Academic Achievement. Career Distinction. Commencement Celebrations. In this edition of Voices, we are highlighting one of the often overlooked facets of our work towards gender equity...the programs that recognize the accomplishments of the women in our community. It’s true much of our time and resources are focused on educational programs and advocacy activities to address obstacles to equity such as violence against women, bias towards women in non-traditional disciplines, and workplace incivility. But that doesn’t mean we don’t also know how to have some fun! (Yes, feminists can actually have fun.) But as internalized sexism would have it, women don’t often feel comfortable talking about our successes. It seems fitting as we wrap up our March activities for Women’s Herstory Month that we take time to reflect on how women students, staff, and faculty are making herstory of their own.

In March we celebrated the accomplishments of this year’s recipients of the Women of Color Awards. We welcomed newly hired female faculty to our community of scholars during our New Women Faculty Reception. As we move into April, we are busy preparing for several of the Women’s Center’s signature programs – Take Back the Night, the Outstanding Academic Achievement Awards Ceremony, and the annual Women’s Advance Conference. We are welcoming a new class of talented women to UConn by hosting two panel discussions during the upcoming Admission Open House. The first session is for high achieving female students, and the second is for women who are thinking about majoring in the STEM fields. On the other end of the academic trajectory, we are also preparing the Women’s Center student staff, Class of 2011, for their upcoming transition. Please read on to find out more about some of these programs, honorees, and graduating seniors.

The Women’s Center staff have some bragging rights of our own. In November, at the inaugural awards sponsored by the Women’s Center Council of the National Women’s Studies Association, the Women’s Center was well represented. Two of the four recipients had UConn connections. I was honored to receive the Outstanding Achievement Award, as well as to present the Emerging Leader Award to Women’s Center alumna, Sasha Smith, who was profiled in last month’s newsletter. My thanks to the Provost’s Office and the UCPEA Professional Development Fund for making my attendance at this conference possible. The cast and crew of UConn V-Day have consistently recognized the Women’s Center staff with their Vagina Warrior awards – Kathy Fischer and Venida Rodman Jenkins (2011), and Carol Millette (2010).

And finally...in 2012, we will be celebrating the 40th anniversary of the Women’s Center. If you were involved with the Center during the past four decades, please make sure you contact us and let us know where you are and what you are up to. We are also looking for volunteers to assist with planning our anniversary events, so if you are interested, please email me at Kathleen.Holgerson@uconn.edu.

—Kathleen Holgerson, April, 2011
VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN PREVENTION PROGRAM

Since 1980, the Violence Against Women Prevention Program (VAWPP) has served as the point program on campus for providing education, advocacy, and support services on the issues of violence against women, consent, bystander empowerment, and how to find resources on and off campus. As part of the Women’s Center’s work on campus, VAWPP trains peer educators through a one-credit Women’s Studies course; conducts workshops during Orientation programs and First Year Experience courses; and sponsors events throughout the year to promote the Women’s Center’s principles of education, advocacy, support and gender equity.

ONE CAMPUS. ONE COMMUNITY. ONE LIGHT: VAWPP PREPARES FOR TAKE BACK THE NIGHT

The Violence Against Women Prevention Program (VAWPP) is hard at work organizing this year’s Take Back the Night, an annual, international event dedicated to raising awareness about sexual assault and empowering survivors of abuse. Our goal is to provide the UConn community with an opportunity to come together and support one another as we give voice to the reality of sexual assault, a violence that effects one in four women in their lifetime.

Take Back the Night is a time for survivors, secondary survivors, and allies to reflect, advocate, and support each other. The event provides many opportunities for people to show their support, share their story, and demonstrate to the UConn community that we demand change.

This year, the event will take place on April 20th at 7pm in the Student Union Ballroom. We will begin the night with opening remarks from the VAWPP teaching assistants and Venida Rodman Jenkins, VAWPP coordinator. We hope this will establish a foundation for the night and invite participants to ask: “What will I do to end sexual assault on campus?”

Following the opening remarks, we invite everyone to join us on a candle-lit march through campus. Every year, the sea of voices and the flood of people emphasize that our culture’s attitude toward sexual assault and the normalcy of violence needs to change now. We march through campus with booming chants to break the silence, light up the darkness, and “take back the night” for survivors of sexual assault.

After the march, we will hold a “Survivor’s Speak Out,” encouraging survivors of sexual assault to come forward and share their stories, while also having the opportunity to listen to others tell theirs. This part of Take Back the Night is meant to show survivors that they are not alone in their experiences with violence and are supported by survivors and allies alike. Trained counselors will be present to support any survivor or ally at any point in time during the program. Following this, everyone is invited to close the night at a Coffeehouse in the Women’s Center. The Women’s Center will have light refreshments and will be set up to give people a time to reflect, share, and heal.

This year’s theme is “One Campus, One Community, One Light”, which we hope emphasizes the importance of a community solution surrounding this issue and community support. We welcome volunteers to help with Take Back the Night. If you are interested, please visit us in the Women’s Center any day up until the event to get involved! We invite you to come join us as we bring the community together, light up the darkness, and take back the night!

—Devan Cody and Tamika Riley
Violence Against Women Prevention Program Teaching Assistants
VAWPP peer educators are putting the final touches on their upcoming performance of *No Witness*, scheduled in the Student Union Theatre on April 4th and 5th. *No Witness* is an interactive play that demonstrates a rape trial and challenges the audience’s perceptions about sexual assault and survivors.

Volunteer students will act as the plaintiff, accused rapist, lawyers, and judge. After hearing the testimony of the accused criminal, 12 members of the audience will be selected as jurors to decide the verdict. While the jury deliberates, VAWPP peer educators will facilitate a discussion with the rest of the audience.

Seton Hall University first created the *No Witness* script highlighting violence in a relationship between a man and woman. This version will show on Monday, April 4th. This year, we are excited to perform two different versions of *No Witness* for the UConn community. We developed a version of a rape trial focusing on a gay couple, which we will show April 5th. In changing the script to depict the sexual assault of a male student by his boyfriend, VAWPP aims to bring attention to the fact that violence transcends all types of relationships and combat the myths surrounding the rape of men. While all victims and survivors of sexual assault face stigmatization, male victim-survivors often experience a particularly strong sense of shame and stigma due to the prevailing societal idea that men cannot be victims of sexual assault.

Both versions will focus on the idea of consent and how we, as a society, choose to define it. We hope this play will make students challenge their own beliefs, specifically in regard to how their view of consent lines up with UConn’s definition stated in the Student Code of Conduct.

*No Witness* provokes reflection about the challenges that survivors of sexual assault face when they seek justice through the legal system. Facing their attacker in court requires extreme courage on the part of survivors. On top of the emotional hardship of having to relive the attack, survivors often endure disbelief from others about their attack and inquisitions into their character.

We are very excited to bring *No Witness* to UConn and hope you will join us, participate in the jury, and be a part of the much needed conversation about sexual assault.

—*Tess Koenigsmark*

**Violence Against Women Prevention Program Teaching Assistant**

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**LUNAFEST COMES TO UCONN**

Organizers Sarah Hannon, Anna Rabin, Brittnie Sutton, Stephanie Bousquet, Elizabeth Thompson and Jessica Sloan would like to present the Annual LUNAFEST Film Festival here at the University of Connecticut. This year’s films will take place on April 12, 2011 in the Konover Auditorium in the Thomas J. Dodd Center.

The mission of LUNAFEST is to celebrate and inspire women through the art of film and community fundraising. LUNAFEST is a national film festival that features short films by, for and about women. LUNAFEST was established in 2000 by LUNA, Makers of the Whole Nutrition Bar for Women, to simultaneously promote women filmmakers, raise awareness for women’s issues, and support worthy women’s nonprofit organizations. Funds raised for this event will support the Breast Cancer Fund and UConn Women’s Center. LUNAFEST provides a very unique and diversifying experience for UConn students and the surrounding community.

This year we will be joined by one of the filmmakers, G. Melissa Graziano, who directed “Love on the Line” and is originally from Connecticut. For information about sponsorship opportunities or to make a donation, please contact Sarah (sarahhannon1@gmail.com) or Brittnie (brittnie.sutton@uconn.edu). Tickets may be purchased online at: The Alumni Connection Website. More information is available at: The Lunafest Official Website.
Nikki McGary is an educator, graduate student, and one of the recipients of last year’s 100 Years of Women Scholarship. She is a great student and a strong advocate for gender equity. Though that’s not what I think of when I think of Nikki. Instead, I think of Spring 2009 when I had the opportunity to enroll in one of her classes, Gender in Everyday Life. It was my first Women's Studies class. It’s not an overstatement to say that that one class established the foundation for the rest of my undergraduate career. Her kindness, resilient enthusiasm in the classroom, and passion for gender equity is contagious. I’m proud to have the opportunity to interview this year’s recipient of the 100 Years of Women Scholarship; PhD student; and my teacher — Nikki McGary.

As an educator, student, and feminist what is your role in the UConn community?
I am not really sure how to answer this question. I teach. I learn. And I try my best to contribute to the University through various community commitments... all of which are geared toward improving the campus community through consciousness raising and helping people. As an educator I try really hard to make feminism something accessible to students, which is also something the Women's Center has helped teach me over the years.

I remember in your class how you fused campus life and the events being offered by the cultural centers and other organizations into your teaching and class activities. Do you think this helps students develop their own awareness of how gender plays into their lives?
I always say that improving education and community building are two important ways to make this world a better place. And although I really love teaching in the classroom, my favorite moments as an educator have been the emails I receive from previous students. They write to say things like "hey, I was listening to some song lyrics and I realized how sexist they are and it made me think of your class." Or updates from students about how they have incorporated feminist activism into their lives in some way.
I love the moments where a student says that this class is meaningless to them at the beginning of the semester, only to have them identify as a feminist only 15 weeks later!

Is the Women’s Center incorporated into your life at UConn, as an undergraduate and now a graduate student?
The WC has been a central force along my journey through (and back to) UConn. I have been close to the WC for over a decade, since I first came to UConn as an undergrad. The WC has always been important to my life as it offers a clearly marked feminist space on campus, where I know I can always feel comfortable. The Women’s Center has also sponsored some of the most important events/guest-speakers that have informed my life and career in various ways.

What events were those?
I remember when I was an undergrad there was the "Love Your Body Day," which was an important turning point in my own life that helped me foster a healthy, and thereby loving, relationship with my own body. I was also in the first ever Vagina Monologues at UConn, which the WC was a strong supporter of.

Has the meaning of the Women’s Center changed for you now as a graduate student?
When I was an undergrad, the WC was a safe and supportive space on campus. Now as an instructor, I am able to see what a really huge resource it is on campus! I think I probably took that fact for granted when I was an undergrad. Now I encourage my students to visit the Center (sometimes I even hold my class there just to bring more feet in the door... and then it’s always so great to see those same students who I brought to the WC as student workers there years later).
The Women’s Center also sponsors guest speakers that have been incredibly valuable for my classes (i.e. Robert Jensen or Ariel Levy who we read in my class). And VAWPP has been such a useful resource for my students! Peer educators have led workshops in my class, but even more importantly, they are a resource on campus where I can
guide survivors of violence, or allies in the struggle against violence, when they approach me after class asking about support available on campus.

**It’s so great to hear that I’m not the only student you guided to the Women’s Center! Do you have any particular memories (funny, insightful, inspiring) involving Women’s Center that has helped shape your own Herstory?**

The quick answer to this question is to say that the Women’s Center has always been endlessly welcoming, supportive and kind to me, and to everybody that I have ever guided in their direction.

More specifically, in terms of my time here as an undergrad, I just remember the feeling of the place. Nothing really specific. Back then, it was in one of those cozy houses. And it was very literally a place where I would just pop in. I remember the feeling of warmth. And I remember laughing. A lot. But to be honest, I don’t remember why... it is more the tone that I remember. The tone of feminist consciousness. The tone of support. And the boost that I got from every visit.

One time I took it upon myself to distribute condoms at the library, and people from the WC came by to show their support. Now that I am back nearly a decade later, the memory that stands out most for me is actually quite a personal one. I had a very close friend who was in an abusive relationship. When I would talk to her about it, my closeness with her was actually a deterrent in her ability to hear me. She needed to talk to people who didn't know her. She needed to talk to people who were able to recognize her stories as ones involving abusive behavior, and be sympathetic and nonjudgmental. But she needed these people to be strangers. She was open and willing to talk about it, so I guided her to the WC/VAWPP. That visit changed her life. She was able to read the material that VAWPP has available. She was able to speak with people who were sensitive to her experiences. So VAWPP helped save my friend's life, quite literally.

**I know for me too, VAWPP has been a tremendous influence on my years here as a student. I think the program will always come to mind when I think of UConn. Which leads me to my next question. What brought you back to UConn as a graduate student and Women’s Studies instructor?**

Truthfully? My academic and personal role models are here. The big joke in my family is that when I was in kindergarten, I wanted to be a kindergarten teacher. When I was in high school, I wanted to be a high school teacher. And when I was in college, I wanted to become a professor. It is then no surprise that I wanted to teach Women's Studies when I realized how life transforming taking a WS class can be. My feminist consciousness sparked here when I took *Feminism and the Arts* with Professor Anne D'Alleva. That's also what guided me to the Women's Center, where Kathy Fischer inspired me. Then as my knowledge of gender and social inequalities grew, and I took classes with Nancy Naples and Marita McComiskey, I became committed to changing the world with what I consider to be my greatest skill: teaching. And so I decided that I wanted to teach WS someday! And what better place to cultivate that skill than in the institution that ignited my interest in the first place!

**That's a great answer! If you could describe the Women's Center in three words, what would they be?**


**If you had the opportunity to share some advice with incoming undergars (and future Women’s Center community members) what would it be?**

Enjoy this time. Use the resources available to you. Really, I mean that. And most importantly, cultivate your critical thinking skills... you will most likely forget a great deal of the "content" that you learn in class; but critical thinking skills will stay with you forever.

**If you could waive a magic wand at the Women's Center, what would you wish to see happen?**

Endless, endless, endless funding from the University!

**That would be nice! Thanks, Nikki.**

---Interview by Kerri Brown
Newsletter Editor
The Women’s Center would like to congratulate Dr. Carolyn Lin, Dr. Lirio K. Negroni, and Susan Severo, this year’s recipients of the Women of Color Recognition Awards. Each of these women demonstrate an outstanding commitment to enhancing the quality of life for women of color, and through their services to the University of Connecticut prove to be role models for women everywhere.

Dr. Carolyn Lin, Professor of Communication Sciences and the Associate Dean for the Graduate School of Communications helped raise over 5 million dollars of federal funding for her research projects that studied the outcomes of alcohol prevention, medication literacy, nutrition education, and HIV prevention. She serves on numerous committees and through her involvement established a Minority Internship Program.

Award recipient Dr. Lirio K. Negroni, Associate Professor and Chair of the Puerto Rican and Latino Studies Project, is a fulcrum in the advancement of social work research related to improving the lives of Latino/a families, communities, and other culturally diverse populations. Dr. Negroni founded the Latino Mental Health Network in Hartford CT and the Connecticut Citizens Coalition.

Susan Severo, Assistant Director of Administrative Services and Director of Student Employment at the UConn Law School, is devoted to many different University projects that shape her role as mentor, supporter, and facilitator. Ms. Severo is an active member of the Law School Health and Safety Committee, as well as the Water Incursion Work Group. She also works closely with students, in particular women of color, as a mentor for the South Asian Law Students Association, the Asian American Law Students Association, the Black Law Student Association, and the Latino Law Student Association.

In short, these three women are outstanding. Their contributions to our community have become the fibers woven together to create the wellbeing of this university.

This year, the ceremony was held on March 1, 2011. The Women of Color Recognition Awards luncheon is in its eleventh consecutive year and would not be possible without the support of our sponsors and the community of cultural centers (WRAAP). If you would like to learn how to nominate someone for this award, or how to offer your support, please visit the Women’s Center website.
I’m not one for acrobats. I’m not the most graceful person alive… My nickname growing up was Crash. I’m known for falling (while sitting in a chair) and tripping on my shoelaces (even when I’m not walking). Though I have to admit, I stood tall this month, unwavering in the Storrs wind, steady on my feet. There’s something about March that can keep a girl on her toes.

This past month, the Women’s Center celebrated Women’s Herstory Month, bringing the stories and voices of so many women together to fortify UConn’s growing foundation of gender equity. Students, staff, and faculty came together to share their stories, hear what others had to say, and discuss ways that we can incorporate feminist thought into our everyday practices, in the classroom, in our career, and in our conversations.

The beauty of Women’s Herstory Month is the fusion of past and present to determine our future. As an undergrad, I had the opportunity to stand on my sisters’ shoulders, those whose footprints have already treaded the path I walk on now, raising their voices and demanding reproductive justice, equal pay, fair media representation, and the deconstruction of gender expectations. On their shoulders, I had the strength of the millions of women before me, keeping me from falling, keeping me from slipping on the muck and sludge that still exists on our campus, in our culture, and stuck like tar on the fibers of our society.

We began the month with “Project Brainwash” and a visit from its creator, Jennifer Pozner. In her lecture, she dissected the detrimental nature of some of television’s most popular shows and why “reality TV is bad for women (…and men, people of color, the economy, love, sex, and sheer common sense!)”

Jennifer Pozner is an example of a young woman who did not sit back and shrug her shoulders when she saw the horrors of reality TV. Instead, she questioned it. And she didn’t stop there. She researched. She investigated. Then, she took all her findings and wrote a book, giving voice and reason to why reality TV really is hazardous for our health.

The month continued with the celebration of International Women’s Day and a performance by Magdalena Gómez, a poet, teacher, playwright and columnist. Ms. Gómez also served as the keynote speaker for the Women of Color Recognition Awards ceremony where she shared her story and stressed the importance of taking action against injustice. Her creative energy was contagious as she performed her poetry and provoked the need to dismantle the cage of oppression through art.

Magdalena Gómez brought soul. She demonstrated the importance of art and the need for imagination in the fight against racism, sexism, and homophobia. Her poetry transcends where conversation cannot always go, blending emotion, logic, and strength together to create song.

As March continued, so did Women’s Herstory Month. The middle of March brought the conversation of Title IX and the effects it has on women’s sports. Dr. Deborah Brake discussed how not much is known about the law that changed the lives of female athletes. Dr. Brake broke down the assumptions, drawbacks, and requirements that come with the law and why it is crucial we understand the rules of the game before we decide to play.

The Women’s Center also brought Shira Tarrant to the UConn community to deliver a lecture and facilitate a discussion titled: “Pornfed: SexySmart Choices in an XXX World.” Her provocative talk introduced the politics of pornography, beauty, sexuality, and consent to students and provided participants with the tools necessary to have a conversation about the very culturally taboo subject of pornography.

This year, Women’s Herstory Month at UConn brought so many different opportunities to get involved with the fight to secure equality for all. Each voice was different and each brought a different idea to the table to discuss, debate, and deliberate over. Though one thing seemed to be a constant: it is impossible to plan for the future without remembering how we got to the present, and to do so we must recognize and understand our herstory.

—Kerri Brown
Newsletter Editor
I HAVE ONE THING LEFT TO SAY...

It’s hard to imagine that another semester is coming to an end, and another group of seniors will be graduating. This year, fifteen of the student staff members of the Women’s Center will graduate. Of course, many of them still have something to say… here are words from some of the graduating Women’s Center Staff of 2011.

I would paint a giant anatomically correct vulva on the rock. The university painted over V-Day’s “Vaginas are Coming” slogan on the rock this year, and it is completely unacceptable. Vaginas are beautiful, and its time for them to be recognized as such!

—Michelle Farber

Sometimes I have to watch what I say. I’ve learned working here that even though I might want to say what’s on my mind, I have to be aware that what I say can sometimes be offensive, controversial and overwhelming at times.

—Jackie Martone

Sometimes life happens and you do not have as much time to work on projects and other demands. But with a good support system, your co-workers can make things a little more bearable.

—Marta Musial

There are so many misconceptions about what the cultural centers do and it’s unfair to judge them without at least visiting them or talking to someone who is involved with one.

—Victoria Flagg

Maybe I can’t always see change, or immediately feel like I’ve made a difference. But at the end of the day, I know I’ve done something, and the little things add up to positively affect someone else.

—Devan Cody

People can always surprise you. Sometimes for the good and sometimes for the bad. The cultural centers have provided me support when I face these surprises... I can handle them in a confident, dignified way.

—Nicole Scrivano

The Women’s Center isn’t A MAN-HATERS Club! I want to yell that through a megaphone for all of UConn to hear.

—Dana Behuniak

To the first year students: take things seriously, but don’t worry too much. Just find something you really love and stick with it.

—I wish someone had told me that sooner. So to all you new students and Women’s Center staff members, my parting gift to you.

—Mindy Brown

I’ve learned that grace isn’t needed to get things done. You have to dig your nails into the dirt, wipe away the tears, and push through. I wish someone had told me that sooner. So to all you new students and Women’s Center staff members, my parting gift to you.

—Kerri Brown

Just Be Yourself. Because nobody can be the best you.

—Lindsay Brathwaite
The University Of Connecticut’s Women’s Center is committed to our work with students, staff, and faculty in an effort to promote gender equity on campus. Our efforts are spread widely throughout the University Community and support all aspects of the University’s mission of teaching, research, and service. We are a key contributor to the University’s priorities of supporting an engaged undergraduate experience, enhancing the institution’s research portfolio, and increasing the diversity of our community. While we are proud of our successes, we need your help to support and

For more information on ways to support the Women’s Center, please visit our giving page at http://womenscenter.uconn.edu/support/give.php

Or, visit the UConn Foundation’s giving site, select “other” under Purpose and include one of the following designations:

Women’s Center: #20447
100 Years of Women Scholarship: #30231

With your support the Women’s Center can:

• support students engaged in scholarship and activism around issues of gender equity and social justice on campus to attend national conferences;

• provide a scholarship opportunity to the UConn community with the 100 Years of Women Scholarship, recognizing students for their demonstrated commitment to women’s issues through service to their community and their high academic performance;

• host our annual Women of Color Luncheon and Awards Ceremony, serving to create networking opportunities for women who are underrepresented on campus and to recognize the recipients of the Women of Color Award for their distinguished service and contributions to the University of Connecticut, as well as their commitment to enhancing quality of life for and/or service as a role model for Women of Color; and

• continue our work to educate our community to help prevent and eliminate sexual assault, dating violence, stalking and sexual harassment on campus through our Violence Against Women Prevention Program.

VOICES
Where all the pieces come together.

We welcome you to visit UConn’s Women’s Center!
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