

Letters & Science



BREAKING
page 18 **BIAS**



Reindeer husbandry is important to the Sámi of Scandinavia. Thanks in part to Professor Tom DuBois, Sámi culture was accurately represented in Disney's *Frozen II*, which hit theaters last November.

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FEATURES

18 Breaking Bias

Professor Patricia Devine has developed a set of “bias disruptors” to help people overcome the habit of implicit bias, and instead live their true values. The biggest question is: will they do it?

BY AARON R. CONKLIN

22 True North

When *Frozen II* hit theaters in November, many noted the movie’s consideration of indigenous Sámi people. Professor Tom DuBois, an expert on Sámi culture, consulted with Disney on this sequel, ensuring more accurate representation than seen in the original movie.

BY KATIE VAUGHN

28 Spreading Kindness

The Center for Healthy Minds’ Kindness Curriculum empowers young children to both feel and show kindness. When teachers in Wisconsin’s Fox Valley introduced it, they noticed calmer, more productive classrooms.

BY SARA IFERT



The Kindness Curriculum at work in a Madison classroom.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE CENTER FOR HEALTHY MINDS

#WeAreLS



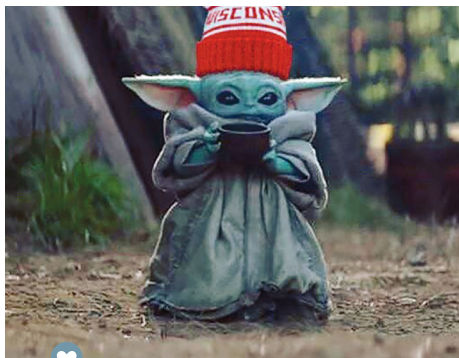
Last semester, UW students and members of the public came together in a class that examined the modern meaning of the Wisconsin Idea. Some of what they learned may surprise you.

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Life, Lady Liberty, and the pursuit of not slipping on the ice #FridayFeeling

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Happy study day! Baby Yoda wishes you luck of the best during finals season!

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Our *Letters & Science* alumni magazine won a gold award in the category of Best Specialized or Unit-Level Magazine from the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) as part of CASE's 2019 Pride of District V awards. It's a testament to the power of strategic storytelling!

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More sensors. New instruments. All to better understand how neutrinos oscillate between their three flavors: electron, muon and tau. Proud to be part of @uw_icecube!

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Letters & Science

SPRING 2020

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FROM THE DEAN

Meeting Challenges



As we were going to press with this edition of the *Letters & Science* magazine, I had written, and my wonderful colleagues had edited, an opening piece that I hoped would set an appropriate stage for the content of our spring magazine. Then came COVID-19. UW-Madison, like so many campuses around the country, wrestled with and ultimately made the difficult decision to cancel all in-person instruction and to quickly transition the spring semester — for at least the near future — to alternative, and remote, teaching. I do not know what the status of the pandemic or our response to it will be by the time you read this, but at this moment it is having a significant impact on this institution and our community.

Taking a step back from the immediate challenges we face as a result of this global pandemic, I am convinced more than ever of the importance of what we do in the College of Letters & Science. This broad-based education in the liberal arts and sciences is designed to prepare our students to think critically, communicate well and understand the natural world in which we live. It is hard to imagine a more valuable set of skills at a time like this. We are inundated with information, not all of which is accurate. It is our responsibility to teach our students how to “sift and winnow” in order to make sense of it all. It is our obligation to prepare our students to understand that how we deal with a crisis such as a pandemic is, in part, a question of how we interact with each other and the world

around us, and to teach both the qualitative and the quantitative reasoning skills needed to understand the remarkable flow of data. Meeting the challenges we face as a society demands the critical thinking skills inherent to a liberal arts and sciences education.

As I was walking across a largely empty campus this afternoon, I wondered about the stories we are telling and will tell about this moment. Through which lenses will writers and scholars examine our responses to COVID-19? What will we learn about ourselves, our societies and nature from this pandemic? How will our biases shape how we think and communicate about this virus and its impact? These questions reinforce the value of the work we do in the College of Letters & Science. Examples of that great work are in the stories in these pages and I am proud to share them with you.

By the time you read this, I hope that our students and faculty and staff are back in the classroom and able to work here on campus. But if they are not, I am confident in our shared commitment to stay connected, engaged and moving forward. Thank you for your continued support of the College of Letters & Science. It means the world to us.

Eric M. Wilcots

*Interim Dean and Mary C. Jacoby
Professor of Astronomy,
College of Letters & Science*



The “Our Shared Future” marker makes clear that the university occupies ancestral Ho-Chunk land.

PHOTO: BRYCE RICHTER

Sacred Ground

When Samantha Skenandore looks around the UW-Madison campus, she sees land that has been home to the Ho-Chunk people since time immemorial.

Skenandore, who graduated in 2001 with a degree in behavioral sciences and law and a certificate in American Indian studies, is a member of the Ho-Chunk Nation and a federal lawyer specializing in Indian law and tribal law. She spoke in September as part of the Wisconsin Union Directorate Distinguished Lecture Series. Her lecture was part of the “Our Shared Future” series, which aims to illuminate the history and traditions of the Ho-Chunk on campus.

Skenandore urged the audience to be mindful of this history as they spend time on the land.

“These spaces are sacred,” Skenandore said. “They were meant for you to go to them, to sit next to them, to think and grow and be part of them and take them in.”

2

A School for the Future

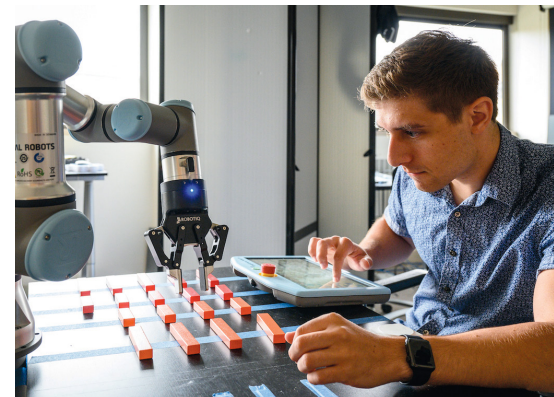
Data and information sciences are quickly transforming the world. This fall, UW-Madison and the College of Letters & Science created the School of Computer, Data & Information Sciences to meet the challenges, demands and opportunities of our data-driven era.

“Many disciplines here, ranging from astronomy to zoology, now need extensive computing and data processing support,” says CDIS founding director Tom Erickson. “Motivated by the high demand for workers with these skills, computer science has become the most popular major on campus, and new programs in CDI sciences are being created to meet the exploding demand.”

Headquartered within L&S, the new division includes the Departments of Computer Sciences and Statistics and the Information School, and is developing interdisciplinary programs within and beyond the college.

CDIS pairs in-depth learning of technical concepts and advanced analytical techniques with liberal arts coursework that covers the arts and humanities, social sciences and natural and physical sciences, allowing students to develop the skills needed to address the challenges that computing and big data have created, including issues of privacy, ethics, security and more.

PHOTO: BRYCE RICHTER



The Write Stuff

This fall, the Writing Center celebrated 50 years of helping not just UW–Madison students, but also faculty, public school teachers and community members improve their ability to communicate effectively through the written word. The list of services offered by the center — and the constituencies it now serves — reads like a Faulknerian run-on sentence.

Maybe you recall taking the elevator to the sixth floor of the Helen C. White Building, where a graduate teaching assistant spent an hour or so enlightening you on the virtues of topic sentences and changing passive to active voice. These days, satellite locations in dorms, libraries and other key campus locations facilitate student access multiple nights a week. Students can Skype with tutors, edit assignments collaboratively on a shared Google document, or receive helpful feedback on assignments submitted through email. And there's a Twitter feed (@uwwritingcenter).

As the Writing Center blazes into its second half-century, it is focusing on diversity and a series of partnerships with local schools, neighborhood centers and libraries to bring the center's writing expertise further into the community.



3

**“It’s raining
so hard
it’s like
you’re on a
boat in
a raging
river.”**

ABIGAIL GRICIUS,
a resident of Chaseburg, Wisconsin

Swollen by the epic 15-inch rainfall

in late August 2018, the Kickapoo River set flood-stage records up and down its valley in Southwest Wisconsin.

A UW–Madison undergraduate English seminar led by associate professor Caroline Gottschalk Druschke teamed up with the Driftless Writing Center to gather stories from those who weathered the natural disaster along the Kickapoo and nearby Coon Creek.

“Stories from the Flood, a Reflection of Resilience” has already gathered more than 70 written, audio and video interviews, with a goal of collecting and preserving at least 200 stories.

4

The number of storm simulations Atmospheric and Oceanic Sciences graduate student Ryan Clare ran, to help professor Ankur Desai determine whether snow cover can help predict the impact and trajectory of big storms. Read more at ls.wisc.edu/news/storm-chaser

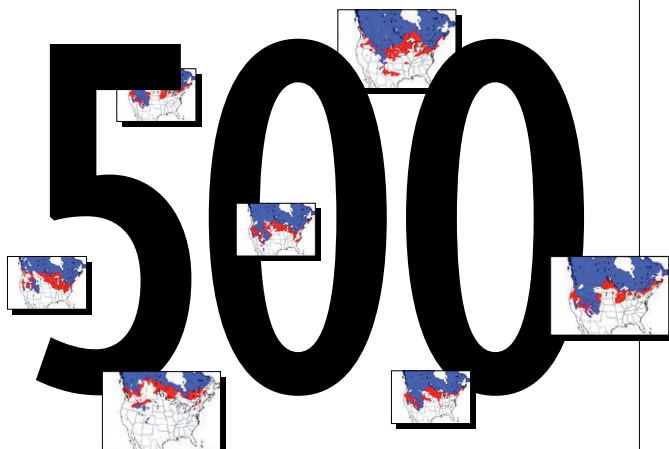


PHOTO: BRYCE RICHTER





Why are Wisconsin's walleye declining?

BY ADAM HINTERTHUER



Over the last few decades, walleye in Wisconsin have been on a downward trend. As lakes in the upper Midwest warm due to climate change, this cool-water species has found itself with less habitat in which to thrive. Yet the percentage of walleye that state and tribal resource managers allow to be harvested each year has stayed about the same.

In the late 1980s, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the Great Lakes Indian Fish & Wildlife Commission worked together to set sustainable harvest limits on walleye for both recreational and tribal fisheries.

Today, more than one million recreational anglers account for about 90 percent of the total annual harvest on the state's 900 "walleye lakes." The other 10 percent comes from the 450 tribal members who spear walleye on roughly 175 lakes each spring.

L&S Center for Limnology graduate student Holly Embke was lead author of a study published in November in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, which found that "40 percent of walleye populations are overharvested, which is ten times higher than the estimates fisheries managers currently use," she says.

A big reason for this "hidden overharvest," says Embke, is that, for the last 30 years, resource managers have focused on fish abundance and not fishery productivity when calculating harvest limits.

For her study, Embke says she wanted to take a more nuanced approach.

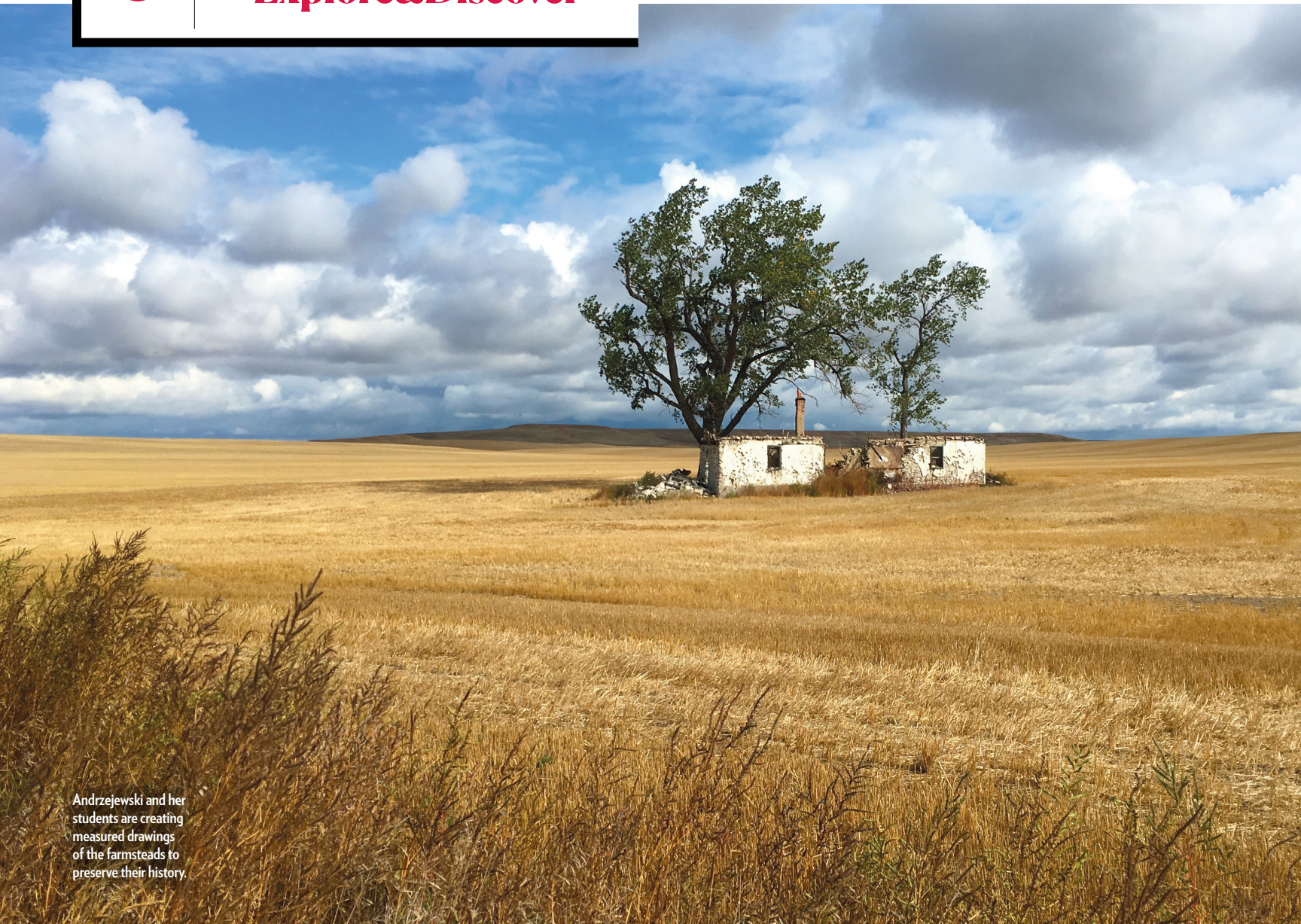
"We wanted to ask not only how many fish are in a lake, but also consider how fast they're growing, how big they are, and how many are produced every year," she says.

Using data that state and tribal researchers had already collected, Embke and her colleagues calculated how walleye biomass had changed over a 28-year period in 179 lakes. Measuring biomass is akin to throwing all of the walleye in a lake on a scale and recording the overall weight. Production is a reading of how much biomass grows each year, an indication of a population's ability to replenish its losses.

By comparing walleye production to the total fishery harvest in these study lakes, they found that overharvest is ten times higher than the four percent estimates generated when fisheries managers consider abundance alone.

By better understanding the resilience of Wisconsin walleye populations and by acknowledging the role that anglers play in reducing stocks, the future of this iconic fishery just may have a fighting chance. ■





Andrzejewski and her students are creating measured drawings of the farmsteads to preserve their history.

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF ANNA ANDRZEJEWSKI

FACULTY

A Building Narrative

Art history professor Anna Andrzejewski mines cultural insights from an unlikely source.

BY AARON R. CONKLIN

Anna Andrzejewski likes to joke that her family hates driving on the interstate with her, because she's always slowing down to look at buildings.

But there's a good reason Andrzejewski tends to drift into the slow lane. The professor of art history has based her career on studying vernacular architecture, a term that has lately come to refer to the ways

in which buildings designed by ordinary people intersect with our daily lives.

"One of the things that's always really interested me is how people use architecture as a way to organize

themselves and make community," explains Andrzejewski, who also serves as director of the UW's Center for Culture, History, and Environment.

In a world of buildings, Andrzejewski sees research possibilities virtually everywhere. That explains why she's currently splitting her time between an examination of post-World War II retirement communities in south Florida, where buildings have been hyper-engineered to withstand the waters of the Atlantic Ocean and the swamps of the Florida Everglades, and chronicling 19th-century farmsteads on the windy plains of North Dakota.

"I've always sort of arrived at what to study almost by accident," she says.

But once she arrives, she digs in. Beginning in 2017, Andrzejewski began spending her summers leading teams of graduate students onto the grassy tundra of west

“The buildings that we’re looking at out there are being plowed under at an astonishing rate. They’re just disappearing every time we go out there.”

ANNA ANDRZEJEWSKI

central North Dakota, there to study the stone and earth buildings built by Eastern European immigrants (such as Germans from Russia and German-Hungarians) who settled the area in the latter part of the 19th century. Stark County, located about 30 minutes outside Roosevelt National Park, is a landscape in transition, encroached on all sides by oil companies and commercial agriculture interests.

As they work to document the last vestiges of the historical record of these immigrant populations and the way they lived, Andrzejewski and her students (Art History Ph.D. students Laura Grotjan and Travis Olson and Geography Ph.D. candidate Carly Griffith) can hear the clock ticking.

“The buildings that we’re looking at out there are being plowed under at an astonishing rate,” she says. “They’re just disappearing every time we go out there. When we were out there last summer, there was a farmer who said, ‘Oh, you want to look at that one? Better go today, because I’m plowing it under tomorrow.’”

Through creating measured drawings, taking photographs, collecting oral histories and publishing e-books, Andrzejewski and her students have examined and chronicled the ways in which the settlers built their farmsteads, using the materials they knew and what was available to them at the time. In the process, they’ve discovered the ways in which the settlers gradually acclimated to their new environment.

“We saw very quickly how, within a generation or two, they started Americanizing their houses in various ways — through furniture or trim that they would get from town,” Andrzejewski says. “You start to see how the stone structures are being replaced with more modern houses, Sears kit houses for example. You can literally read the process of what we would call Americanization on the frontier.”



The structures Andrzejewski’s team are studying in North Dakota are constructed with materials the Eastern European immigrants had used in their homelands.

The team also found more than just German-Russians and German-Hungarians on the plains. Different architectural forms and layouts — houses that also doubled as barns and bright paint colors on the interior and exterior of the structures — served as evidence that other ethnic groups, such as Estonians and Ukrainians, had settled and blended there.

As a devotee of public scholarship, Andrzejewski is deeply committed to demonstrating the value of these settlements to the world. Assuming she can keep landing grants to support the work — and the state of North Dakota just awarded her another \$20,000 to fund another summer of work — she thinks she and her students have perhaps five more years to study the farmsteads.

“There aren’t that many landscapes of these particular European settlement groups within the boundaries of the continental United States and their stories need to be recorded in the face of threats to it,” she says. “It’s a case of getting out there and doing the kind of work we do to preserve the history before it’s gone.” ■

PHOTO: PAULIUS MUSTEIKIS

Andrzejewski’s research interests encompass prairie cabins and retirement communities in Florida.



TEACHING

Stage Direction

Sandra Adell discovered the magic of theater when she was invited to perform in a skit at the Wisconsin sesquicentennial celebration in 1998. Since then, this professor of Afro-American studies, who has an extensive background in comparative literature, has built her entry-level class on African-American dramatic literature around the principles of acting and theater, using drama as a key to unlock her students' imaginations and get them to discuss difficult issues surrounding race and ethnicity.

BY AARON R. CONKLIN

Theater changed the way I teach, because it made me more open. I became more creative in the classroom. And that's not an easy thing to do, especially when you're teaching Black literature and theater, written by African-Americans, to a group of predominantly white students.

We usually start with Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*, which some of them may have read, and then two or three weeks later, I add material where you really cannot avoid discussing the ugliness of racism, for example, the popularity of blackface entertainment on this campus in the 1920s. This is often the first opportunity many of the white students have had to talk about issues pertaining to race and racism in a classroom setting.

We read some serious plays but we also do fun stuff, like performing scenes from some of the plays. This is not an acting class, but I let them know from the start that we're going to do some scenes.

Last semester we went to see University Theatre's production of Bruce Norris' *Clybourne Park*. The students were required to take notes and write a play review. And they came back the next week having written these great reviews. They saw the strengths and the weaknesses of the play. They even talked about blocking, lighting, and set design because now they have the language for it. I've turned them all into writers, I've turned them all into critics, reviewers. I've turned them all into scholars. They like that.

These students have had some serious discussions about race and the impact that racism in this environment has on students of color. They also learned a lot about African-American theater.

My hope is that if nothing else, they've acknowledged that racism is a systemic problem. And if there's any kind of sense of responsibility, it's what they do with what they've learned and what they pass on to the young folks who're coming behind them. ■



Adell: "I've turned them all into writers. I've turned them into critics, reviewers."

PHOTO: COURTESY OF ELIZABETH HENNESSY



Elizabeth Hennessy scrubs the carapace of a giant tortoise before he gets a GPS accelerometer tag allowing scientists to track his movements on Santa Cruz Island.

RESEARCH

Sharing Paradise

A realistic vision for the future of the Galápagos Islands.

BY ERIC HAMILTON

In the summer of 2012, the eulogies rang out. "There will never be another like him," reported the *New York Times*. The most famous tortoise to have ever lived — Lonesome George — was dead.

Lonesome George became a global sensation when he was discovered on the Galápagos Island of Pinta in 1971, the last known member of his species. He was a fitting symbol for the islands named by the Spanish after the giant tortoises that call them home. The heroic efforts to have George sire a new generation, and his ultimate failure to do so, seemed only to confirm humankind's destructive tendencies and the further need to restore the Galápagos Islands to a time before people, to construct a "new Eden."

But it's time to turn the page on that view of a spoiled paradise, says Elizabeth Hennessy, assistant professor of history and environmental studies. Hennessy has studied the Galápagos and the relationships among conservationists, tourists and residents there since 2007. In her research, which combines science studies, environmental history and political ecology, Hennessy argues for making people integral to conservation work, not antithetical to it. And she wants to dispel persistent myths about conservation work on the islands and elsewhere.

"For several decades, the rhetoric of conservation focused on preserving the Galápagos as a

nearly untouched natural laboratory," she says. "But people are part of the ecosystem. The challenge for conservation is how to best interact with both residents and tourists."

In the 20th century, conservationists and biologists made the Galápagos Islands the poster child of what Hennessy calls the "pristine model" of conservation. The islands seemed a perfect choice. Not only did they help inspire Charles Darwin's theory of evolution, but they also lacked an indigenous population, which meant that humans were relative newcomers to the islands over the past 500 years.

"To build a conservation of living together and sharing the planet, you have to have a sense of history," says Hennessy. "This idea of the pristine is a false reading of history."

The reality is the islands were anything but pristine by the time Darwin arrived on the *Beagle*. Pirates and whalers had let goats and rats loose and hunted animals, including giant tortoises, for food. Darwin himself dined on tortoises. But the idea of restoring the islands to an evolutionary paradise secured funding and won the hearts of visitors. Tortoises began adorning conservation institution logos and tourist souvenirs alike as a symbol of nature in need of protection. The tortoises themselves, like Lonesome George, attracted thousands.

Today, some 30,000 people live on the islands. Clashes between residents and conservationists over resources and regulations have shown the limits of a conservation strategy that ignores people or, worse, demonizes them. That's a mistake, Hennessy says.

"I want people to understand the history of Galápagos in a way that makes space for people there — conservation needs to look forward, not back toward restoring the past," says Hennessy. ■

PHOTO: PAULIUS MUSTEIKIS

CAREER PREP

Best Self Forward

SuccessWorks helps students bring their authentic selves to the workplace and thrive.

BY MARY ELLEN GABRIEL

How many of us bring our whole selves to work? We tend to dress, talk and act differently around our co-workers than we would at home or with our friends. Professional expectations, etiquette and organizational culture all help determine our work personas. For recent graduates, learning to navigate this new terrain can be exciting, empowering — and challenging.

While they are in college, L&S students are encouraged to embrace heritage and gender identities, seek supportive communities and develop their own strong voices as part of their campus experience. Now,

career prep can support this process of self-discovery — and even help them leverage it in the job market.

As part of its mission to help all L&S students to succeed, SuccessWorks at the College of Letters & Science has developed Identity at Work, a web-based hub directing students to expert resources on navigating the job and internship search process and thriving in the workplace, especially as these activities intersect with their identities.

“Identity is a key and important component of our students’ personal and professional development,” says Rebekah Pryor Paré, Associate Dean and SuccessWorks’ Executive Director. “Identity at Work is part of a broader effort at SuccessWorks to address our students’ unique needs and create a more inclusive campus. We include resources for LGBTQIA+ students, students with disabilities, undocumented students, veterans and service members, women, international students and students with multicultural identities.”

For each of these student populations, Identity at Work serves as a portal to on-campus resources, job boards, professional associations, networking groups, legal resources and other helpful, expert-driven information.

“It’s designed to help students feel they are not alone,” says Jorge Zuñiga, who advises students at SuccessWorks. “It honors the idea that people will come to work with different experiences and identities that should be celebrated.”

The College of Letters & Science has the highest proportion of students from underrepresented groups at UW-Madison. This means that “different populations of students have different needs at different times,” according to Paré.

“In general, hiring and professional practices are

culturally-specific, so the career preparation advice we give to students from different backgrounds may vary, depending on a student’s particular circumstance,” she explains. “Identity at Work helps students understand their rights in the workplace and it gives them opportunities to connect with employers, seek out mentorship, and feel empowered to represent themselves authentically.”

Forbes.com ran a story last spring on the importance of being authentic at work, acknowledging the risk involved for anyone belonging to a minority group. The authors, Randall S. Peterson and Kathleen O’Connor of the London Business School, asked: “To feel fully authentic at work, LGBTQ employees may wish to display photos of their partners or spouses. Can they bring their whole selves to work in this way? How much authenticity can religious people experience when meetings are scheduled at

“[Identity at Work] honors the idea that people will come to work with different ideas and identities that should be celebrated.”

JORGE ZUÑIGA,
Career & Internship Specialist

ILLUSTRATION: SARA WONG



times when they are observing their religious traditions? Can ethnic minorities feel authentic when they are discouraged from wearing traditional dress at work?" It's not only the employees who suffer when denied authenticity — the organization cheats itself, as well, choking off creativity and preventing true connection.

The idea for Identity at Work came from the information students were sharing in the advising surveys they were asked to fill out, says Zuñiga.

"More and more students have been sharing aspects of their identities," he explained. "As advisors, it gave us a better understanding of their unique needs and we realized there was more we could do as an office."

At first, a working group created an internal database of resources they could draw on to advise students, but then advisor and internship coordinator Kathleen Rause

suggested sharing it with students. The online hub became a sneakily simple innovation that Paré says other colleges and universities have yet to implement on this scale.

"In L&S, we serve half of the entire UW-Madison student population, which means we have not only vast numbers of career interests and opportunities, but also students with a great variety of identities and ways they can play out in a work setting. So, we set out to build the best, most comprehensive resource possible," Paré says.

Since launching in fall 2019, Identity at Work has been one of the most-visited pages on the SuccessWorks website.

"We want our students to know that we value them as people, in all of their identities," says Rause. "The qualities that make them who they are, in addition to career skills, are a big part of the value they bring to any workplace." ■





Professor Rania Huntington (left) and student Yixian Gan (right) examine the *Ertan leizing*, first published in 1603.

STUDENTS

Power of Research

It's not just for STEM majors or super-connected overachievers. The Undergraduate Research Scholars Program connects L&S students with faculty via a wide spectrum of fascinating projects — opening minds and changing lives.

BY MARY ELLEN GABRIEL

Two years ago, Rania Huntington and Yixian Gan embarked on a mysterious journey. Together, the professor of Asian languages and cultures and the freshman international student set out to map “records of the strange” from ancient China, using QGIS, an open-source, state-of-the-art software program. These stories appear in a volume known as *Ertan leizing* (*Tales for the Ear, Expanded by Categories*), first published in 1603.

While many of the stories contain elements of the supernatural — ghosts, reincarnations — they were not considered fairy tales or fables.

“They are more like what we’d call urban legends,” Huntington explains.

“They are purported to have really happened. Someone heard the story from someone else. It wasn’t thought to be made up out of thin air.”

For Huntington, where these stories happened in China is of great scholarly interest, because locations can help fill in missing gaps in her study of this literary genre. She calls it a window into the “geographic imagination” of the people who lived then.

The project was launched through the Undergraduate Research Scholars Program (URS), which connects undergraduate L&S students with opportunities to work one-on-one with faculty on research projects across a wide spectrum of disciplines. The program can be exciting — even life-changing — for students and faculty alike.

Gan, whose knowledge of Chinese allowed him to take part in translation and transcription, as well as mapping, was surprised to discover that quite a few “horrific” tales were clustered in his hometown of Beijing.

“That was interesting and creepy at the same time,” he admits.

But Gan, who is a double-major in computer science and applied math and engineering physics, acknowledges a more profound impact as well. This year, he applied for, and received, a prestigious Sophomore Research Fellowship to continue the project. He says the benefit of working with a renowned expert in Chinese literature on a humanities-based project has been invaluable.

“At first, I was drawn to the project because of the computer science, working with QGIS,” Gan says. “But as I went further, reading and transcribing these stories, I gradually started to appreciate the literary and artistic value of the tales. This project helped me gain a deeper understanding of my own culture.”

A “high-impact practice”

One of the benefits of studying in the College of Letters & Science at a university the size of UW-Madison is the wealth of opportunities for undergraduate research. URS, which started in the late 1990s, offers a highly rewarding framework for students interested in research — many of whom have very little idea what it entails. Some may think it’s just for STEM majors — a misconception that URS director Hannah Bailey is eager to correct.

“Research is for anyone,” says Bailey. “And while the hard sciences have a strong infrastructure for collaboration, some of our richest mentorship opportunities have come from the arts and humanities.”

Students earn credit while gaining valuable experience interacting with faculty, honing their research skills and learning to articulate the goals and outcomes of a research project.

URS has become a signature high-impact practice within the College of

Letters & Science. The program encourages participation by students from underrepresented groups and provides support through a weekly seminar with fellow program participants and peer mentors.

Rewards go both ways

Faculty, too, benefit from the URS experience.

For example, Huntington is finding that the computer sciences expertise of her student team allows for more interesting ways of interacting with the software she’s using to map the ghost stories. And she says that her undergraduate researchers bring an “openness” that is refreshing.

“For them, anything is possible,” she says.

Alfonso Morales, a Vilas Distinguished Achievement Professor in the Department of Planning and Landscape Architecture, has been involved with URS for the past 10 years. Currently, he’s working with URS student Mingqi Yan on a toolkit that supports farmers market managers in the United States and Canada. But he always appreciates seeing how students grow from conducting research and collaborating with graduate students and older undergraduates, many of whom are former URS students.

“I get a special pleasure when I see insight developing in a student from the work they do,” he says. “I often see that lightbulb moment when they interact with me and other students — it’s a thrill and always makes me smile.”

Fellows model inquiry

To ensure URS students get the most out of their research positions, the program requires that students gather each week in seminar sessions led by URS fellows, typically juniors and seniors who have been through the program.

In a safe space guided by fellows who have walked in their shoes, students gain confidence, and a community, Bailey says.

“It’s a testing ground for ideas,” Bailey adds. “They learn to ground their ideas with evidence and challenge each other.

It’s a different kind of thinking than most are used to.”

Janiece Piolet counts her two years as a URS Research Fellow as among the most rewarding of her UW-Madison career. She’d done social science research through the program as a freshman and wanted to “give back.”

“I wanted to help others understand the power of critical discourse,” she says. “Part of the URS mission is to create a diverse and inclusive community that includes students from underrepresented groups, and I wanted to be a part of a program that recognizes the agency of marginalized communities and the invaluable knowledge that they possess.”

Piolet, who graduated this past December as a double major in psychology and sociology with a certificate in educational policy studies, will head to graduate school in the fall, and she credits URS for setting her on a fulfilling path.

“URS taught me that graduate school is possible, even for a Black girl from the west side of Chicago,” she says. “It is undoubtedly a part of my continued success as a scholar.” ■

A map created by students using QGIS showing a cluster of “strange tales” settings.



CULTURE

Africa
Writ Large

Ainehi Edoro is sharing a continent's worth of literature through social media — with the intent to delight.

BY LOUISA KAMPS

Once you start clicking through *Brittle Paper*, the sprawling digital magazine Ainehi Edoro created to chronicle African literature and literary culture, it's hard to stop: One link takes you to a blurb covering the Oxford English Dictionary's recent inclusion of 29 Nigerian words, the next to a hefty profile of a globally influential British-Zimbabwean fiction editor who's opening doors for many writers from Africa and the African diaspora. There's a short,

sweet story about a Congolese-French novelist's affinity for dapper fashion. One more link takes you to an eclectic list of 50 notable books written in 2019 by African poets, novelists, and essayists that reads — yes! — like a tip sheet from your coolest cosmopolitan friend.

Edoro, a Nigerian-born UW-Madison assistant professor of English, started *Brittle Paper* in 2010 as a personal blog but later redesigned her site to become a digital hub where scholars and critics could write about the work of African authors in a purposefully broad and engaging way. *Brittle Paper* covers the history and tradition of African literature, and it does not shy from difficult topics — to mark the recent 50th anniversary of Nigeria's Biafran War, the site posted a list of 50 books addressing the war's causes and implications. But Edoro has also made sure *Brittle Paper* is full of texture and vivid contrasts. A primary aim of the site, she says, is to spotlight African fiction, memoirs, graphic novels, queer writing, and poetry collections in "a loving way, for readers who just want to know, is this book fun?"

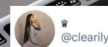
Edoro works with three other editors to produce *Brittle Paper* and its smart, lively social media feeds. Together they count clicks, study popular fashion and lifestyle blogs and text daily to make sure they've hit on the right mix of long and short pieces, provocative display type, and playful updates on literary life to keep readers coming back for more.

"I've wanted to imagine an African literature that is centered on readers and readers' desires, as opposed to always teaching the reader, instructing the reader," Edoro says. "And I think that we are helping to shift the vector of mainstream African literature away from a pedagogical model to one that is based on readers' tastes. Literature is changing in ways that are beautiful and interesting, and at the end of the day," she says, "we just want readers to care about reading and connect with books in a way that's meaningful for them." ■



3 TV ADAPTATIONS
OF BOOKS BY
AFRICAN AUTHORS
TO WATCH OUT
FOR IN THE 2020S

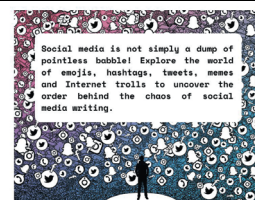
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9 FILM ADAPTATIONS
OF BOOKS BY
AFRICAN AUTHORS
TO WATCH OUT FOR
IN THE 2020S

(based on what
we know so far)



SPRING 2020 | ENG. 178.001

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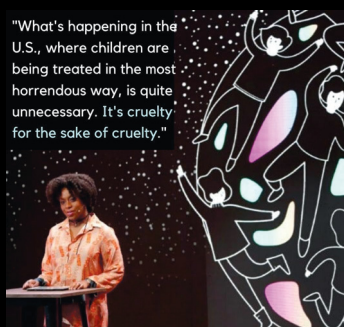


RADIOBOOK
RWANDA

QUOTES FROM
5 AFRICAN
WOMEN WRITERS
TO HELP YOU
JUMPSTART
YOUR WRITING
DREAMS



"What's happening in the
U.S., where children are
being treated in the most
horrendous way, is quite
unnecessary. It's cruelty
for the sake of cruelty."



4 SUPER COOL
T-SHIRTS
NNEDI
OKORAFOR
OWNS THAT
WE WANT

(because who
dresses like
Chimamanda)

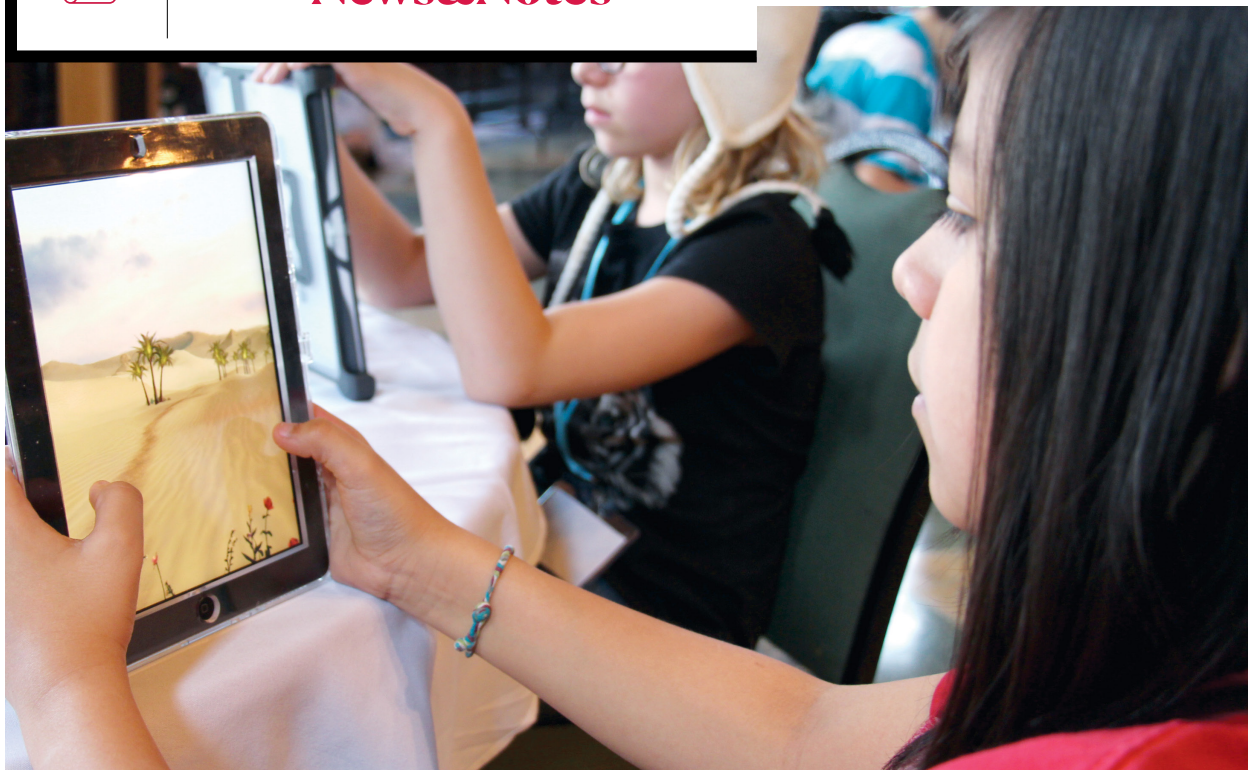


PHOTO: MARIANNE SPOON / CENTER FOR HEALTHY MINDS

The video game *Tenacity* leads players through relaxing landscapes to improve the attention spans of middle schoolers.

Mindful Gaming

The UW Center for Healthy Minds partnered with researchers at the University of California-Irvine to develop *Tenacity*, a mobile video game designed to improve the attention spans of middle schoolers. In a research study, the game, which teaches mindfulness and breath-counting as it leads players through a series of calming landscapes, demonstrated a positive impact on the areas of the brain tied to attention span.

It Came From a Can

L&S alumna Anna Zeide (History of Science, '14) won the 2019 Best Reference, History and Scholarship Book Award from the James Beard Foundation for her book *Canned: The Rise and Fall of Consumer Confidence in the American Food Industry*. In the book, Zeide, who was supported by a fellowship from the Center for Humanities during

her time at UW, examines the origins of the canned food industry.

There Will Be an App for That

Department of Psychology professor John Curtin is part of a team that received a \$3.42 million grant from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to develop a phone-based app to help motivated patients avoid a relapse of opioid addiction. The app is designed to monitor phone activity and predict likely instances of relapse and builds on previous work Curtin has done with alcohol addiction.

Hey, Genius

International sea-level rise expert Andrea Dutton, a recent addition to the Department of Geoscience faculty, was one of two UW-Madison professors to receive a prestigious

MacArthur Foundation Genius Grant. (Art professor Lynda Barry was the other.) Dutton, who studies fossilized coral structures to use past sea-level changes to predict future levels in shifting climate conditions, is currently studying ice sheets in New Zealand.

Teach 'Em How to Say Goodbye

Lisa Kamal, a geology major who gave the student address at the 2019 Winter Commencement ceremony, dropped several references to the popular Broadway musical "Hamilton" into her remarks, striking a chord not just among the more than 7,300 attendees at the Kohl Center, but around the world. Video of her speech went viral, reaching millions of people on social media platforms. You can watch it here: go.wisc.edu/gradspeech2019

HONOR ROLL



Gregory Nemet of the La Follette School of Public Affairs was awarded the first-ever World Citizen Prize for Environmental Performance from the Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management (APPAM), for the research that fueled his book, *How Solar Energy Became Cheap: A Model for Low Carbon Innovation*.



John Valley, an emeritus professor in the Department of Geoscience, received the Arthur L. Day Medal from the Geological Society of America, commemorating a career spent developing new techniques to explore and quantify isotope compositions from small samples.



Assistant professor **Shimon Kolkowitz** became just the third UW-Madison physics professor to be selected as a Packard Fellow for Science and Engineering in the award's 32-year history. The fellowship will fund his research on ultra-precise atomic clocks.

MORE L&S NEWS AT LS.WISC.EDU/NEWS



BREAKING BIAS

After spending her career studying it from every imaginable angle, psychology professor Patricia Devine has found the tools to triumph over implicit bias. The question is, are people motivated to use them?

BY AARON R. CONKLIN

A few years ago, Patricia Devine was attempting to rile up a class of graduate students, and she settled on a sure-fire topic: prejudice.

“One of the issues I was trying to figure out was whether we could trust what people report verbally given that their spontaneous reactions often belied their verbal reports,” says Devine, UW-Madison professor of psychology and director of the UW’s Prejudice and Intergroup Relations Laboratory. “People tell us that they don’t want to be prejudiced. They don’t want to be biased. But there’s this competing notion that they’re telling you that because that’s socially desirable, socially acceptable. Hence many people denied the validity of the verbal reports in favor of their difficult-to-control spontaneous reactions. I asked, is it possible for both to be true?”

Her students, at least initially, were stunned into silence.

It’s a thorny question Devine — and the rest of modern society as well — has been wrestling with for most of her career. But after nearly three decades of identifying and studying the problem of implicit bias — the idea that it is, in fact, possible for a person to simultaneously reject prejudice and still react to stereotypes and behave in prejudicial ways — there’s nobody who knows it quite as well as she does. Her 1989 dissertation, the one that first laid out the conundrum, is among the most cited in the social sciences.

“When I started working on these issues, there weren’t a lot of people working on them,” says Devine. “And now the field has transformed and it’s one of the central issues.”

Devine’s focus has changed, too, from identification to eradication. Over the past decade, she and a team of UW scientists have developed an interactive workshop

Devine's original dissertation on the conundrum of implicit bias is among the most cited in the social sciences.

designed to break bias by making people aware of how insidiously it takes hold. Participants begin by taking the Harvard Implicit Association Test, a reactive experience that measures the strength of a person's associations between social categories and stereotypic attributes. Participants quickly discover there's a reason why we so easily pair, say, black with athleticism and white with academics. "Students walk across campus, they see a tall Black man, and some may think he's on the basketball team," notes Devine. "They don't run up and say, 'Are you on the basketball team?' They have no evidence whatsoever bearing on the validity of the assumption. But the mind treats that inference as though it's valid evidence and the inference leads to the perpetuation

of the bias over time. This is tricky stuff to overcome."

The real key, says Devine, is inducing motivation. To make any progress at all, individuals must want to overcome their own unconscious biases.

"We point out that the associations are just that — associations," says Devine, leaning forward earnestly. "The ease with which these associations come to mind doesn't mean that they reflect your values. If your values are different, then we help you understand that these associations function like a habit, and we can use the power of your conscious mind to try to overcome those habitual responses. The next step is to tune into or recognize when they are most vulnerable to responding with bias that they don't intend and

PHOTO: PAULIUS MUSTEIKIS




don't want. Making people aware of these moments is important because these are the leverage points to address the unwanted bias. That's the leverage point. These are the moments when you can do something different."

The "something different" has taken the form of tools Devine likes to refer to as "bias disruptors," a set of five tools she and her colleagues have developed. Tools like stereotype replacement, where you might look at a disheveled man walking toward you on the street, and, instead of assuming he's a threatening homeless man and crossing the street to avoid him, consider that he could just as easily be a businessman coming home from a casual workout at the gym. Other strategies involve focusing on the individual rather than making stereotypic assumptions about the person based on social group membership and looking for opportunities to connect with groups we tend to stereotype.

"We don't just bring people to the brink of awareness and then say, 'So don't do it,'" says Devine. "We try to help them figure out how not to do it, how to live their values, specifically, what they could do instead. Further, we are straightforward in noting that breaking the bias habit, just like breaking other habits, requires sustained effort over time. And we've done the research to evaluate the impact of our bias habit-breaking intervention."

That impact can be eye-popping. In 2015, Devine partnered with Molly Carnes, the director of the UW's Center for Women's Health Research, to examine, and potentially reduce, gender bias in departmental units covering all fields of science, engineering, and medicine across UW-Madison. Over the course of the two-year study, 92 departments were broken into two groups—46 departments served as control departments and 46 departments received the bias training. At the end of the study, which made use of Devine's bias disruptor tools, faculty in the latter group reported engaging in more bias-reducing actions and experiencing a more inclusive departmental climate. These departments also saw their hiring rate for women jump from 33 to



WE HELP YOU UNDERSTAND THAT THESE ASSOCIATIONS FUNCTION LIKE A HABIT, AND WE CAN USE THE POWER OF YOUR CONSCIOUS MIND TO TRY TO OVERCOME THOSE HABITUAL RESPONSES.

PATRICIA DEVINE
professor of psychology and director
of the UW's Prejudice and Intergroup
Relations Laboratory

47 percent, while the control group's hiring rate remained fixed at 33 percent.

"That translated to 31 new women being hired in those departments," says Devine. "it's very exciting that we see this impact play out in a really consequential way."

Carnes is now leading the Bias Reduction in Internal Medicine (BRIM) Initiative, a national effort to use similar strategies to reduce not just gender bias, but bias arising from other negative group stereotypes as well (e.g., race, sexual orientation, disability, obesity).

"As part of this, we're looking to see if changes in attitudes and behaviors made by individual faculty members in departments of medicine can influence department climate, which is related to faculty retention and physician burnout."

If the medical community can embrace this, it stands to reason that other industries—military, police, corporations—can do so as well, Devine points out. "What is perhaps most exciting about the program of work is that people can become agents of change within themselves and within the social contexts in which they live and work."

But even backed by strong evidence that her bias habit-breaking approach is working, Devine would be the first to admit the battle's far from won. The modern digital landscape, for instance, can be a daily superhighway of bias reinforcement, with countless social media platforms influencing younger generations with new (and old) insidious stereotypes. Along with William Cox, an assistant scientist, Devine has broadened the workshop to apply to biases beyond race or gender, particularly in the online space.


She is also working on interventions. With associate professor Kristin Shutts and graduate student Katharine Scott, she is developing ways parents can identify and combat bias in their children. And with Emily Dix, another graduate student, she is developing an intervention aimed at white people who deny the negative impacts of bias. Assessing the outcome of these interventions (which she is working on with graduate student Megan Bruun) will show how well they're working. Devine recently received a William T. Grant Foundation research award to work with researchers in South Carolina on using unconscious bias training with teachers to reduce racial and behavioral disparities in the classroom. The research possibilities, it seems, could encompass another three decades.

Devine is ready for it.

"Recognizing that we are vulnerable to these biases, and that we could take steps to address them, that's just the beginning of the journey," says Devine. ■

True North





Scandinavian studies professor
Tom DuBois collaborated
with Disney to make *Frozen II*
an authentic representation
of indigenous Nordic cultures.

BY KATIE VAUGHN

A scene from the
movie *Frozen II*.

PHOTO: DISNEY

The first impression *Frozen*, Disney’s 2013 animated blockbuster inspired by Hans Christian Andersen’s *The Snow Queen*, makes is through music. As the opening credits appear onscreen, viewers hear a “vuelie,” a song of the Sámi people indigenous to what is now northern Norway, Sweden and Finland.

Viewers next see ice harvesters and a boy dressed in clothes inspired by Sámi outfitting — a young Kristoff, with his reindeer sidekick Sven in tow — but their attention is quickly directed to the fictional town of Arendelle, where Princess Elsa is concealing magical powers. And it stays there for most of the movie, leaving just a hint of the people who have shaped Scandinavia since ancient times.

In the highly anticipated sequel, which hit theaters in November 2019, indigenous Scandinavian culture plays a major role — and is authentically and respectfully portrayed, thanks in part to Tom Dubois, a folklorist and chair of the Department of German, Nordic, and Slavic.

Frozen II sees Elsa, along with sister Anna and friends Kristoff, Sven and snowman Olaf, leaving the kingdom to trace the origins of her powers. The group is drawn to an enchanted forest, where they meet members of the Northuldra — a fictional indigenous group inspired by the Sámi’s clothing, dwellings and connection to nature — and Arendellian soldiers who have been trapped in the woods for more than 30 years.

“*Frozen II* moves out of Arendelle and goes north,” DuBois says. “They’re in a very different world, and the film really takes that original vuelie as motivation.”



Frozen II features the Northuldra (top) — a fictional indigenous group inspired by the Sámi people (bottom) of Norway, Sweden and Finland.





PHOTOS: DISNEY (TOP), ANNA ÖHLUND / IMAGEBANK, SWEDEN, SE (BOTTOM)

Hollywood Calls

So how did a UW-Madison professor who's been teaching and studying Sámi culture for three decades come to influence the follow-up to the highest-grossing animated film to date? It has a lot to do with DuBois' reputation and connections.

One of DuBois' former graduate students, Jackson Crawford, had been teaching at UCLA and provided cultural expertise for the first *Frozen*. When Disney decided to explore the Sámi side of the story in a sequel, Crawford insisted DuBois was the expert to consult.

DuBois held a "Skype seminar" for Disney, answering questions and providing an introduction to indigenous Nordic cultures. Then he and a handful of others helped Walt Disney Animation Studios' head of creative development plan a two-week itinerary to Finland, Norway and Iceland for the film's creative team.

"They had very specific requests," DuBois recalls. "They said, for instance, 'We need to see a forest in the fall.' There was lavish attention to all of the details—what the light is like, what the leaves look like, how they sound crunching on the ground. They wanted to soak all this up."

DuBois wasn't able to join the Disney team on that trip, as fall 2016 classes had just begun at UW. But he connected them with his friends and contacts across Scandinavia, which provided a full picture of Sámi contemporary life and history.

"Every Disney Animation film begins with research," says Peter Del Vecho, producer of both *Frozen* films. "Tom introduced us to individuals from the Sámi

“Not only
do Sámi
children see
themselves
represented
in the movie,
but they
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language.
It’s incredibly
powerful.”

TOM DUBOIS
Halls-Bascom Professor of
Scandinavian Folklore,
Folklore, and Religious Studies

community who helped us deepen our connection to the region. We are grateful for his collaboration.”

Also crucial was the Disney team connecting with leaders of the Sámi Parliaments of Norway, Sweden and Finland. The Parliaments created an advisory group, called the Verddet, to assist the filmmakers in accurately and respectfully portraying their culture in the movie. And as part of the collaboration, they requested that *Frozen II* be dubbed in Sámi, as well as Norwegian, Swedish and Finnish.

“Not only do Sámi children see themselves represented in the movie, but they hear it in their own language,” says DuBois. “It’s incredibly powerful.”

The International Sámi Film Institute praised the project, stating on Facebook that there are few films for Sámi children and to have such a major movie offered in their language is “just unbelievable and such a precious gift.” The group

added that the cooperative approach “is groundbreaking in so many ways and a good example of how companies can collaborate with indigenous peoples in a truly respectful way.”

Star Power

DuBois hopes audiences enjoy the film as much as he does, even if they didn’t get to view it at the movie’s official wrap party in Pasadena, as he did back in November.

“It was wildly fantastic,” he says of the event for the roughly 300 contributors to the film, plus other guests.

In addition to the movie itself, what DuBois found most touching was the film screened beforehand, a video showing elements of the research trip he helped organize. Another highlight was the final frame of the movie’s credits — a special thanks to the cultural advisors, which included DuBois, his colleagues and friends in Scandinavia and Colin Connors, a graduate student who helped lead the Disney team on a visit to Iceland during their research trip.

Back on campus, DuBois has appreciated talking with his students about his experience with *Frozen II*. He can share the excitement of being part of such a cultural moment, but also explore the significance of Disney collaborating with indigenous communities.

“It’s what the whole education idea is about — we share resources and they take them and push them forward in new and exciting ways,” he says. “What a beautiful thing to be involved in.” ■

Studying the Sámi

BY TOM DUBOIS

Since time immemorial, Sámi people — Sápmelaččat — have lived in the northern tracts of what today is known as Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia.

They practiced a largely sustainable way of life based on hunting, fishing and reindeer husbandry, living alongside their farming neighbors for many centuries, in fact, for thousands of years. Through pernicious legal maneuvers and assertions of racial difference, the rights of Sámi people were abridged over the 1700s and 1800s by leaders of neighboring states, who asserted ownership over Sámi lands and viewed the Sámi as a subject people to be controlled, absorbed or removed.

My scholarly work has focused on three areas in relation to Sámi culture. First, I have studied the worldview and religious traditions of Sámi before Christianization and their practice of traditions that scholars term “shamanism.” Second, I have worked to make the ideas of early 20th-century Sámi intellectuals better known to international readers through careful and culturally informed translations of works like Johan Turi’s *Muitalus Sámiid birra* [*An Account of the Sámi*] of 1910, one of the first books ever written by a Sámi person. Third, I have worked to document the creative and effective ways that Sámi people since the late 1970s have used media to promote an agenda that underscores Sámi rights and that makes common cause with indigenous peoples in other parts of the world.

These three foci in my research map the onset of colonization, initial attempts at dismantling colonization and the ongoing hard work of “decolonization” that indigenous communities around the world are engaged in today.

When a major Western entertainment corporation like Disney enters into dialogue with the leaders of an indigenous community and respects the cultural rights and dignity of that community, an important step in decolonization occurs. I am convinced of these two things: colonization involved us all; decolonization requires us all.

Tom DuBois, the Halls-Bascom Professor of Scandinavian Folklore, Folklore and Religious Studies in the Department of German, Nordic, and Slavic, where he is also the department chair.

Lavvu is a temporary dwelling used by the Sámi people.



Reindeer husbandry has been and still is an important aspect of Sámi culture.



Traditional Sámi knife, handmade with a reindeer horn handle decorated with traditional carvings.



The Sámi people have their own folk costume, the kolt.





spreading kindness

As schoolchildren in Wisconsin's Fox Valley encountered ideas from the UW-Madison's Center for Healthy Minds, teachers and parents noticed that one kind act begets another.

BY SARA IFERT

When the Community Early Learning Center of the Fox Valley (CELC) opened in 2014, it was focused on providing a focal point and a rallying site for early childhood education in the community, serving a high percentage of low income, special needs and English-as-a-Second Language children and families. There was a strong desire to not only improve early childhood education, but also to pursue research on how to best teach children from diverse backgrounds in a part of Wisconsin that has experienced economic hardship.

Within a few years of CELC's opening, staff learned of the Kindness Curriculum, a tool developed for use in 4K classrooms by researchers at the Center for Healthy Minds in the College of Letters & Science at UW-Madison. Studies of the Kindness Curriculum had found that kids who participated had a better attention span, better grades and showed a higher level of social competence than children who did not take part. Sesame Street Workshop had even drawn on the Kindness Curriculum to help shape its spring 2017 season, focused on kindness.

"At the heart of it is empowering young children to begin to feel how positive qualities such as kindness and gratitude feel in their bodies, physically," Lisa Flook, a former associate scientist with the Center for Healthy Minds, said when the research began to gain traction in classrooms.



At the heart of it is empowering young children to begin to feel how positive qualities such as kindness and gratitude feel in their bodies, physically.

LISA FLOOK
former associate scientist
with the Center for Healthy Minds

Through lessons in focused attention, breathing practices, mindful movement exercises and other activities, the Kindness Curriculum provides children with the opportunity to demonstrate acts of kindness toward one another.

“Mindfulness was something we all agreed could have a lot of potential in our classrooms,” says Beth Haines, a psychology professor at Lawrence University who was intrigued by the Center for Healthy Minds’ research and programming in this area and thought it could be adapted by the CELC in Wisconsin’s Fox Valley. “It is really interesting that children can pick up these skills even at a very young age.”

Haines, working with Kathy Phillippi-Immel, a psychology professor at UW-Oshkosh, Fox Cities Campus, launched what the two decided to call “The Kindness Project” at the CELC, with a stated goal to bring the UW’s Kindness Curriculum to Fox Valley classrooms in 2018.

Implementation began with teachers, who attended mindfulness-based training sessions with experts from the Center for Healthy Minds (and were compensated for their time). The team knew that a train-the-trainer model would empower and motivate teachers to implement and continue to build the program. Right away, teachers commented on the potential of the Kindness Curriculum to have a positive impact on their classrooms. Many also developed their own mindfulness and compassion practices after going through training and working with mindfulness coaches on an ongoing basis at the CELC.

Once launched, the Kindness Curriculum’s impact was tracked by the research team. Because they worked with a larger, more diverse group of students and parents than had been included in the initial study, CELC staff gleaned further valuable insights about the Kindness Curriculum’s relevance and impact.

Early results from Haines and Phillippi-Immel’s study suggest that children in both preschool and 4K classrooms showed stronger cognitive flexibility, sharing behavior and self-regulation after participating in the Kindness Curriculum.

When prompted for feedback on the program, 93 percent of parents reported that the Kindness Curriculum positively impacted their children. Many parents noticed their children doing specific acts of kindness at home.

Parents themselves had an opportunity to attend mindfulness classes that gave them new tools to help them manage the stress and anxiety of parenting and to more directly connect to the curriculum that their children were learning.

The positive impacts of teaching kindness didn’t only affect the students. Teachers noticed more acts of kindness

and more communication in general between colleagues, which fostered a more positive working environment. They also reported somewhat less stress and higher levels of personal accomplishment.

To date, more than 26 classrooms have used the curriculum in the Fox Valley, including those at Headstart CELC Center, Bridges Child Enrichment Center, University Children’s Center on the UW-Oshkosh Fox Cities campus and Appleton Even Start Family Literacy. Through continuing research, CELC expects to find improvements in children’s social-emotional competence and cognitive self-regulation skills, which could contribute to better outcomes for school readiness.

“The degree of enthusiasm and engagement about the Kindness Curriculum from both the teachers and parents was really surprising to us,” says Phillippi-Immel. “The broader community has also been excited about how we can expand and reach out to others about the work we’re doing.” ■

This work in Fox Valley has been made possible by the Basic Needs Giving Partnership Fund, an Innovative Grant from United Way Fox Cities, the John and Sally Mielke Community Collaboration Program, the Mielke Family Foundation, Lawrence University and UW-Oshkosh, Fox Cities Campus.

Founded by world-renowned neuroscientist Dr. Richard J. Davidson, the Center for Healthy Minds envisions a kinder, wiser, more compassionate world. Faced with mental and physical health challenges at a global scale, the Center conducts rigorous scientific research as part of the College of Letters & Science, bringing new insights and tools aimed at improving the well-being of people of all backgrounds and ages.



Children putting the Center for Healthy Minds' Kindness Curriculum to work in a public school classroom.



Bridging the Divide

Steven Olikara marshals millennials to the cause of bipartisan democracy.

BY AARON R. CONKLIN



Olikara (center) was the first-ever student to graduate with an environmental studies major.

Most people would be daunted by the challenge of trying to bridge the yawning chasm between our modern political parties. Not only is Steven Olikara, a 2012 environmental studies and political science graduate, trying to do something about it, he's tackling the generational gap, too.



PHOTOS: JEREMY HARRIS (LEFT), PROVIDED BY STEVEN OLIKARA (RIGHT)



Olikara, shown here rocking out at a wedding reception, sees multiple parallels between music and politics.

“Partisan polarization leads to short-term thinking and policy-making, which means we’re not having a future-looking political discussion or trying to find common ground.”

STEVEN OLIKARA

In 2013, just a year after graduating as UW–Madison’s first–ever environmental studies major, Olikara founded the Millennial Action Project (MAP), a Washington, DC–based nonprofit organization aimed at building bipartisan bridges between state and national legislators under the age of 40. At a time during which polarization between Democrats and Republicans is at an all–time high, Olikara has made it his mission to harness millennial energy to forge a new path.

“Partisan polarization leads to short–term thinking and policy–making,” says Olikara, “which means we’re not having a future–looking political discussion or trying to find common ground.”

MAP’s staffers work directly with millennial legislators and Congressional staffers on both sides of the aisle, providing them with information and support to pass bipartisan bills on a wide range of issues. Over the past seven years, Olikara and MAP have worked with more than 1,000 legislators and helped set up chapters in 29 states. MAP helped legislators affect gerrymandering reform in Ohio and authorized research from the Centers for Disease Control to advance the discussion on gun control in several states.

Olikara found inspiration to create MAP in his other burning passion – music. Growing up in Brookfield, WI, Olikara played guitar, bass and drums, and sang in bands devoted to everything from rock, funk and hip–hop to punk and folk.

But the musical style he kept coming back to was jazz.

“With jazz, it’s all about listening, a call and response that results in a beautiful, improvisational art form,” Olikara explains. “That collaboration led to better art, not worse.”

Collaboration is a quality that’s been glaringly absent from U.S. politics over the last decade.

“In political discourse today, it’s more like call and shut down. We’ve lost that collective spirit,” he says.

MAP’s agenda encompasses two issues Olikara focused on during his time as a Udall Scholar and a Truman Scholar at UW: energy and the environment. Folks who were on campus during his tenure (2008–12) may remember him as the student who introduced President Barack Obama during his campaign stop in Madison. (UW–Madison hosts its own MAP chapter, which has partnered with the Department of Political Science.)

These days, Olikara’s picking up steam on multiple fronts. In February, he launched a new audio and video podcast series called *Meeting in Middle America* to bring MAP’s collaborative message to a new platform. In April, he’ll present in Washington, DC with former Wisconsin Senator Russ Feingold as part of an event hosted by the Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies. His music remains critical to him – he’ll be releasing an album of original compositions this summer. (“Think of it as a mix of Bon Iver and Nirvana,” he says.)

But it’s MAP that has the lion’s share of his attention.

“Investing in our democracy is the challenge of our time,” Olikara says. “Now is the time to lean in and fix it.” ■



The Politics of Participation

Jeff and Susanne Lyons support elections research and student scholarships at UW-Madison.

BY MARY ELLEN GABRIEL

Jeff Lyons (Political Science, '78) got hooked on politics at age 12, canvassing for his father, an Evanston, IL doctor who ran for alderman (and won). In 2014, Jeff developed the concept for, and was the initial funder of, the Elections Research Center — a hub of faculty experts positioning UW-Madison as a leader in the study of American elections. Jeff and his wife Susanne also created the Abner J. Mikva Scholarship, in honor of the now-deceased U.S. representative, chief judge for the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of

Columbia and White House counsel, whose leadership, values and championing of civic involvement were an inspiration to the couple. The UW scholarships go to students who have completed the Mikva Challenge, a Chicago-based program that helps high school students discover their political voices.

Jeff: I grew up in Evanston, IL. I thought I'd go into politics after graduation from UW-Madison. Instead I spent much of my career at Charles Schwab in various marketing and senior management roles. But politics stayed an extremely strong interest of mine.

Susanne: I grew up on Long Island, NY. My interests were more in the arts and languages. I worked in financial services (Fidelity Investments, Schwab and Visa) and retired in 2007. Since then, I have served on a number of boards, including the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Committee.

Jeff: She's being modest. Susanne served on the USOPC board for the last 9 years. When the previous CEO stepped down in 2018, she became the interim CEO. In 2019, she became the Chair of the USOPC.

Susanne: Yes — I travel quite a bit around the world, supporting Team USA and helping to make sports safer for athletes. We also do a lot of traveling for fun.



PHOTO: ANGELA DEGENZO



“Support provided by the Lyons Family Chair has catalyzed the research on elections by individual professors and students into a collective enterprise. The conferences, projects, and programming made possible by Jeff and Susanne have helped to institutionalize the election expertise that exists on campus by creating an identifiable community of researchers.”

BARRY BURDEN

Director of the Elections Research Center, the Lyons Family Chair
in Electoral Politics and Professor of Political Science

ERC's new 2020 Election Survey polls battleground
states 3 times during the primary season. Check out results
at elections.wisc.edu/2020-election-survey/

Jeff: My favorite trips are bicycling vacations. I love traveling where you are actively experiencing the beauty and cultural opportunities of a place up close.

Susanne: At home we play a lot of Scrabble and do crossword puzzles. Jeff has a slight edge in Scrabble. “Scrabble to the death,” as we call it.

Jeff: When I think back on my time at UW–Madison, the best parts were just hanging with friends — sharing a pitcher on the Union Terrace, having a Plaza burger, hiking at Devil’s Lake, or going to sporting events.

I was always interested in the analytical side of politics. Polls, trends, what was important to the electorate. I now follow various blogs, like Nate Silver’s fivethirtyeight.com. Every election I set up a pool where friends wager a nominal amount to predict various outcomes in the election.

Susanne: To his dismay, Jeff has never won the pool.

Jeff: When Ab Mikva ran for Congress in 1976, I worked on his campaign from Madison. Ab was an inspiring individual, a magnet for a lot of youth at the time. I had enrolled in a course on electoral politics, taught by Henry Hart. For our class project, my good friend George Broder and I decided we were going to try and convince UW–Madison students from the 10th Congressional District in Illinois to register and vote by absentee ballot. It was quite a task. We first had to convince the Registrar’s Office of the value of our research and allow us to identify students from the North Shore. Ha! Privacy then was not quite the same concern as today. We believe our efforts got about 300 people to vote absentee. The election turned out to be the closest of any congressional campaign that year — and Ab won by 201 votes.

Susanne: Fun fact: Ab Mikva married us!

Jeff: He was very close with my parents. He said, back in the 70s, he’d preside over

my wedding. Twenty years later, I took him up on it.

After retiring from government, Ab and his wife, Zoe, set up the Mikva Challenge to get youth more involved in politics and civic issues. I wanted to honor Ab because of the impact he had on my life and so many others. With help from the Nicholas Match [which raised more than \$100 million for UW–Madison scholarships], Susanne and I created an endowed scholarship for UW–bound students, from minority backgrounds and with financial need, who had completed the Mikva Challenge in high school. Susanne and I both believe that diversity is a source of strength. People from diverse backgrounds bring innovative ideas and fresh perspectives.

Susanne: Jeff is invested in doing things to make a difference. Often, I’ll think that Jeff is just watching a football game and then he’ll come to me with a fully

fleshed-out idea, like putting UW’s name behind election expertise.

Jeff: At the time I was thinking: What can we do to strengthen our political science department? I wrote a proposal on how we could create a brand around the study of electoral politics, with the goal of attracting and retaining key faculty, funding graduate research, and drawing media attention to UW’s scholarly work on elections. David Canon (department chair at the time) agreed with the idea — and in 2014, the Elections Research Center was up and running.

Susanne: We are both very proud of what the ERC has accomplished.

Jeff: Yes, through Barry Burden’s (ERC Director and the Lyons Family Chair in Electoral Politics) leadership, the UW is becoming known as a hub for research and learning about U.S. elections. ■



Understanding Oppression

BY SAMI SCHALK



ILLUSTRATION: CRISTINA SPANO

I study issues of race, disability and gender in contemporary American literature and culture. I have written about how these issues are dealt with in films such as *Avatar* and in the Wisconsin-based American Girl brand. My current research project explores how Black activists, specifically the Black Panther Party and the National Black Women's Health Project, have addressed disability as a political concern in ways that differ from the mainstream, predominantly white, disability rights movement.



Dr. Sami Schalk, Associate Professor of Gender and Women's Studies, also writes about positive body image. Last fall, a video of her twerking with musician Lizzo at a Madison concert went viral on social media.

As an interdisciplinary scholar, I ask questions such as: What are the relationships between racism, sexism, ableism (discrimination against disabled people) and other forms of oppression? How have marginalized groups (women, disabled people, people of color, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer people, transgender and non-binary people) sometimes done harm to one another or to marginalized people within their group (such as queer people of color) in their fight for collective liberation? I aim to improve understanding of the relationships between oppressions in our modern world so that, perhaps, in conversation with the many brilliant scholars, artists, and activists I read and work with, we can develop new strategies for political and social change that can address multiple oppressions at once and refuse to leave anyone behind.

I bring this work to the classroom by encouraging my students to ask questions of their own assumptions. What beliefs do you hold that you have never questioned? How did you come to know what (you think) you know about people who are different from you? From TV and movies? From your parents or community of origin? Who benefits from these beliefs and who suffers? Are the beliefs you hold helping you be your highest and best self—helping you make the world better—or are these beliefs holding you back from that? What I love about teaching in the Department of Gender and Women's Studies at UW-Madison is that my students come open, earnest and eager to learn. I learn from and with my students constantly, and every year at least one student e-mails me to say that my class changed their thinking, even changed their life or career path. Everyone needs to have a basic understanding of systems of oppression because all of us will interact with people different from us and potentially hold power over people less privileged than ourselves. We need to understand our role within these systems in order to change them for the better. ■



A WORLD OF POSSIBILITIES

Join us to learn about the fascinating research happening in UW–Madison's College of Letters & Science (L&S). Enrich your mind with TED-style talks from some of the UW's top faculty members and hear from L&S interim dean Eric Wilcots during this online event.

Fueling Discovery, a partnership between L&S and the Wisconsin State Journal, invites the college's faculty members to submit articles about their innovative work for inclusion in a special, annual section of the newspaper to be published May 3.

Visit www.ls.wisc.edu
in April for the
event's date and
to learn more.



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Last Word

For more than 100 years, a relief map of the Grand Canyon hung in Science Hall, suffering the bumps and scrapes of time. One day Lindsey Buscher, senior editor on the History of Cartography Project, realized that the map had been displayed at the 1876 Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia. A painstaking conservation effort in the summer of 2019 restored the map — the oldest commercial relief map in the country — to its former glory. It is back on the wall in Science Hall, and the photos for the History of Cartography Project turned out just grand.

PHOTO: LINDSEY BUSCHER

