

FALL 2015, ISSUE 7

GENDER AND WOMEN'S STUDIES NEWSLETTER



A FEW WORDS FROM OUR CHAIR:

Welcome to the fall 2015 edition of the Gender and Women's Studies newsletter! This semester has been a typically busy and exciting one for us. Here are a few highlights. In September, the department co-sponsored the visit of Andrea Pino and Annie Clark, the co-founders of End Rape on Campus who were featured in the CNN documentary *The Hunting Ground*. In October, we co-sponsored the screening of the documentary *The Mask You Live In* (yes, we like documentaries in GWS). Last month, Professors Jamie Wagman and Ann Marie Alfonso Short, along with four students, Giovanna Posselius, Annelise Steele, Roni Hanks, and Alyssa Santos, attended the

National Women's Studies Association annual conference; some of them even got to meet feminist icon Gloria Steinem! Part of the trip was made possible because of department travel funds. To that end, we will be having a trivia night spring fundraiser on Friday 22 January. I hope you can come.

Finally, I would like to give a shout-out to Kayla Gaughan. In late October, she and her friends at Feminists United organized and created a flag display that represented some of Planned Parenthood's many services. Gender and Women's Studies has three agency learning outcomes, because as an academic discipline, we are founded and sustained by

feminist activism. Thank you, Kayla, for not only following your conscience but also contributing to the department's annual assessment report.

I wish everyone a short finals week and a long and restorative winter break.

All the best,

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- A few words about attending her first National Women's Studies Association conference from student Alyssa Santos
- -A few words about serving on the President's Sexual Assault Task Force from Bri O'Brien



First Visit to NWSA

After spending a weekend in Milwaukee, WI at the NWSA conference, I can easily say that it has been one of the most eye opening experiences where I was able to hear everything talked about in my GWS classes have a real world application. Upon entering the building we were able to choose the pronouns we preferred and use gender neutral bathrooms as we pleased. Right from the start this made us all feel very comfortable that all types of people were accepted here and we could be open about the things we were interested in.

I went into this conference trying to find more information about women's health and birth related topics, and I came out overcome with joy from how much I learned and was able to use toward my future nursing profession. There was something there for everyone and every major. Among the many panels, I learned not just about birth, but even topics such as campus sexual assault that applied directly to Saint Mary's College. I appreciate that the conference brought topics to my attention that I was not aware even existed. One of my personal favorite speakers was Mia Mingus in the plenary session on intersectional activism. She explained that transformative justice call us to

not only work with the survivors of injustice, but also the people who have caused the harm to create a more just world that we can build upon.

My colleagues and I often found ourselves in the position of being interested in so many panels that we did not have enough time to visit them all. We learned how to be activists in our community as well as gather information to apply to our GWS classes this semester. We even became aware of GWS related internships and some of us discovered what we would like to do in this world after college.

The conference was not only educational, but helped to foster personal connections with some of the amazing GWS professors here at Saint Mary's. The conference encouraged me to enter my own papers into the upcoming GWS conference being held at Notre Dame in the spring and helped me to recognize that I can always go further with the things I learn.

If ever given the chance in the future, students especially here at an all women's college should consider going to the NWSA conference. So far, it is the best experience I have had in college and I can't wait to see what future conferences hold.

– Alyssa Santos

STUDENT OVERVIEW OF PRESIDENTIAL TASK FORCE ON SEXUAL VIOLENCE

[On April 29th, 2015 President Carol Ann Mooney announced her intention to create a Presidential Task Force on Sexual Violence](#) - a move sparked, in part, by a shift in the perspectives on sexual violence within not only our campus community, but throughout campuses nationwide. This announcement came soon after the April 9th screening of *The Hunting Ground* - a CNN documentary highlighting the disturbing trends in campus sexual violence. For many members of the SMC community, the film portrayed our cherished Avenue in a way we had never seen before; with this portrayal came the realization that SMC is not immune from the harsh reality of campus sexual violence. Students, faculty, staff, and alumnae responded immediately with calls to action, encouraging discussion, collaboration, and change. The twenty day gap between the screening and President Mooney's announcement was filled with events and programs aimed at bringing attention to the issue of sexual violence on campus - ending with an intimate, private discussion between President Mooney and SMC students. The community's demands for change were answered by the creation of the Presidential Task Force on Sexual Violence, [a group consisting of students, faculty, and staff](#).

Aside from the Class of 2019, each current class year is represented by at least one student on the task force. Students submitted letters of interest to the President, who then selected appropriate representatives. The Faculty Assembly elected/suggested representatives. Finally, select members of the staff were appointed to the task force. (6 students, 3 faculty members, the College Counsel, the Vice President for Student Affairs, the Assistant Director of the Alumnae Association, a representative from the Health and Counseling Center, and the Director of Campus Ministry)

The group has been charged with answering three questions:

1. What steps can Saint Mary's take to reduce and eliminate sexual assault and other forms of sexual violence against our students?
2. In what ways can Saint Mary's improve the College's procedures for handling claims of sexual assault and sexual violence?
3. How can Saint Mary's better support students who have survived some form of sexual violence?

To best address these issues, [President Mooney created three subcommittees](#): Education, Procedures, and Support. Each subcommittee meets separately and then reports back to the overall task force.

Through working with subcommittees and as a collective group, the Task Force aims to generate and deliver a report to the SMC community no later than May 1st, 2016. The report will provide an overview of current services offered by the college as well as recommendations and [suggestions](#) for how to proceed. Minutes from each meeting are [posted on the college's portal](#) and are not available to the general public. The Observer offers the most comprehensive [coverage of the Presidential Task Force on Sexual Violence](#).



A night out in Milwaukee with GWS faculty and students.

Professors Stacy Davis, Sonalini Sapra, Jamie Wagman, and Alyssa Santos, Roni Hanks, Annelise Steele, Giovanna Posselius; and our excellent photographer Professor Ann Marie Alfonso Short.