

# Network News

Feminists on campuses across the country are developing and implementing innovative programming with the hopes of creating feminist communities for students, teachers, and surrounding communities. One of these programs is designed to empower young women by providing opportunities for leadership. One is structured to encourage students' intellectual development. Another provides a great example of how alliances can be established between feminists with very different political stances. The final example illustrates how ordinary activities like TV watching can become the basis for feminist conversations on campus. These examples illustrate the range of forms feminist programming might take. If you know of other interesting feminist programming, please tell us about it <feminist-teacher@uwec.edu>.

## **UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO AT COLORADO SPRINGS WOMEN'S STUDIES SMART-GIRL PROGRAM**

The UCCS Smart-Girl Program represents a unique collaboration between a University program (Women's Studies) and a local nonprofit organization, working together to make a difference in the lives of girls and women. The collaboration significantly benefits both the University and the Smart-Girl organization, and can serve as a model for university-community collaboration nationally. The mission of Smart-Girl is to encourage, support, and

inspire teen and preteen girls to make smart choices in order to become capable, resilient, self-reliant women. Smart-Girl began in 1999 as a grassroots organization. Since its inception, over fifty devoted individual donors and board contributions have financed the program. In 2003 and 2004 alone, board members provided over 4,200 volunteer hours.

Smart-Girl exists to help adolescent girls develop and practice the attitudes, skills and behaviors that will lead to success and self-sufficiency in adolescence as well as adulthood. Its objectives are to: 1) increase self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism, 2) develop leadership and communication skills, and 3) learn, develop, and practice critical-thinking skills. Small groups of middle-school girls are teamed with highly trained high school and college-aged female facilitators who direct preteen girls away from risky behaviors and toward self-confidence, accountability, and a deep sense of community. Together, girls and their facilitators explore issues such as relational aggression, problem solving, the media, and body image. Activities are designed specifically to appeal to middle-school girls, and facilitators avoid activities that feel like "regular school." The curriculum is experiential, non-didactic, inductive, evocative, and creative. The girls participate in art projects, role-playing, journaling, skits, games, poetry, and musical activities. The curriculum consists of over one hundred hours.

In 2003 the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs began a partnership with Smart-Girl to train and provide college credit to high school girls and undergraduate and graduate women who serve as guides for the groups. Now, each group of middle-school girls is facilitated by at least two trained guides, while a trained adult coach provides support and supervision. At the UCCS Smart-Girl Leadership Institute, high school girls and college women are trained to serve as guides for the Smart-Girl Program and to start new programs and become program directors. Program directors and peer guides complete an extensive twenty-seven-hour, college-level course taught by Smart-Girl founders, staff, and university faculty. Both high school and college students may enroll in the training for college credit either in women's studies at the undergraduate level or educational counseling at the graduate level. Training topics include cultural competency, group process and facilitation, developmental issues of pre-teens, contemporary social issues facing adolescent girls, bullying prevention with girls, and the Smart-Girl curriculum.

If you are interested in starting a Smart-Girl Program at your university or in your community, visit [www.smart-girl.org](http://www.smart-girl.org) or email Abby Ferber, Director of Women's Studies at UCCS <[aferber@uccs.edu](mailto:aferber@uccs.edu)>.

#### **UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT-STAMFORD'S FEMINIST SCHOLAR DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM**

Pending funding, The University of Connecticut-Stamford is kicking off The Feminist Scholar Development Program. The program pairs an undergraduate student with a faculty member to work on interdisciplinary research, course development, or

programming. The goal is to foster feminist research and publishing and to build a research dimension into the programming of the Center for Women's Studies. Students receive funding, mentoring, training, and opportunities for further collaboration (possibly co-authorship). The hope is that students will gain hands-on experience (i.e., writing summaries of articles, coding data, meeting with the principal investigators) that will contribute to their intellectual development.

Feminist Scholar Development recipients are encouraged to present works in progress and completed research in the Center for Women's Studies at local conferences and meetings. Presentations at the Center for Women's Studies will be open to the entire campus and local community.

#### **VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY PREGNANCY RESOURCE FORUM**

Vandy Fems, a student-led organization aimed at raising awareness of women's issues, and Vandy Students for Life, a non-religious organization focused on encouraging women to carry pregnancies to term, first aligned in 2004 in order to help Vanderbilt women who became pregnant. Together the organizations have held Pregnancy Resource Forums to provide students and any other interested parties with an overview of all the resources available to students who find themselves unexpectedly pregnant. Although Students for Life initially wanted the panel to provide information only about helping students carry their pregnancy to term, Vandy Fems insisted on providing information about abortion resources. Together the unlikely collaborators developed a panel that was satisfactory to both organizations. Although abortion services were

discussed, the panel addressed the various kinds of resources needed to carry a pregnancy to term. The moderator-led panel included representatives from the Office of Housing and Residential Life, the Office of Financial Aid, the Office of University Chaplain, The Margaret Cunningham Women's Center, the Psychological and Counseling Center, Student Health, Planned Parenthood, the Hope Clinic (a pro-life pregnancy resource center), and a nurse-midwives group. Afterward, the presidents of Vandy Fems and Vandy Students for Life led a brainstorming session to identify what resources are still lacking for pregnant Vanderbilt students. Working together, the organizations identified Vanderbilt offices that offer support for pregnant students. After the first forum, the organizations developed a brochure describing resources currently available and contact information for various campus offices and community organizations. The brochure is now widely available on campus. Vandy Fems and Vandy Students for Life have been applauded for unifying across political lines. In his 2005 commencement address, Chancellor Gordon Gee acknowledged the coalition formed by the two organizations, saying, "They came

together to support women in need, and their coming together for the Pregnancy Resource Forum was an absolutely shining moment in the university's history." The organizations plan on making the Pregnancy Resource Forum an annual event.

#### **TV WATCHING AT NORTHWESTERN**

The Gender Studies Scholars Group at Northwestern University has attempted to bridge feminism and popular culture through television watching and critical analysis. The group watches contemporary television shows like *Nip/Tuck*, *Sex and the City*, and *The L Word* and then discusses the programs. In a recent forum about the aforementioned television shows, the group concluded that through the shows' portrayals of marginalized sexualities and non-traditional gender roles, they serve an educational purpose. In addition, the group discussed how consumption of cultural practices impacts personal identity. Although the group acknowledged some positive aspects of these programs, it also identified representations still missing from television's cultural repertoire. Each month a group of students will select a topic and prepare a short presentation before leading a discussion.