I was thrilled to be appointed Chair of the Department of Women’s Studies in July 2009 after our former Chair, Diana Scully, retired. Diana did so much for the program including assuring its place in the university by achieving full department status. Now that we have it, we have begun a number of initiatives that we believe will increase our enrollment and our status in the university community. First, a little history...

With Diana’s retirement looming, and no clear replacement in sight, the Dean’s office convened a fairly large and very representative group of professors from the College of Humanities and Sciences, led by Dr. Karen Rader, to develop a plan for the Department. The resulting plan includes a number of initiatives that we believe will increase our enrollment and our status in the university community. First, a little history...

Another initiative in the planning document was developing a graduate program in women’s studies. We prepared an application for a Post-Baccalaureate Certificate in Gender, Sexuality and Women’s Studies that consists of five courses, three core courses and two electives. The Certificate has also been unanimously approved by the College’s and University’s graduate academic committees and will follow the same general route as the name change. It too, should be available for enrollment by Spring 2011. It is our goal to begin planning a master’s and doctoral program in Gender, Sexuality and Women’s Studies during the coming summer months. These ambitious goals will take longer to bring about than those described above, but are well worth the effort.

In the summer 2009, the Department moved from 1000 W. Franklin to 915 W. Franklin (Starke House). Although our quarters are a bit smaller, the configuration is interesting and we’re enjoying the new space.

We applied for HTEEF funds and now have a computer projection system in the conference room that enables us to teach some classes in our building. We have applied to have WIFI installed in the building but are not likely to hear the results of that request until the fall.

It is our goal to make our space attractive to our students, encouraging them to come by, hang out, and study here. The space is also amenable to art...
shows and we’ve had three so far. Faculty member Liz Canfield, describes the shows in greater detail in this newsletter.

We now have about 30 valued affiliate faculty who teach cross-listed courses for us. We are encouraging these colleagues to become a more active part of our department by helping with curriculum planning, and presenting their research at monthly colloquia sponsored by the Department. We also have planned a retreat for faculty at which we will discuss elements of feminist pedagogy and the feminist classroom.

We are graduating fourteen women’s studies majors this May—a large group, indeed. We congratulate them on this achievement and hope each will keep in touch, telling us about the milestones they achieve in their lives.

Plans for next year include a study abroad trip that includes an opportunity to become involved in a project in the host country; a continuing review of the curriculum and the department’s mission statement, goals and objectives; greater involvement with the Richmond community both as a service opportunity and as a means of developing new internship for our students and employment options for our graduates.

We encourage all of our students, alumni, faculty and friends to visit us in person or on our Facebook page. We always appreciate the opportunity to talk about our work and yours.

We wish everyone a lovely summer and will see many of you again in the fall.

-Janet Hutchinson

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Most of my life has been focused on health, even though it has never been my intention to become so passionate about it. I really had no choice. I grew up with severe asthma in a very low-income family so whether or not I wanted to know about health care, it was not something I could avoid.

As a child, it was not an unfamiliar experience to be rushed to the hospital; it was just as familiar as a trip to the beach or my grandmothers house. My asthma was so severe and was triggered by so many unknown environmental elements that no one knew how to control all of my flare-ups. Once I would get to the hospital, I would have to take unlimited amounts of antibiotics, corticosteroids, shots and pain killers in order to regain my ability to breathe again. It was a very traumatic experience and it happened often, I wasn’t allowed to be outside with other kids or play sports. I felt deprived from life and I also felt like all these medications were actually making me worse than better.

As I got older I started to take more of an interest in the development of medications for asthma and found that there still isn’t very much information about it at all. I realized that many people, who have suffered like me, are still suffering because of the numerous side-effects of all the medications they had to take just to stay alive. People suffer from a range of symptoms like: back pain, extreme allergies, stomach ulcers, vaginal infections, chronic stomach pains, and fluctuation with weight, migraines and many more. This prompted me to begin my research on more natural methods of treating asthmatic patients. I learned that Traditional Chinese Medicine has been proven to significantly decrease asthmatic symptoms in men, women and children and has absolutely no side-effects.

Ever since this discovery, I have made it my goal to find a median within the western idea of medicine and the eastern holistic view of medicine as well. I will use this trip to China to learn the language fluently and become familiar with the culture to learn as much as I can about their ideas on health. In the future I would like to open a clinic specifically for women that treats a broad spectrum of health issues in the most healthy way possible with the least amount of side-effects.

-Keyana
UPDATE FROM ASSISTANT PROFESSOR LIZ CANFIELD

It is such a pleasure to work with Women’s Studies! I started here in August of 2009, coming from the University College. I’ve taught courses for Women’s Studies for a number of years now, which I feel fortunate to have been able to do. My current position, in addition to teaching, includes undergraduate advising, and my primary goal this year has been to grow our number of majors/minors, which has been highly successful!

We convened a Women’s Studies Student Advisory Board last Fall, which has been crucial in helping us recruit new majors and focus our priorities for the Department. Our Advisory Board has helped us rename our department (see the Chair’s letter for details) and design our graduate certificate program. This group of students has also embraced their creativity and has created a number of zines and pamphlets that highlight the work of our Department. Come by our office and pick one up!

Our Advisory Board was also central to our organizing effort for our part of the Suffrage March and celebration that coincided with the dedication of the Crenshaw House. This event was November 20th, the centennial anniversary of the founding of the Equal Suffrage League, which took place at the home of Anne Clay Crenshaw at 919 W. Franklin St. This event was co-sponsored by the League of Women Voters, the VCU Libraries, the College of Humanities and Sciences, and our department. We made quite a spectacle, dressed in early 20th century garb and sporting yellow sashes. Over 100 people joined us in the march and dedication, where Women’s Studies students read suffragette speeches, and Dr. Monica Rao and VCU Rector Panny Rhodes spoke. Anne Crenshaw’s granddaughters, Sally Clay Witt and Anne Warfield Crenshaw Tuesdale were there to celebrate with us, and they did the official honor of unveiling the new sign in front of the house. It was quite a moment for us!

Women’s Studies students Cassandra Mulheron and Mary Silcox have worked diligently with me to host art exhibits in our building at 915 W. Franklin Street. We have had two openings so far. The first show opened in September, which was a group student and community member show that celebrated identity and gender. This show featured work by Laura Browder and Sascha Pflaeging from their “When Janey Comes Marching Home” collaboration, which is a multimedia installation of portraits and oral history narratives of female Iraq War veterans and enlisted women. Our second show opened at the start of the Spring 2010 semester, and featured work by students and community members around issues of gender, sexuality, and politics. Our summer show will feature photo-documentary work by a number of student and community photographers, and the theme is gender identity and community activism. We are lucky to have a space that is amenable to showing art and we are proud to feature such quality work by VCU students, faculty, and community members. If you are interested in showing your work in our space, please contact me.

Our department has also reached out to support student groups and clubs that promote social justice work and/or work in the arts. We have been working with leadership from these VCU student groups and the VCU Monroe Campus SGA to collaborate on initiatives that promote gender justice, combat gender violence, and work to end discrimination based on race, class, sexuality, gender or ability. We collaborated with the Women’s Project from TheaterVCU to produce “The Vagina Monologues” this year, and we co-sponsored a number of lectures and events, including Michael Kimmel’s lecture from his latest book, Guyland, which explores hegemonic masculinity among teens and young men.

We also had an active presence at VCU SAVES sponsored events like The Clothesline Project and Take Back the Night, two events that are highly important to us. I spoke at VCU VOX’s Sex Talk Live event this spring, and we’ve worked with VOX to promote their visibility on campus.

We are one of two home departments (the other being English) for a student journal, Amendment. We are intensely proud of the work that Amendment editors and staff put into the journal every year, and also proud of the student work featured there. You can find free copies of Amendment in our office, the English Department office, the Student Media Center, and other various locations around campus.

We are also proud to host Decibel, a new student FSA (feminist/soldier alliance), which meets in our department on Tuesday nights at 7 p.m. Decibel is working on raising awareness about issues of gender violence and sexual assault in the military, activism around “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” legislation, participating in global women’s rights movements, and with building opportunities for women veterans and enlisted women.

As the faculty advisor for Queer Action, I am proud of the work that they’ve done, organizing other students and community members to be activist around issues of discrimination based on gender and sexuality. QA has also sponsored national acts like the Salt Lines Tour, and held a Take Back Prom event this spring. I could go on and on about what our student groups are doing, but I’ll let them tell you about it themselves in the student group update section of this newsletter.

We feel very strongly about our students being able to engage in community and artistic work, as well as rigorous academic work, and this year has been testimony to our passion. Our students continue to inspire, delight, and amaze us. Our colleagues across the campus have been incredibly supportive, showing up for our events, helping us plan our curriculum and direction for the future, and promoting our department as a dynamic place for students to study, collaborate, and get active. Being able to work with other departments, administrators, faculty, and students has been at the core of our success this year, and we look forward to building even stronger ties with them in the years to come. As an undergraduate advisor, it has been so heartening to be able to place students in courses with such excellent faculty and to direct them to student groups that pique their interests and fulfill their academic, artistic, and activist needs.

If you have any questions about anything you’ve read about, or if you want to become more involved with Women’s Studies, please don’t hesitate to contact me via email at ercanfield@vcu.edu or by phone (804-828-8725).

-Liz
Sara Tandy Virginia Commonwealth University  
Department of Women’s Studies Class of 2005

I relocated to Philadelphia in 2007, and have since been working with Medical Students for Choice (MSFC).

MSFC is a non-profit organization with a mission to ‘create tomorrow’s abortion providers and pro-choice physicians’ by improving the standards of reproductive health medical education.

My Women’s Studies education at VCU not only made me fall in love with feminist theory, it also made me passionate to devote my career to the fight for reproductive justice and equal rights for all.

Regards,

-Sara Tandy

Ashmi Doshi, Virginia Commonwealth University  
Department of Women’s Studies  
Class of 2005

I graduated from VCU in 2005, and began medical school at the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF) that fall. I took a year off to do research in Women’s Health, publishing an abstract in the Journal of Women’s Health (Oct 2008) and presenting my research at the 2008 NIH Office of Women’s Health Research Symposium. I am graduating from Medical School this May, and will begin residency in Emergency Medicine at UCLA in June. Throughout undergrad and medical school, I have been passionate about women’s health issues, and plan to continue to lobby for these issues throughout my future career.

-Ashmi Doshi

Jessie Jacobsen Wah, Virginia Commonwealth University  
Department of Women’s Studies  
Class of 2008

I have a little bit of alumni news for myself. My husband Joey and I had our first baby on July 30, 2009. His name is Tai Stuart Wah and he’s pretty amazing if I do say so myself! Also, with the help of the beloved Dr. Jennifer Fronc, I was just recently informed that I was accepted to the VCU Master’s Program for Social Work and I will start in Fall 2010. That’s all the news for me! :)

Sincerely,

-Jessie Jacobsen Wah

Robin Autry, Virginia Commonwealth University  
Department of Women’s Studies  
Class of 2000

I graduated from VCU with a graduate degree in criminal justice in 2000 after having completed an undergraduate degree in criminal justice and a minor in women’s studies in 1997. I am employed by the City of Richmond as a Local Pretrial & Probation Officer where she devotes her time to enhancing public safety through the supervision and habilitation of defendants and offenders in the community. I am passionate about raising the public’s awareness of the challenges faced by offenders upon the release from jails and prisons and supports Long Walk to Freedom and Richmond Homeless Connect. I also teach Driver Improvement for John Tyler ASAP in Chesterfield County.

In 2007, I became a state certified substance abuse counselor (CSAC) and in July 2010, completed the Virginia Offender Workforce Development Specialist training, an 180-hour curriculum developed by the National Institute of Corrections, earning my certifications as an offender workforce development specialist and a global career development facilitator (GCDF).

I share my passion with my husband of 14 years, Jeff Autry, an electricity instructor at Beaumont Juvenile Correctional Center. They have a 6 year old son and enjoy participating in Cub Scout events with him. Our older children, Magen and Dustin, live in Myrtle Beach, SC with their mother. Magen is celebrating her “Sweet 16” in May and Dustin is studying culinary arts at Horry County Technical School. You can be reach me at Robin.Autry@Richmondgov.com

-Robin Autry
Women's Studies News

“Revolutionaries”

Amendment News

This year at Amendment has been primarily focused on rebuilding the journal from the ground up. After many staff members graduated or left the journal last year, we campaigned and recruited with a vengeance, and thus tripled our staff to 15 active members, organized a comprehensive list-serv of nearly 80 students and faculty members, and have worked extremely hard on completing what we feel will become our best issue yet, due to hit the stands in Fall of 2010. We also ordered our first round of official Amendment t-shirts and tote bags, and have received a great budget increase for 2010-2011, so be sure to look out for even more fabulous action from Amendment in the years to come! If you’d like to contact us with questions, concerns, suggestions or submissions, e-mail us at amendmentvcu@gmail.com.

- Audrey Walls

VOX (Voices for Planned Parenthood)

This year, VOX (Voices for Planned Parenthood) had three events and many information distribution tables in the Commons. In the Fall and the Spring we had Sex Talk Live, where students could come have their sex questions answered by our "sexperts". In the Fall we also had a free HIV testing event provided by the Fan Free Clinic. Our information distribution tables focused on Planned Parenthood's campaign "GYT" (Get Yourself Tested). And as we do every year, we handed out hundreds of free condoms.

-Suzanne Shaver
President, VCU VOX

OMSA (Office of Multicultural)

This year the Office of Multicultural Student Affairs continued it’s efforts in expanding programming and services for women at VCU. In the Fall, OMSA hosted a variety of discussion and film events focusing on issues ranging from domestic and sexual violence to reproductive freedoms and choice. In addition, the final edit of the Women’s Resource Guide was finalized that features resources, services and organizations that focus on issues relevant to women on campus, in the Richmond community and in the state. In the Spring, OMSA observed it’s third annual Women’s History Month in March which encompassed an assortment of student programs that included the Vagina Monologues, feminist speakers from the community, films and discussions as well as the keynote event – the Salt Lines Tour – a group of four spoken word queer and feminist activists who use their talents to give voice to those who have been silenced.

2010 WMNS GRADUATING Seniors

Justine Blincoe
Laura Buell
Claudia Camargo
Elian "Seth" Chernyak
Katherine A Crawford
Marian Crawford
Dana Daniels
Ana Finley
Christian Halley
Elizabeth Kindelan
Shannon LeCorre
Michelle Lore
Stephanie Lynch
Stasia Rapp
Margery Tobey
Mary "Cat" Vann
August 2009 & January 2010: SOVO Fairs
- Opportunity to promote awareness of sexual & intimate partner violence and provide students with a chance to get more involved with the VCU Community by volunteering. Distribute resource items & brochures to students.

October 2009: Domestic Violence Awareness Month
- Set up information tables throughout the month to distribute resource information, raise awareness and encourage students to become active bystanders to signs of dating violence
- Participated in the statewide Red Flag Campaign; posters were hung up around campus and red flags were displayed in the lawn of the Commons. Presented with The Well.
- “A Rose for Toni” is a one-woman dramatic monologue about the effects of both physical and emotional violence, told throughout the lens of her mother and her sister. Followed by an interactive question & answer session and presentation on identifying danger signals.
- The Clothesline Project is a national project that aims to raise awareness about intimate partner violence, sexual assault, gender motivated hate crimes, and family abuse through a visual display of t-shirts made by or for survivors of violence. Students are provided with supplies to make their own t-shirt to add to the collection. Presented with The Well.
- ‘Sex Signals’ is a nationally touring production that addresses sexual assault and date rape on college campuses. Presented with Men Against Violence.

January 2010: Stalking Awareness Month
- Set up information tables for the beginning of the semester with information to raise awareness on stalking and provide students with resource information.
- Additional round of displaying Red Flag Campaign posters that address stalking.

February 2010: Healthy Relationships Awareness Week
- Set up information tables to promote healthy relationships. Students able to make their own “healthy hook-up kits” for Valentine’s Day. Presented with Project Reach.

March 2010: International Women’s Day
- Set up information tables to celebrate international women’s day and to raise awareness the rest of the month about one woman’s journey to find other women with her name. She discovers that more than half of those women are also survivors of some form of family, intimate partner, or sexual violence.
- The Clothesline Project is a national project that aims to raise awareness about intimate partner violence, sexual assault, gender motivated hate crimes, and family abuse through a visual display of t-shirts made by or for survivors of violence. Students are provided with supplies to make their own t-shirt to add to the collection. Presented with The Well.
- Take Back the Night is a national event hosted by schools and community centers around the country each April. This is an opportunity to break the silence about violence and empower the community. This year’s event included exciting speakers from The Richmond YWCA, VCU’s Department of Women’s Studies, and Student Organization Men Against Violence; a performance by Susan Greenbaum; a fundraiser raffle for The James House (community outreach & shelter in the Tri-Cities); and an open-mic for survivors.

April 2010: Sexual Assault Awareness Month
- Set up information tables throughout the month to raise awareness about sexual violence. Students provided with brochures, resource items, and chances to get involved with events over the month.
- “Searching for Angela Shelton” is an award-winning documentary week about the violence faced by women around the world. Students provided with information and ways to get involved.
Queer Action is VCU's LGBTQ and Ally advocacy group. We focus on social and political issues within the LGBTQ community and bring awareness to students on campus. We have had a very productive year, and we have three events that we are particularly proud of. Drag Ball, our annual Fall event that benefits Richmond’s Fan Free Clinic had a very good turnout as well as amazing performances by Esta Bunny and other members of the Trailer Court.

In response to Attorney General Ken Cucinelli’s letter to Virginia’s universities encouraging administration to rescind sexual orientation and gender identity as a protected class in their nondiscrimination policies, Queer Action, along with other organizations, held an anti-discrimination rally in the Commons Plaza. Over 1,500 student and faculty members showed up in support of VCU’s commitment to their current nondiscrimination policy. The rally was followed by an impromptu march to the Capitol.

Most recently, we partnered with the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) and the Richmond Holocaust Museum to screen the film “Ask Not”, about the military policy of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” as part of their Voices of Honor tour. Following the film, there was a panel discussion involving soldiers featured in the documentary as well as from VCU.

Thanks!
-Kaitlynn Slaughter
President, Queer Action
Name ___________________________________
Address__________________________________
________________________________________
Phone___________________________________
Email____________________________________

I Would like to make a contribution of $ ___
To the Women’s Studies Program.

Please make checks payable to: VCU
Indicate Women’s Studies in the memo section.

Send to: Janet Hutchinson
Department of Women’s Studies
VCU, Box 8423060
Richmond, VA 23220

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Symposiums,
and
Conferences!