News of Young ILS Alumni

We hear periodically from some of you, and otherwise keep track of you! We always appreciate an update on your lives. Here are a few recent pieces of news:

• Chris Jarvis (2006) has completed a year working for AmeriCorps in St. Paul and will do his graduate work in public policy with a focus on international policy at the Humphrey Institute of the University of Minnesota.

• Eva Payne (2006), winner of our Ruth Knatz Prize, has been admitted to Harvard Divinity School with a full ride and a Presidential Scholarship. Her undergraduate thesis was on the role of ritual and approaches to self-determined spirituality among contemporary women taking independent religious paths.

• Roy Chan was admitted to Georgetown, Berkeley, and Harvard, and has chosen to attend the Kennedy School of Government (Harvard) for a Master’s in Public Policy and Urban Planning.

• Michael Tiboris, working on his doctorate in philosophy at UC-San Diego, will be marrying another ILS alum, Melanie Robak, who has taught high school math and Urban Planning at UC-San Diego, will be marrying another ILS alum, Melanie Robak, who has taught high school math at UC-San Diego, will be marrying another ILS alum, Melanie Robak, who has taught high school math at UC-San Diego, will be marrying another ILS alum, Melanie Robak, who has taught high school math at UC-San Diego, will be marrying another ILS alum, Melanie Robak, who has taught high school math at UC-San Diego, will be marrying another ILS alum, Melanie Robak, who has taught high school math at UC-San Diego, will be marrying another ILS alum, Melanie Robak, who has taught high school math at UC-San Diego, will be marrying another ILS alum, Melanie Robak, who has taught high school math at UC-San Diego, will be marrying another ILS alum, Melanie Robak, who has taught high school math at UC-San Diego, will be marrying another ILS alum, Melanie Robak, who has taught high school math at UC-San Diego, will be marrying another ILS alum, Melanie Robak, who has taught high school math at UC-San Diego.

• Jessica Sack: After graduating from UW-Madison, Jessica (daughter of ILS and Geography Professor Robert Sack) went to Oxford and completed her MPhil in anthropology/museum studies. She also took a degree in performance studies from NYU. She taught at the Brooklyn Museum for 5 years, and is at Yale as curator of public education for the Yale University Art Gallery.

• Sam Hines is working with a firm in Delhi, India, as an analyst for mining assets, and plans to return to the U.S. for graduate work in business and/or law in 2008.

• Jennifer Hrycyna is finishing law school at Northwestern University and working in poverty law in Chicago. She is very interested in public policy change to improve social justice.

• Kirsten Fryer is finishing seminary training for ministry Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago. She also has had a clinical pastoral internship at Mayo Hospitals and Clinics, which included pastoral work in emergency trauma situations. She hopes to work in Wisconsin.

• Joshua Gross is working on his dissertation at Penn State in Information Sciences and Technology and already has an impressive list of publications. He also holds an MS in Software Engineering from the University of St. Thomas in the Twin Cities, and has been awarded the University Fellowship and Teaching Fellowship at Penn State.

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Take Up Your Pen and Write: ILS Student and Alumni Authors

At the annual fall semester ILS Integration Party, faculty, T.A.s and students mingle. They have fun, but don’t usually expect trouble; however, this year, they found it. ILS alumnae Patrick Somerville came to read from her new book of short stories, Trouble, and made students believe that being published is possible. Pat holds an MFA from Cornell, where he has taught creative writing and English. He lives in Chicago. While his bio lists him as 428 years old, we believe you can knock off the first digit. His work has appeared or will be published in: One Story, Epistle, GQ, The Beloit Fiction Journal, and other publications. His title story has been nominated for the Pushcart Prize. The book is published by Vintage Press and described as charting “the dangerous territories of adolescence and adulthood for the American male.” It has devilish humor and is worth a read!

Beginning with Pat’s book, we have inaugurated our Student and Alumni Publications Bookshelf (behind Pat, shown below with our copy of his book and with Alexander Meiklejohn himself).

Also appearing on our bookshelf is the work of current ILS student, Andrew Myszewski, who wrote a scholar-ship-winning essay honored by the University of Wisconsin System’s first annual Liberal Arts Scholarship Competition and published in the Fall 2006 issue of Liberal Education, the journal of the Association of American Colleges and Universities. Andrew’s essay, “Empowering Citizens for the Twenty-First Century” is inspiring and shows that Meiklejohn’s concerns and priorities live on. You can read it online at http://www.uwac.org/liberal-education/le-fao06/le-fao06_leap.cfm.

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In the fall semester, students organized two regularly occurring recurring events, “Dinner and a Movie” and “Coffeehouse.” “Dinner and a Movie” events. ILS Coffeeshops provided an opportunity for students to meet and get to know ILS faculty in an informal setting, while “Dinner and a Movie” events offered a chance to network with other students, enjoy a communal meal, and view a thought-provoking film. This spring, the two events were merged into a single recurring event, “Dinner and a Movie,” with discussion led by ILS faculty. Films in the series include Thank You for Smoking, Crash, V for Vendetta, and others.

As Le Salon grows and attracts new members in the coming year, the Board of Directors will have the chance to take part in a wider variety of activities designed to enrich the ILS experience, including group outings to art exhibits and plays, as well as expanded service-learning opportunities. The students of Le Salon continue to work hard on behalf of their fellow ILS-ers to expand the possibilities of our community of people “thinking together independently.”

ILS Alum Abha Thakkar Receives Social Justice Center Visionary Award in May 2006

Our own Abha Thakkar (Class of 1998) was honored by the Social Justice Center in Madison. She received the Visionary Award for her strong social justice leadership in the Madison area. (See http://www.capitalcityhues.com/May0606AbhaThakkar.html for a photo and article about her work.)

Abha was a very strong contributor to our ILS program and to the campus, working in the ILS-affiliated Bradley Learning Community during its first years of development in various student resident life positions and serving as a pivotal member of the team that sought and obtained the Robert Wood Johnson campus-wide grant on alternatives to alcohol in undergraduate life. Today, at age 30, Abha is the outgoing Associate Director of the Northside Planning Council, Co-Chair of the City of Madison Mayor’s Community Advisory Committee. She is now working for The Memory Project, a nonprofit that involves American schoolchildren with orphans in Latin America and Africa who have no photographs of themselves (www.thememoryproject.org). She has worked on important issues, Abha also helped to secure a neighborhood grant for the Sherman Avenue/Northport Drive area. Her focus is on improving the common good in the most concrete and measurable ways possible. As she put it in her acceptance speech, “One of the questions we ask ourselves frequently on the Northside is: how many people’s lives did we actually make better? How many more people have access to the food, housing, and education they deserve? Not how many meetings we held or how many people showed up at them….”

In her “spare” time, she served as a civic engagement community mentor for an ILS civic engagement project last year, and is a guest speaker each semester in the ILS senior capstone seminar. She has given the keynote address at the ILS-affiliated Bradley Learning Community opening dinner a few times, most recently this past fall (2006). She talks with our capstone students about leadership and character, and having a life mission statement.

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Lapham to Lubasi: Civic Engagement Spans the Globe

ILS Civic Engagement Class Works with Lapham Elementary Students to Fill Library with Books for African AIDS Orphans.

By Katherine Davey, Community Mentor and ILS Alum, and Kathleen Sell, ILS Faculty Member

The ILS Course: Three students took an ILS-intensive course on civic engagement in Spring 2006. Pictured in the accompanying photo with Wisconsin First Lady Jessica Doyle are Joy Menet (next to Jessica Doyle), Justin Hager, and Emily Theisen. The students worked with three superb volunteer Community Mentors, all of whom are ILS alumni: Katherine Davey (development director at Porchlight, a transitional housing agency of whom are ILS alumni: Katherine Davey (development director at Porchlight, a transitional housing agency), Jeff Pertl (former legislative relations director at Porchlight, a transitional housing agency, of whom are ILS alumni: Katherine Davey (development director at Porchlight, a transitional housing agency)), and Emily Theisen. The students worked with three superb volunteer Community Mentors, all of whom are ILS alumni: Katherine Davey (development director at Porchlight, a transitional housing agency), Jeff Pertl (former legislative relations director at Porchlight, a transitional housing agency, of whom are ILS alumni: Katherine Davey (development director at Porchlight, a transitional housing agency)), and Emily Theisen.

The "Lapham to Lubasi Run-a-thon," held Wednesday May 10, was led by one of Lapham’s second-grade classes to raise awareness of poverty in Africa and to collect books to build a library for the Lubasi Children’s Home, an orphanage in Livingstone, Zambia. Laphasi is a community-supported home for over sixty Zambian children ranging in age from 5 to 15 years. As part of their Africa curriculum this spring, a class of Lapham second graders made a connection with this special home, and has been writing back and forth to learn more about life in Africa. And learning about some of the challenges of growing up in a poor country made the students eager to help. They selected the run-a-thon as their way to support their new friends.

The event was a great success. The students had a collective goal of 852 laps around the field. With each lap representing 10 miles, this goal would symbolically take the runners the 8,320 miles from Lapham School all the way to the Lubasi Home for Children. Nearly 250 students relayed the course. Parents and teachers cheered the students on and everyone celebrated together as laps accumulated.

The students also surpassed their goal for book donations. With a goal of 200 books, their efforts have raised more than 450 beautiful new books and several hundred dollars to cover shipping and help Lubasi with library construction costs.

Wisconsin First Lady Jessica Doyle at Lapham Elementary School with ILS civic engagement students Joy Menet, Justin Hager, Emily Theisen.

The books have arrived, and the accompanying photo shows Lubasi students reading the books from Lapham Elementary! Lapham students continue to communicate by letter with their friends in Zambia, and hope to soon have internet access for a live chat with one another. We are so impressed with our Lapham students and our ILS students. We have high hopes for the continued teamwork between generations, for the greater numbers of community mentors, and for the achievement levels in Wisconsin and the United States, and recent polls and studies bear out a rise in youth engagement.

Introducing the 2007 ILS Scholarship Winners

Our 2007 ILS scholarship winners recently took a moment to share their plans for the future with us. Read on to learn more about how the scholarships supported by your donations will help these deserving students further their own goals, and, by extension, the mission of Integrated Liberal Studies.

Samantha Dezur, winner of the Alexander Meiklejohn Scholarship for summer travel:

“I’m extremely excited that this scholarship has given me the opportunity to go to a foreign country and experience the Mexican culture. The people and the language of the country have had a significant impact on my life. I plan to further my academic endeavors as well as my personal beliefs. I am genuinely grateful for the chance to submerge myself in this deeply rooted culture.”

Katie Behrens, recipient of the Pooley Prize for academic achievement:

“In my next two years at Madison, I hope to obtain the richest undergrad experience possible, before pursing certification in Secondary Education. If I can pass on a fraction of the ideals and beliefs that I have learned at the UW, and especially through the ILS department, to the next generation, the future of the humanistic disciplines will be in good hands. It is also my personal goal to make sure that everyone can spot a deus ex machina from 10 feet away. Thank you for your support — it is very much appreciated!”

Briania McGinnis, winner of the Pooley Prize for academic achievement:

“I plan to pursue a PhD in political theory at George-town University, beginning in fall 2007. This summer I will apply the Pooley Prize money toward a trip to Eu-rope to research and present on a pair of papers I have written about literature and politics. The first, ‘Saint Joan on the Slaughter Bench of History: Shaw’s Joan as Hegelian World-Historical Individual,’ will be presented at the New Directions in the Humanities conference at American University in Paris in July. The second, my ILS capstone project, will be expanded following a trip to London to review Virginia Woolf’s papers at various archives.”

Jeff Landow, awarded the Charles Anderson Award for best paper written in an ILS course:

“I will spend the next academic year (and this schol-arship money) getting myself certified to teach at the high-school level, and hope to start teaching English in 2008. I also will be actively looking for graduate schools to continue my English education.”

Claire Harley, winner of the Ruth Knatz Memorial Prize for an outstanding student majoring in a human-istic discipline:

“I am planning on working toward getting my teach-ing certificate in the next couple of years and will be able to use this money to fund my education and further my goal toward becoming a high school English teacher.”

Ford Scholars Hosted by ILS

During Alumni Week in May 2006, as in the prior year, ILS hosted the Reunion of the Ford Scholars (this time from the Class of 1956–57) at Meiklejohn House. We were delighted to visit with them, hear their reminis-cences, and catch up on their lives. They were also eager to catch up on the doings in ILS. Professor Laura McClure hosted the event.

The Ford Scholars Program was a Ford Foundation ex-periment that selected mature and bright 15 and 16 year-olds to begin college early, to increase the supply of pro-fessionals for the United States after World War II and to increase the number of college-educated persons in the military. Originally for men, the program expanded to include women. UW-Madison was one of 12 universities that participated, and ILS was much touted to the Ford Scholars by our own Professor Howe. The Ford Scholars and the role of their undergraduate hosts, ILS Professor Herbert Howe and his wife Evelyn Howe PhD, are pro-filed by the UW Foundation at: http://www.uwfoun da.tion.wisc.edu/media/documents/pdf/insights_06_fall. pdf.

Class of 1956-57 Ford Scholars
Professors Attend Summer School

Ten liberal arts faculty from around the country came to the UW-Madison campus this summer to learn, practice, and develop their discussion and facilitation techniques and skills, very much in the spirit of Meiklejohn’s Ex College and work with adult education in civic engagement in the San Francisco Bay Area. This faculty development conference or “Summer Institute” was sponsored by the Interactivity Foundation (http://www.interactivityfoundation.org/), a non-profit foundation dedicated to promoting and enhancing citizen discussion of public policy matters. ILS also supported this conference by acting as its campus sponsor for use of the UW’s conference facilities.

The goals of this Summer Institute were, first, to familize the faculty participants with the basic elements of a discussion process that the Foundation has developed for conducting citizen discussions of emerging areas of public policy, and, second, to collaborate with the faculty on developing and adapting elements of this discussion process for use in college courses to be taught on their home campuses during the 2007 spring semester. The broader objectives of the Interactivity Foundation are, in many ways, consonant with those of the ILS Program, generally—that is, to engage citizens and students in interdisciplin ary and integrated public discussions of emerging policy issues, to promote and enhance such discussions, and to further explore and develop the possibilities that may come from such discussions.

During the ten days of the Summer Institute, the participating faculty met with staff and fellows of the Interactivity Foundation that facilitating Adolf G. Gundersen, former ILS adjunct professor and teaching assistant) to learn, practice, collaborate on, and further develop a discussion process for active engagement and employs a broadly conceptual and interdisciplin ary approach to the development of ideas about future and long-term issues for public policy, similar to the ILS seminar approach.

ILS Faculty Recognition

Professor Klaus Berghahn, who teaches a wonderful course on Utopias for ILS, and is a professor of German, is one of four UW-Madison faculty members to receive the very competitive and prestigious 2007 Hilldale Awards, which recognize outstanding research and service. Klaus has received a number of awards from the university, including: a Ronnes fellowship, a Mid-Career Award and the Weinstein-Bascom Professorship in Jewish Studies. Professor Berghahn founded and has served as Director of the Center for German and Eu ropean Studies. He studied at the University of Cologne and holds his doctorate from the University of Munster.

Professor Howard Schweber won a 2006 Distinguished Teaching Award (the William H. Kiekhofer Award). Professor Schweber is a professor of political science who has taught in ILS and in 2003 won our Meiklejohn-Powell Faculty Fellowship. He is well-known and beloved for making his course in constitutional law lively and engaging, and always taking the devil’s advocate position to help students learn how to argue and defend their positions.

Professor Aaron Brower, who taught in ILS for many years and has served as our primary link to the Bradley Learning Community, where he has been Faculty Director for several years, has been named Vice Provost for Teaching and Learning at UW-Madison. A professor of social work, Aaron was a 2001 recipient of the Chancellor’s Award for Distinguished Teaching, helped create the FGCS (Freshman Interest Groups) courses on campus, and is well-regarded nationally as a scholar of learning communities and the integration of student life with academic life. The vice provost position oversees undergraduate education improvement, fosters connections between academic and student life, and is seeking to expand opportunities for student engagement through service learning, undergraduate research, learning communities and honors programs, all areas that ILS and Bradley Learning Community have strongly supported and with which we have been involved.

“Where in the World Is Werner?”

A Variation on the Wisconsin Idea

By Kathleen Sell, Professor, ILS, and Doug Bradley, UW-Madison Office of Corporate Relations.

According to the Wisconsin Idea, the boundaries of the university are the boundaries of the state. More recently, we have asserted in this globalized world that the boundaries of our responsibility to outreach are certainly national and international. So, we thought you might want to look at how this works for our ILS professors, by taking a look at the talks and presentations that our ILS Chair, Professor Craig Werner, has given around the country over the past year. Craig is very self-effacing and might be horrified at this publicity, but he is an excellent example of the commitment to UW-Madison’s outreach mission, and facilitating that we had to write this article. Any of our faculty could be profiled for their significant outreach, and in future issues of the newsletter, we hope to share all of the people and places to which scholarship takes us.

Whenever anyone asks us—“Where is Craig”?—we rush for the U.S. map and can point to a wide variety of locations:

- October: Denver University. A set of presentations on the relationship between African American and American Indian Culture.
- April: Presentation on Hip Hop and Soul music at a consortium of Philadelphia area private high schools.
- April: Presentation and reading by The Deadly Writers Patrol (see below) at the Vietnam Veterans Art Museum in Chicago.
- “The Mosaic of History and the Civil Rights Movement” presented at the New Jersey Project Conference at Monmouth College.
- “Call and Response: African American Music and Native American Storytelling” presented at Denver University’s Symposium on Native Americans and African Americans.
- “Sampling the Ancestors: Hip Hop, Soul and Gospel” presented at Wofford College, South Carolina.
- “Howard Thurman, Paul Tillich and the Voices of the Civil Rights Movement” presented at the Oral History Association Conference, Little Rock.

Like many of his generation, Professor Werner believes that the nation continues to be affected by the changes wrought by the war in Vietnam. But he is doing something about it too! While not a Vietnam veteran himself, Craig is a seminal member of the Deadly Writer’s Patrol (DWP), a veteran-centered writing group sponsored by the Madison, Wisconsin Veterans Center that supports veterans’ attempts to give voice to their feelings. With Craig’s assistance, DWP has begun publishing The Deadly Writer’s Patrol Magazine, issued three times a year, that provides a forum for writings that originate from the Vietnam experience.

In addition, Craig is combining his interest in Vietnam with his expertise in music to co-author with Vietnam veteran Doug Bradley (of UW-Madison’s Office of Corporate Relations) a book about music and Vietnam—if you will, the soundtrack of the Vietnam era. Titled We Gotta Get Out of This Place, their work tells the story of the Vietnam War through the music-based memories of dozens of veterans: male and female; black, white, Native and Chicano; from the Northeast and the Deep South, the Midwest, Rocky Mountains and California; combat soldiers and support troops. It also gives voice to the musicians and songwriters whose songs shaped the vets’ lives, among them Eric Burdon, Curtis Mayfield, Bruce Springsteen, Country Joe McDonald and John Fogerty.

We Gotta Get Out of This Place has already attracted an impressive amount of media interest and attention. The Washington Post, Minneapolis Star-Tribune, Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, and Denver Post have published feature articles on the project. A feature originally published in The Atlanta Journal-Constitution was streamed by the New York Times, and National Public Radio has picked up one of several shows originally broadcast on Wisconsin Public Radio. The authors have been invited to talk about the project at educational institutions and veterans’ organizations in Chicago, Philadelphia, the Bronx, Colorado, Kentucky, Wisconsin, Georgia, and North Carolina. Werner and Bradley are planning to teach an ILS course on this topic in 2008.

And, you can catch Craig on the airwaves or the Web: Craig just did a “University of the Air” show (Wisconsin Public Radio, available online for your listening pleasure) on Black Power and the Black Arts Movement (go to “http://wpr.org/uaa/” and select the show for April 19, 2007 to listen via RealPlayer) and Joy Cardin on May 3, 2007 (go to “http://www.wpr.org/cardin/” and select the 8 a.m. May 3 show) with Doug Bradley on their forthcoming book on the music of the Vietnam era.