian American community on campus. With Professor Leung’s help and student ideas, we are actively redefining the Asian American community. We wish him the best in his future endeavors and thank him for his wonderful contributions to our community.

Maxwell Leung, Visiting Professor

by Ruth Manski ’09

Maxwell Leung, or more fondly known as Max, was a visiting assistant professor for the Sociology Department and the American Studies Program during the 2008-2009 school year. Leung’s work that makes sense to you. If you are exhausted at the end of the day and still looking forward to the next, then you have found work that makes sense to you. Money and prestige may or may not accompany such work, but find work that makes use of your strengths, and satisfaction will likely follow.

5) Make peace with your body. Appreciate how your body facilitates all the things that you do: occupational, intellectual, emotional, and sensual. If you have a hobby that can do things, or even most of the things you need it to do, enjoy and celebrate that body. Perhaps it is our brains or intellects that bring us together at Grinnell for four years, but it is our bodies that make it possible for us to come together. So take good care of yours.

That’s it: be truthful about your skills, foster quality friendships, seek out new experiences, find work that makes sense, and make peace with your body. If you could transport you and your families and friends to the bedside of someone who wants to talk about what has mattered to them before their body gives out, these are the five things I imagine they would say to work that makes sense, and make peace with your body. If you could transport you and your families and friends to the bedside of someone who wants to talk about what has mattered to them before their body gives out, these are the five things I imagine they would say to yourself feeling stretched, then you’re in a good place.

electricity on your skin? Not knowing what would happen next? Bottle that, repeat it, seek it out. If you find yourself feeling stretched, then you’re in a good place.

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Craig Upright

Craig Upright (M.A., Princeton University) joined the Sociology Department in the fall of 2009. Hired as Professor Kent McClelland’s sabbatical replacement, he will teach Sociology 291 (Methods of Empirical Investigation) and Math 115 (Introduction to Statistics) in the spring term. He has introduced himself to prospective and current majors through the investigation of contemporary social movements (Sociology 240) and in a special topics course on “Food and Society.”

Both of these fall term courses coincide with his current research interests, in particular the role that cooperative grocery stores played in the development of the contemporary organic food industry. While WalMart is currently the largest single vendor of organic food in the United States, the emergence of these products within mainstream culture took more than three decades to complete. Several states in the Upper Midwest played a role in this large community of cooperative movements starting in the early 1970s, just as the desire for organically grown food gave rise to a new alternative infrastructure that helped solidify the market. A dispassionate observer could have predicted that both movements – those promoting organic food and those promoting local agriculture – would eventually collide. Craig spent several years as a chef and purchasing agent for several fine-dining restaurants in Minneapolis, and when he moved to St. Paul named “Motor Oil Industrial Coffee’s” next to an alternative art gallery, where punk- and alternative-rock bands played in the basement on weekends.

Craig chose sociology as the discipline in which he could most effectively teach undergraduates about the opportunities for learning about and engaging in their own cultures to pursue projects of social justice. Before coming to Grinnell, he taught at the University of St. Thomas and Hamline University in St. Paul. Beyond cooking (and eating), Craig enjoys reading, writing, a little archery, and riding his motorcycle exploring Iowa’s country roads. He believes that to throw a mean bowling ball, though often inaccurately placed, bowling ball and likes to play the occasional game of billiards.

Karla Erickson — With the support of a Harris Faculty Fellowship, Karla spent the 2008-09 academic year conducting fieldwork in local nursing homes and hospice organizations. She also took certified nursing assistant courses as part of her research for her ethnographic study of interactions between workers, residents, and their families in end of life facilities. Karla’s book based on her dissertation, *The Hungry Cowboy: Service and Community in a Neighborhood Restaurant*, was published in March 2009. In October, Karla attended the 2008-09 Academic Year in Teaching Sociology. Finally, with Professor Angela Onwuachi-Willig of University of Iowa, Karla has started a new edited anthology that examines what Kesho Scott calls “the habits of surviving” of faculty of color in law schools. The volume, entitled *Forebearance* and an article on the use of case studies in teaching about inequality, co-authored with Sharon Bird of ISU, will soon appear in *Teaching Sociology*. In October, Karla spent the 2008-09 Academic Year in Teaching Sociology. Finally, with Professor Angela Onwuachi-Willig of University of Iowa, Karla has started a new edited anthology that examines what Kesho Scott calls “the habits of surviving” of faculty of color in law schools. The volume, entitled *Forebearance*, will collect and analyze the experiences of faculty of color who survive, flourish, and receive tenure from one law school. In addition to this academic work, the leave year allowed Karla to pursue other passions: She ran a half marathon, visited her godson in Hawaii, went on a road trip with her room, and married her long-time partner, Matt Karsjat. After an excellent leave year, Karla is happy to be back in the classroom, teaching a Tutorial and a Social Theory course.

Chris Hunter was able to teach a tutorial in 2008-2009, again on community organizing, and once again greatly enjoyed it, despite the hard work the tutorial brings. Otherwise, Chris has been teaching his normal, and enjoyable, array of courses, including sociology 101 as part of a collection called *Cinematic Sociology, and an article on the use of case studies in teaching about inequality, co-authored with Sharon Bird of ISU, will soon appear in *Teaching Sociology*. Finally, with Professor Angela Onwuachi-Willig of University of Iowa, Karla has started a new edited anthology that examines what Kesho Scott calls “the habits of surviving” of faculty of color in law schools. The volume, entitled *Forebearance*, will collect and analyze the experiences of faculty of color who survive, flourish, and receive tenure from one law school. In addition to this academic work, the leave year allowed Karla to pursue other passions: She ran a half marathon, visited her godson in Hawaii, went on a road trip with her room, and married her long-time partner, Matt Karsjat. After an excellent leave year, Karla is happy to be back in the classroom, teaching a Tutorial and a Social Theory course.

David Cook-Martín just completed his second year at Grinnell College. If David had to describe this past year, he would say it was a time when there were three aspects: a time when he learned a great deal about all of the people and organizations that make Grinnell College a premier institution of higher education. David thinks this helped him become a better adviser. He also says, “Fantastic colleagues and generous students shaped my thinking about effective pedagogies in and outside the classroom.” Students and faculty committees pushed me to think about the future of Grinnell and the ways I can contribute to it as a new citizen.” David made good progress on a couple of articles, a chapter, a book, and on his main research project related to immigration. In the course of working with several students on various research projects (see article on MAPS), David notes that he has gained greater insight into his vocation as a teacher-colleague. He says he has learned from and was inspired by students’ triumphs and personal challenges. David concludes by saying “If I can learn as much this year as I did last, I will be one born out, but satisfied sociologist!”

Krista Bywater

Krista Bywater is the 2009-2011 Andrew Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow in Sociology at Grinnell College. She is enjoying teaching *Sociology of Global Development,* and she will instruct a course on environmental sociology and globalization in the spring semester. Krista recently obtained her doctoral degree from the University of California, Santa Barbara. Her dissertation, “*Water for Life, Not for Profit:* Globalization, Development, and Water Struggles in India” examined four of the most well-known anti-privatization water conflicts in India. The highest profile water struggles that she analyzed are the social movements against the Coca-Cola Corporation in Kerala and Uttar Pradesh. These movements were launched to contest the high-profile water conflicts because access to clean water is fundamental to development and improving the quality of people’s lives. While conducting her dissertation fieldwork in India for eight months in 2006 and 2007, Krista interviewed more than a hundred protesters, local residents, government officials, employees of transnational corporations, community organizers, scholars, and Coke employees. Her work considers the diverse perspectives and contributes to scholarship on the global water crisis, environmental movements, and sustainable development. Having presented her research findings at numerous conferences, Krista is editing her dissertation into several journal articles. She also is looking forward to applying her research here at Grinnell as she works with GSPAN, a student group at the College, which is beginning its Anti-Coke Campaign!

More broadly, Krista’s teaching and research interests include qualitative methods, theory, environmental sociology, social change, and global environmental governance. She is passionate about helping students obtain the knowledge, tools, and motivation they need to create a world in which they want to live. Before coming to Grinnell, Krista taught courses at the University of California, Santa Barbara including "Qualitative Research Methods," "Sociology of Education," and "Sociology of Mass Media." She also taught "Introduction to Sociology" as the 2008-2009 Dissertation Fellow at Skidmore College in New York. Besides her enthusiasm for teaching, Krista loves to travel. She grew up on the small Caribbean island of Antigua and has traveled throughout Europe, India, Central America, and the West Indies. Once sum every she even made it to Reykjavik, Iceland. She has lived in the South and in the West Coast and East Coast areas of the United States. After all of her adventures, Krista is preparing for her first winter in the Midwest.
In light of prevailing budgetary concerns, the Sociology Department was extremely fortunate to offer nine students the opportunity to undertake Mentored Advanced Projects (MAPs) for 10 weeks over the summer. Professors Chris Hunter, Karla Erickson, and David Cook-Martin advised two, three, and four students respectively on research topics closely related to their personal research interests and professional endeavors. Virginia Anderson, Nicole Baker, and Macaula Holmes, all worked with Professor Erickson on issues surrounding End of Life Care, an ongoing project for Professor Erickson that began more than two summers ago. In addition to reviewing literature and ethnographies, students worked with the residents of Mayflower Homes, an assisted living and skilled care facility in Grinnell volunteering to get a sense of some of the realities of America’s aging population. “My favorite part of the MAP thus far has been volunteering and meeting residents at the Mayflower, said Anderson, who hopes to gain more experience as a researcher as well as get to know more residents. “Being able to interact with the residents during fun activities like crafts and ice cream socials both brightens my day and hopefully adds to theirs.”

Holmes also has enjoyed working with the residents but in terms of her specific research question, she hopes she will better understand the “organizational aspects,” the practical side, of preparing for care at the end stages of life. “The topic of this MAP deals with recent material, especially the information about the new federal stimulus package. With the recent nature of the material, it has been a little frustrating but somewhat encouraging to watch the American debate on healthcare from the perspective of England, where every aspect of the National Health Service is run, but everyone agrees that “socialized” medicine in the form of the NHS is a good thing.

This fall I’m once again spending a semester in London as a professor for the Grinnell-in-London Program. The topic of my class, as in my previous semesters in London, has been the British welfare state, and we have been finding it interesting but somewhat discouraging to watch the American debate on healthcare from the perspective of England, where people may grumble about how the National Health Service is run, but everyone agrees that “socialized” medicine in the form of the NHS is a good thing.

The convention center swarmed with sociologists and the air was full of intellectual energy. As a recent college graduate, I was very intimidated. People knew each other, they had published their latest publications, sounded sharp. Seeing my nametag, I had a few people approach me. “My friend went to China with Susan Ferguson,” “Karla Erickson got me through our American Politics classes!” I realized I was representing Grinnell and not just myself.

That day I saw presentations on such topics as Black middle class art collectors, the use of public space by bike messengers, and how race influences cultural views of eating disorders and obesity. These sessions affirmed my interest in sociology. One of the things I love about sociology is the wide variety of people it attracts and how their myriad viewpoints come across in their work. I saw young people, men and women of color, a woman with pink hair!

Saturday morning was my moment of truth. The night before I realized that my paper session wasn’t a student panel like I had thought but the real thing; I was going to share a podium with professionals! With this realization came a stomach ache of nerves. The room was only dotted with people, maybe 20 to 30. But they all knew their stuff; all were interested in urban sociology. I talked for about 15 minutes and felt triumphant as I sat down and breathed a sigh of relief. It was a thrill to shake peoples’ hands and hear their encouragement. Dr. Orum was incredibly supportive and told me to “keep going” with my studies. After the academic whirlwind weekend, I was emotionally and physically exhausted. However, it was exciting to be a sociologist outside the Grinnell sphere and a great honor to mingle among hundreds of other academics from around the world. I left the conference exhilarated about what sociologists are studying and the possibilities for the future.

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oppression that affects all communities. Interning at the organization I had the opportunity to help plan the National Gathering of GSA Networks, develop curriculum and action guides for the play Tru Loved, and experience the inner workings of an LGBT non-profit. This internship furthered my sociology education by allowing me to apply sociological theory and practice to a job in which I furthered my learning of privilege and oppression in its many manifestations. I learned about multi-issue political organizing on a state wide and national scale while fighting on the front lines for LGBT equality. Last summer I had a chance to explore a potential career path in the non-profit world and take my political skills I learned in San Francisco back to organize here on campus.

Allison Brinkhorst - This past summer, I spent 6 weeks shadowing case managers of foster kids in St. Louis City and St. Charles County, Missouri. Unlike most case managers, who work directly for the state, these individuals work for Youth In Need (YIN), a non-profit that was contracted by the state of Missouri to do this work. I went through professional training along with new YIN employees, and then I was able to shadow case managers on foster home visits, family support team meetings, warrant applications for children claiming abuse, supervised visits of foster kids with their biological family, court hearings, legal staffings, emergency recruitment [of adoptive families] meetings, and residential treatment visits. I was occasionally able to help out with paperwork and with calling residential facilities to find placements for specific foster kids. However, I learned the most by talking to case managers while enroute to appointments and hanging out with foster kids.

The basis of all YIN work is the strength-based philosophy: recognizing and fostering the strengths that an individual or family in need already has or does. The foster care case managers in particular, therefore, spent a surprising amount of their time helping to strengthen the biological families of the children in their care. Depending on the court order, these family members were provided bus passes to go to parenting classes, supervised visits with their children twice a month, and even assistance with affording adequate housing. This work brought me into contact with biological family members trying to cope with schizophrenia, intimate partner violence, stark poverty, drug addiction, etc., all of which provided me with experience and knowledge that will aid me in future social work positions. Finally, I definitely felt that these experiences gave life to the complexities of families and the many definitions of “family” that we studied in Sociology of the Family with Susan Ferguson last year.

Charisma Montfort - Last summer I had the opportunity to work at The National Trust for Historic Preservation in the Office of Diversity Initiatives. The Trust focuses on revitalizing communities and preserving places that matter. I was given two main objectives: 1) to help launch the diversity website page, and 2) to help establish a rubric for determining Diversity Scholars for the National Preservation Conference. These tasks changed when I realized that creating this home page would involve revamping many of the pages that already existed. I did help to redefine diversity at the Trust. For example, diversity is not just limited to African Americans, women, Latinos, and LGBT communities. I thought of accessibility. I did not understand why there was no information on the mandate to make many of the historic houses and museums wheelchair accessible. Also, the National Trust for Historic Preservation owns 29 historic sites, many with interconnected and multi-racial histories. I found that only some racial-ethnic stories were being told. I researched and changed the current histories so that they fully told the stories of all occupants in the buildings.

Scholarships and Awards

In 2002, the Sociology Department created two new awards to recognize the work of sociology majors.

The Judith Louise McKim Sociology Scholarship is an endowed scholarship that is awarded yearly to a top junior or senior sociology major. The scholarship may be awarded to one person or split between two candidates. The criteria for the award include: 1) the student has demonstrated excellence in course work at the College generally and in sociology in particular; 2) the student may have financial need; 3) the student has demonstrated a commitment to the sociological perspective and to social justice; and 4) the student has demonstrated leadership abilities either within the department or on campus. Beginning in 2003, the Sociology Department has awarded this scholarship to 11 outstanding sociology majors:

2003-2004 Allison Barrett
2004-2005 Keli Campbell and Nova McGiffert
2005-2006 Jenny Dale and Liliana Renteria
2006-2007 Rachel Allison and Sollie Flora
2007-2008 Christopher Neubert and Madison Van Oort
2008-2009 Latona Giwa and Mark Root-Wiley

The Sociology Book Award also was created in 2002 using the Designated Funds given to the Department by alumni and friends. This award is given annually to the sociology junior who has the highest G.P.A. The $100.00 gift certificate from the College Bookstore is used to help defray the costs of books. The winners of this award include:

2003-2004 Keli Campbell
2004-2005 Rose Wilson
2005-2006 Sollie Flora
2006-2007 Katrina Brooks
2007-2008 Mark Root-Wiley
2008-2009 Alyssa Penner

The Sociology Department is proud of these students' achievements, and we thank all alumni who have given to the Designated Fund in Sociology.

Charisma Montfort - Last summer I had the opportunity to work at The National Trust for Historic Preservation in the Office of Diversity Initiatives. The Trust focuses on revitalizing communities and preserving places that matter. I was given two main objectives: 1) to help launch the diversity website page, and 2) to help establish a rubric for determining Diversity Scholars for the National Preservation Conference. These tasks changed when I realized that creating this home page would involve revamping many of the pages that already existed. I did help to redefine diversity at the Trust. For example, diversity is not just limited to African Americans, women, Latinos, and LGBT communities. I thought of accessibility. I did not understand why there was no information on the mandate to make many of the historic houses and museums wheelchair accessible. Also, the National Trust for Historic Preservation owns 29 historic sites, many with interconnected and multi-racial histories. I found that only some racial-ethnic stories were being told. I researched and changed the current histories so that they fully told the stories of all occupants in the buildings.

Karla Erickson's new book: The Hungry Cowboy

Service and Community in a Neighborhood Restaurant
(University Press of Mississippi, 2009)

The Hungry Cowboy offers a behind-the-scenes look at the dynamics of social class, race, and economics in a suburban eatery. Based on two years of fieldwork, Erickson weaves together narratives from servers, customers, and managers to convey how people make contact and build on fleeting exchanges to form more intimate relationships in a service society. Erickson reveals how workers, customers, and managers co-produce a friendly, “homey” ambience. Workers take pride in the care and concern they invest in a job that is often diminished, seeing their work as one way to warm up the marketplace.

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Alumni Updates by Nichole Baker ’10

Eric Jacobson ’06 received his MBA from the University of Chicago and then worked as a hospital administrator until retiring in 1996. A cancer survivor, Eric lives in Michigan and winters in Florida.

Sandra Stein ’99 is the CEO of the NYC Leadership Academy, an organization that prepares and supports innovative school leaders who will, in turn, empower teachers, students, and parents to direct efforts to improve student learning in some of New York City’s most challenging schools. Before joining the Leadership Academy, Sandra was an Associate Professor at Baruch College, School of Public Affairs and founding director of its Aspiring Leaders Program (ALPs), which recruits and prepares educators to become New York City public school principals. She has written two books on the issue of preparing the nation’s educational leaders, which have received wide-spread critical acclaim. Sandra received her two M.A. degrees in Political Science and in International and Comparative Education and her Ph.D. in Education Administration and Policy Analysis from Stanford University.

Sarah (Clatanoff) Williams ’89, her husband, and daughter live in Ainsworth, Nebraska, where Sarah completed her 16th year as an elementary school principal for the Ainsworth Community Schools. She is currently working on attaining her Educational Specialist’s Degree, which will allow her to become a superintendent of schools. Sarah’s husband, Brian, farms and ranches with his family. They raise Black Angus cattle on a mid-size ranch and farm about 500 acres of corn and soybeans.

Anthony Weeks ’91. In the fall of 2008, after pursuing careers in social work and illustration/information design and living in both San Francisco and New York, Anthony began the MFA Documentary Film and Video program at Stanford University. Anthony writes, “It’s one of the few MFA programs in the country to focus on documentary media, and it’s growing. I was taking courses at the same time and learned that they had a program.”

Elena Bernal ’94 After receiving a master’s in Educational Administration and Foundations from Illinois State University in 1996 and a Ph.D. in Educational Policy Studies at Pennsylvania State University, she served as director of institutional research at Bryn Mawr College. Elena then returned to Grinnell College, where she is the campus liaison for the Posse partnership, served as interim vice-president of student affairs, and directed a campus assessment project. She was recently appointed Vice-President for Diversity and Achievement at Grinnell College, where she supervises the Office of Institutional Research and collaboratively supervises staff whose functions promote and support diversity at Grinnell.

Carla Parry ’94 received her Ph.D. in Social Work and Sociology at the University of Michigan. She currently is an Assistant Professor of Medicine at the University of Colorado-Denver, School of Medicine in the Division of Health Care Policy and Research. Her job is very interdisciplinary and includes researching quality of life, psychosocial growth, and service needs in adult Leukemia patients. In addition to completing this research and publishing the resulting papers, Carly also is the curriculum lead for a project that designs applied social work curricula for corporate clients and then trains the trainers. Two summers ago, she was a presenter and facilitator at the National Institutes of Health Summer Institute. She feels that over the years she has slowly shifted her focus from sociology to medicine and she is happy with this shift.

Gretchen Borsche Wilson ’94 has recently moved to Midland, Texas from Nigeria with her husband. Molly Dingel ’98 recently moved from Fargo, North Dakota to Rochester, Minnesota with her husband, a fellow Grinnellian (James Rees ’97), and two young sons. Molly accepted a new position in Higher Education as the Manager of Corporate Programs at the University of Minnesota-Rochester.

Sarah Stavegie ’98 In December of 2008, Sarah was a Ph.D. candidate in sociology and demography at the University of California, Berkeley. In addition to completing fieldwork in Bosnia and Rwanda, Sarah assisted with the campus’s Human Rights Center with a Guatemalan research project which focused on the cumulative effects imprisonment on former detainees. This project received national press and was released as a book in 2009. After graduation, Sarah hopes to receive a post-doctoral fellowship working on genocide at the University of Sussex or working with the RWJ Health and Society post-doc at University of Pennsylvania.

Stephanie Jarro ’99 In addition to submitting articles to various academic journals, Stephanie is currently completing her dissertation for her Doctorate of Sociology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Stephanie’s dissertation concerns the dynamics involved in the choice to have an abortion. It builds on her masters’ thesis and asks two questions: 1) What type of pairings are most likely to produce an abortion? 2) What is the role of men’s preferences in a woman’s decision to have an abortion? She is using data from the National Survey of Family Growth.

Delphia Shanks ’01 is the Community Development Director at the Community Action Partnership of Greater St. Joseph, Missouri. Before joining CAP, Delphia was a Teach for America teacher in the Baton Rouge Public School System, 2002-2004, and the Director of The Galaxy Youth Center, Grinnell, 2001-2002, as part of the Grinnell Corps program. Delphia is speaking on campus this fall as a Wilson Practitioner, talking about the ups and downs of her work life since Grinnell, and what she has learned.

Jessica Halverson ’02 is Manager of Development Programs at Ceres, a nonprofit organization. Ceres (pronounced “series”) is a national network of investors, environmental organizations, and other public interest groups working with companies and investors to address sustainability challenges such as global climate change. Jess is responsible for cultivation and stewardship of individual donors, and she manages the design and roll-out of special development projects. Jess earned an MBA from Boston University, where she completed dual concentrations in Public and Nonprofit Management and Strategy and Business Analysis. She has a background in nonprofit consulting, communications, and development. She most recently worked for the Melville Charitable Trust to build the Partnership to End Long-Term Homelessness (PETAH), a funder network of corporate and foundation grantmakers committed to ending homelessness in the United States. Jess is giving a lecture on her work with Ceres on campus this fall as a Wilson Practitioner.


Megan Beanam Carlson ’03 After marrying long-term partner (Zach Carlson, ’03) in 2007, Megan graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Madison Law School in 2008 with various awards for her service to minority populations. Megan currently is a Staff Attorney for the California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation. She works alongside migrant farm workers to educate them about their legal rights, and she organizes, advocates, and represents migrant workers in lawsuits.

Kat Jones ’03 married another Grinnellian (Evan Torner ’04) in December of 2007, and in December of 2008, she completed her comprehensive research paper on the ideal romantic relationships of Evangelical Christian women. She is conducting research for her dissertation, which studies different groups that promote abstinence until marriage.

Amanda Perry ’03 Since graduation, Amanda has taught middle school math at an Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound school in Fort Collins, Colorado. In addition to teaching, she led service learning and week-long adventure camping immersion experiences and generally tried to make middle school more humane. No longer teaching, Amanda started graduate school for a masters in Community Development at the University of California, Davis in the fall of 2009.

Jill Peterson ’03 married Kevin Heinze in July, 2009 and their wedding video of them dancing down the aisle became a YouTube sensation. They were interviewed on the Today Show on July 25, 2009. Jill and Kevin are using the global attention to help raise money for domestic violence. If you would like to see the video or the number of Grinnellians in the wedding party, or donate to the charity for domestic violence, go to http://www.jkweddingsdance.com. When not becoming a YouTube sensation, Jill is a graduate student in a Ph.D. program in Psychology and Social Behavior at the University of California, Irvine.

Lindsay White ’04 Since graduating, Lindsay has pursued a career in women’s health and completed her masters of nursing degree. She currently is a Family Nurse Practitioner and Women’s Health Coordinator at the Codman Square Health Center in Massachusetts.

Abigail Hagel ’06 recently moved from Seattle to Minneapolis. After seemingly endless negotiations with a variety of graduate schools, including the University of Washington and the University of Massachusetts, Abbi decided to pursue the Ph.D. program in sociology at the University of Minneapolis. After seemingly endless negotiations with a variety of graduate schools, including the University of Washington and the University of Massachusetts, Abby decided to pursue the Ph.D. program in sociology at the University of California, Berkeley until 2007. Since that time, she has been a Visiting Scholar at Stanford University and the University of California, Berkeley, where she has conducted research. She is currently a research assistant at the University of California, Berkeley, where she is completing her dissertation. Abby’s dissertation is entitled “The Dynamics of Women’s Access to Abortion: A Qualitative Study of Women’s Experiences.”

(Continued on page 13)
Alumni Updates, continued
of Minnesota because they better catered to her interests and offered her a comprehensive funding package.

Jasmine Brewer '07 is currently living in Los Angeles where she is Lead Education Advisor for Para Los Ninos Youth Development Services Department, an organization that services youth in foster care by providing tutorial services, independent living skill services, and mentoring services. Jasmine conducts in-house educational assessments, maintains the referral database, and serves as the main contact person for the department. In addition to this full-time job, she also is pursuing a Masters in Educational Psychology and a School Psychology Credential at California State University, Long Beach.

Sollie Flora '07 is currently in law school at the University of Michigan where she dedicates a lot of time to working on cases for the Michigan Innocence Clinic, a group that tries to get the convictions reversed of people who have been wrongfully convicted. Last summer, Sollie worked in Chicago for Winston & Strawn, a large national law firm.

Jenny Weber '07 currently is living in St. Louis and working for Teach for America, where she was offered a full-time position handling written communication with corporate and foundation donors and researching new funding possibilities.

Hannah Hakim '08 has just begun her masters of social work program at New York University. NYU was her top choice, and she was thrilled to get in and enjoys living in the city.

Alexandra Kossoy '08 joined the Grinnell Corps after graduating from Grinnell and taught children in Greece. She currently is enrolled at Rocky Vista University, a DO school in Denver, Colorado. She specifically wants to focus on multiculturalism, spirituality, and non-Western forms of medicine.

Madison Van Oort '08 After receiving a great fellowship that ensures full tuition reimbursement, health insurance, a stipend, and guaranteed assistantships, Madison is pursuing a Ph.D. in sociology at the University of Minnesota.

Lindsay McKenzie Young '08 Recently married, Lindsay is currently working with the Kansas City Local Investment Commission as the Site Coordinator of the Caring Community Schools in the Hickman Mills School District in Kansas City. This non-profit organization serves low income areas by facilitating a neighborhood-based decision-making process, which leads to the restructuring of existing services to better benefit the neighborhood families. While she started doing mostly human resources and payroll things at this organization, she is excited to begin coordinating before and after school programs developed using community input.

Yoji Konno '09 is currently in St. Louis and working for Teach for America, where she was offered a full-time position handling written communication with corporate and foundation donors and researching new funding possibilities.

The Self Study/External Review
During 2008-2009, the Sociology Department conducted its 10-year Self Study/External Review. The last Self Study was done in 1997-1998 and much has changed in the department since that time. Many of you may have responded to the Sociology Alumni Survey that was sent out last fall by the College to garner feedback on the department.

Chair's Corner
by Susan Ferguson
Greetings alumni and friends of Grinnell's Sociology Department! My good intentions were to get this newsletter mailed out in early summer, but as you will see, these past 18 months have been incredibly busy for the department. In this writing, I want to update you on some of the happenings in Sociology since the last newsletter in Summer, 2008.

Changes in Personnel
During the last two years, we have conducted several searches for temporary and permanent positions in the Department. In this newsletter we highlight some of the new faculty, including Maxwell Leung, visiting professor in 2008-2009, Craig Upright, visiting professor in 2009-2010, and Krista Bywater, our Mellon Post-Doctoral Fellow in Sociology for 2009-2011. The Department has been greatly enriched by the contributions of these faculty. Also note that some of our long-time colleagues, Ken McCliland, is going on SFS (Senior Faculty Status) beginning in 2010, so the Department is currently conducting a tenure-track search for his replacement.

Alumni Survey Occupation Results
The 62 alumni who responded to the Sociology Alumni Survey (graduated between 1994 and 2008) describe a total of 57 jobs that they hold or have recently held. Of these jobs, 21—more than a third of the total—are in the nonprofit sector, and another 15—more than a quarter—are in the education sector, most often in elementary and secondary education. Another nine jobs are in the business sector, with six respondents indicating that they are self-employed and one listing a corporate law firm as place of employment. The health care sector is represented by six jobs and government and politics by six jobs. Positions reported with the nonprofit sector include three social workers; two jobs each in case management, development, grant writing, human resources, and training; and one attorney, a family advocate, a housing specialist, a labor organizer, a program director of a Community Action Project, a site director, and a volunteer. In the education sector, there were a total of nine teaching positions reported as well as positions in education research, a neuroscience curriculum designer and lab technician, a school counselor, a speech pathologist, and a supervisor of student teachers. Positions in the business and self-employment sector included two attorneys, a choreographer/yoga teacher, a grocery store clerk, a sales representative, a tutor for computers, a wine exporter, and a writer. Four of the six jobs reported in the health care sector were in research; another was in operations, and one in occupational therapy. In the government sector, there were two political campaign workers, a grant writer/office administrator, and research specialist, a social worker, and a VISTA volunteer. Ten of the 62 respondents reported being currently enrolled in graduate school, with six reporting their only occupation as graduate student or Ph.D. student.

The primary finding of the review is that the Sociology Department is a strong and committed undergraduate program that has much to celebrate in terms of the growth of our curriculum and of our majors. The External Reviewers state in their report, “The Department is justly praised for its excellent teaching, solid undergraduate program, and contributions to the Grinnell College Community.” The reviewers also state that the current sociology curriculum is robust in providing “… sociology majors with a very solid set of experiences and skills that are critical to a strong liberal arts education.” The external reviewers think the major serves students well, including the high number of sociology majors who go on to graduate school in sociology and in professional programs. During the review, the Department also identified curricular areas where we would like to improve, including strengthening our theory and research methods training. In brief, let me highlight for you some of the research findings from our Self Study:

—The Department has grown from graduating an average of 9.5 seniors per year prior to 1995 to an average of 25 seniors per year. In 2008, the graduating class contained 36 sociology majors.

—The Department attracts and creates a positive learning environment for women, students of color, queer students, and students from other diverse backgrounds. Between 1988 and 2008, the Department had 364 majors, and 81.6% of them were women, and more than 22% of them identified as domestic students of color or as foreign nationals.

—The Department is committed to mentoring students in independent research. Since 1992, the Sociology faculty have supervised over 123 independent studies, guided readings, or advanced research projects with our students.

—The Department is committed to applied learning. Since 2000, over 80 majors have worked at internships across Iowa and the nation.

—The Department is committed to off-campus study. Between 1998-2008, 115 sociology majors (just over 50 percent of our graduates during that time frame) went off-campus during their junior year.

The Department News...
Let Us Know What You Are Doing Now

Send to: Susan Ferguson, Department of Sociology, Grinnell College, Grinnell, IA 50112-1690, or e-mail to: fergusos@grinnell.edu

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Other News: ____________________________________________

(Please attach sheets if you need more room)

* Visit Grinnell Sociology Department website at http://www.grinnell.edu/academic/sociology/

Our newsletters are available online on the Sociology Department website. By submitting your information, you give permission for this information to be published accordingly. Please note this when submitting your entry for this newsletter.