As you can see from the contents of this newsletter, the Integrated Liberal Studies Program is not just thriving, it is actually growing in a number of new and exciting ways. Although we graduated a record number of certificate earners last spring, our growth is not simply reflected by numbers. Our curriculum and campus presence are changing as well.

Thanks to the efforts of Kathi Sell (ILS) and Professor Adam Nelson (Curriculum and Instruction), ILS has a new residential program, the Alexander Meiklejohn College, which encourages close interaction between faculty and students along the lines of the original Experimental College. The College is committed to the ideals of interdisciplinary inquiry, engaged citizenship, and integration.

Professor Daniel Kleinman (Rural Sociology) and the students in his ILS 275 course realized this ideal in another way last spring when they organized a multi-day citizens’ consensus conference on nanotechnology. The conference explored the ways a citizen might be educated to understand, and therefore make decisions about, complex scientific questions that impact our everyday lives.

Another exciting development is the addition of a new faculty member, Richard Avramenko (ILS and Political Science), to our program. Rick is a political theorist who recently received his Ph.D. from Georgetown; while his research focuses on ancient and continental political thought, he also maintains strong literary interests. We are delighted to have him!

As I reflect upon all of these changes, I am reminded what a privilege it has been to oversee the ILS program for the past four years. I feel this all the more keenly now that a new chair will bring new energy and new ideas to the program. I look forward to watching the next phase unfold!

Warmly,
Laura McClure
Greetings from Alexander Meiklejohn Residential College (AMRC)! My name is Colleene Thomas, and I am one of 52 residents in UW-Madison's newest learning community. The AMRC has its roots in Meiklejohn's 1930's-era Experimental College, which was located just a few blocks east of the new community, on the lakeshore portion of campus. Meiklejohn was intrigued by the connections between democracy, education, and civic action. It just so happens that these ideas, pertinent as they were in the '30s, are still fostering dynamic conversations and thoughtful inquiries today. With this in mind, the idea of a modern version of the Experimental College was launched last January.

I was able to be part of the planning process, and participated in several months of steering committee meetings, conversations, and emails as University Housing, the ILS, and students deliberated about the creation of what truly is an experiment in democratic living. A small democracy, with only 52 residents, but a huge idea.

In June, I was part of a delegation of eight from the community that attended the American Democracy Project conference, which is a program of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities and of the Campus Compact. There we heard stories of dozens of civic engagement programs across the country. What we saw was enthusiasm for the idea of a residential community. One of the foundations of Meiklejohn's idea of the Experimental College was that it would be residential; a place where democracy would be infused into all aspects of life.

Earlier this fall, the first batch of AMRC residents moved into our community. As I helped with move-in, I watched each of my peers bringing something different to the community. Many of us are from Wisconsin. Nine of us are international students. We have two English majors, one music major and at least five engineers. 52 of us are part of one of the newest democracies in the world.

How does one go about this process of developing democratic thought? Maybe you have some ideas for us! We're starting with a few key elements. First, we have a class, taught in the building, on "Democratic Theory, Liberal Education & Civic Engagement." Also, we have a hall organization—an Assembly, of sorts. It is the forum of the community, and meets regularly to address issues. Building on the principle that an educated and active mind will be more likely to contribute to society, we have subscribed to several publications that are available for reading in our common space. They include The New York Times, National Geographic, The Economist, Orion and Ebony.

Because this is the very beginning of the AMRC, these programs, ideas, and plans that we have are all being tried for the first time. It makes each conversation, each hall organization meeting, each community activity part of defining who we are and how we want to make this place. During the fall semester, the class, taught by the AMRC Faculty Fellows and ILS Faculty members Drs. Kathi Sell and Adam Nelson, is part of driving the academic dialogue of the community. In the spring, community members, by this time well versed in the theories and concepts of democracy, liberal education, and civic engagement, will apply their ideas to a civic engagement project that carries as many credit hours as the first semester class. These projects will see students engaging in the wider Madison or state community—and going beyond a normal "service learning" project.

All in all, when one steps back from the project to take a look, a few things become apparent: First, civic engagement is a hot topic nationwide, though definitions of it vary from project to project. Second, the Alexander Meiklejohn Residential College is living up to its founder's legacy in that it, like the Experimental College, is on the cutting edge of democratic theory and practice. We are part of defining the rapidly emerging field of civic engagement, and we are again creating an atmosphere and forum where liberal education reaches new frontiers. The AMRC represents a new approach to Meiklejohn's Experimental College, and like the original community, is a huge experiment. It becomes more and more clear with each mention of the community in the civic engagement and academic worlds alike that this is an experiment worth documenting, worth supporting, and worth living.

Hello from Kathleen Sell (AMRC Faculty Director), Laura Buchs (Program Director), and Adam Nelson (AMRC Lead Faculty).
organizations posted news about the event on their Web sites, and half a dozen legislators as well as a host of other officials attended the press conference at the conclusion of the consensus conference.

The report written by the participating citizens continues to receive attention. It recently figured in a multi-day series on nanotechnology in the Wisconsin State Journal and was discussed on WORT over the summer. In early October, Professor Kleinman attended a conference in Houston to discuss the citizen forum and the report.

Charles Anderson Award for Best Paper

Named after emeritus Professor of Political Science, former program chair, and beloved teacher Charles Anderson, this award acknowledges the most outstanding paper by an ILS student during the 2004-2005 academic year. This year, the award went to Eva Payne, a history major, for her paper, “Island of Destiny,” an imaginary dialogue between herself, Emily Dickinson, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and many others.

Richard Avramenko, Assistant Professor of ILS and Political Science, Joins Faculty

A political theorist by training, Richard Avramenko is delighted to have landed in Madison with the ILS program. He arrived this fall from Georgetown University in Washington, DC, where he finished his PhD and spent the past few years teaching classes concerning such issues as Political Economy, Tocqueville’s Democracy in America, Friedrich Nietzsche, Politics and Literature, and the History of Political Thought. Although his main areas of expertise are ancient and continental political thought, he also claims to be able to read political science articles with real charts and graphs. In short, Avramenko is willing and able to measure the size of your soul.

When not teaching, Avramenko can often be spotted thinking and writing about strange things, like courage, friendship, boredom, anger, time, and comedy. He tells people his favorite film is The Sheltering Sky, his favorite musician is Shostakovich, and his favorite book The Brothers Karamazov — but everyone knows the truth: Office Space, 50 Cent, and Thus Spoke Zarathustra.

When not teaching, measuring the size of souls, or lying about his tastes, Avramenko can be found marathon training or blading around Lake Monona, sipping frappacino at a local café, biking, playing hockey, or just generally being “a kaleidoscopic man, a man of many different humors, fair and colorful as the city itself.”

Alexander Meiklejohn Student Fellowship

Jamie Williams was the recipient of the Meiklejohn Fellowship to study abroad in Florence, Italy in Spring, 2005. The award allowed her to research the impact of immigration on Italian views of religion. Jamie had the opportunity to visit rural festivals and pilgrimages to the tombs of Saints on various Catholic holidays.

Pooley Prizes

The Pooley Prize is named for Professor Robert Pooley, the first chair of the Integrated Liberal Studies Program in 1948, and is given annually to two outstanding ILS students on the basis of academic achievement, participation in the life of the ILS Program, and an essay about the student’s educational philosophy. This year’s award went to Nicholas Fox, a major in English and Political Science, and to Emily McWilliams, a philosophy major.
Towell Creativity Award

This award acknowledges the ILS student who best exemplifies the value of creativity. Sponsored by Roundhouse Marketing and Promotions, it seeks to encourage students to think outside the box; indeed, requires it. Kathleen Coughlin was awarded this year’s Towell prize for her series of composition, “Life, in a Theme and Five Variations for Unaccompanied Oboe,” originally submitted as a final project for Craig Werner’s ILS 275 course in Fall, 2004.

The Ruth Knatz Gross Wisnewsky Memorial Prize

This award is given to a truly outstanding student who is majoring in a humanistic discipline and who shows promise of making a valuable contribution to the humanities. My colleague at UMD and I just received funding from NSF to explore the role of Women in Science and Engineering-type residential learning communities on women interested in engineering and the sciences. Finally, more personally, our oldest son Jake started college at Cooper Union this fall.

Cathy Middlecamp Wins National Chemical Sciences Award

ILS faculty member Cathy Middlecamp was recently given the 2006 American Chemical Society Award for Encouraging Women into Careers in the Chemical Sciences. The purpose of the award is to recognize individuals who have significantly stimulated or fostered the interest of women in chemistry, thereby promoting their professional development as chemists or chemical engineers, and increasing their appreciation of chemistry as the central science. The award consists of $5,000, a certificate, as well as a grant of $10,000 to the University of Wisconsin, to strengthen its activities in meeting the objectives of the award. Congratulations, Cathy!

Teaching Assistant Excellence Awards

So much of the success of the ILS program depends on the excellent work of our Teaching Assistants. They bring enthusiasm, creativity, and expertise into the Meklejohn classrooms everyday of the week. Kristin Hunt, a doctoral student in Theatre and Drama, and Robert Schoville, a graduate student in Curriculum and Instruction, exemplify these qualities. They have spent countless hours with students and have helped make the ILS community a warm and welcoming place.

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