Greetings friends and alumni of the UWM Department of Sociology!

I am very pleased to send you our initial Sociology newsletter through which we hope to keep our alumni and friends updated annually. In just the last few years, there have been a number of changes in the department, from our move out of Bolton Hall to significant changes in our faculty and staff, as well as the beginning of our new PhD program.

In the past three years, we have said goodbye to several long-time and beloved faculty and staff members. Professors Ronald Edari, Lakshmi Bharadwaj, and Ann Greer, with a combined 120-plus years as faculty members, retired in 2011, as did Sally O’Connor, a long-term senior lecturer in the department. Over that same time period, Patrick Goldsmith, Kuang-Chi Chang, Sarah Halpern-Meekin, and David Nowacek left to take positions elsewhere. Mary O’Bryan, who brightened our front office for many years, retired in 2012. We thank all of our departing colleagues for their contributions to the department.

While we could never replace such important department members, we also have welcomed some amazing new people, including Oriol Mirosa, who earned his PhD from UW-Madison and joined us in the fall of 2012; John Roberts and Aki Roberts, who joined us from the University of New Mexico in early 2013; and Gordon Gauchat, who earned his PhD from the University of Connecticut and joined the faculty in the fall of 2013 after completing a post-doc at UNC-Chapel Hill. Celeste Campos-Castillo, who earned her PhD from the University of Iowa, is currently completing a post-doc at Dartmouth and will join us in the fall of 2014.

Our move out of the 7th floor of Bolton was temporary (while they renovated the HVAC system to provide air conditioned offices for the first time), and now nearly two years into our stay at the Northwest Quadrant (the former Columbia Hospital) we are slated be back in our old home on the 7th floor of Bolton Hall by early January 2014.

In spite of all these changes, our commitment to undergraduate education in sociology continues unabated, and our PhD program is up and running, with 12 students now working their way toward a doctorate in sociology.

We would love to hear from alumni about your memories of the UWM Sociology program, especially stories about how you continue to use the knowledge and skills gained at UWM today. Tell us about your career so that we can share your experiences with students and fellow alumni. In fact, in this issue, we profile two of our alumni, Scott Marshall and Georgiann Davis. Please email us with an update at sociology@uwm.edu.

Donald E. Green, Chair
Department of Sociology
When did you graduate from UWM? I graduated in 1998.

How would you describe your undergraduate experience at UWM as a sociology major? I really enjoyed going to UWM. It really is the best of all worlds, being in an urban environment with easy access to downtown and the east side. It was a better fit for me than being limited in a much smaller location like you find at other universities. Other than a semester at Sandburg, I was a commuter the rest of my time there, and I found there was a lot to offer students as far as organizations, intramural sports and, of course, the top-notch education I received. I did not, however, enjoy receiving parking tickets when I got good parking spots near campus. I actually fell into a sociology major thanks to my love of those classes and the curriculum. I originally was going to school to earn a mass communications degree, but each time I had to select a Letters & Science elective, I kept choosing sociology classes since I enjoyed the content of those classes so much. After a few semesters of this pattern, I visited my counselor on campus, and he told me I was two classes shy of a sociology major!

How did you end up working for Hunger Task Force? After working in radio for eleven years at the Milwaukee Radio Group (102.9 The HOG, 96.5 WKLH, Jammin’ 98.3), I learned of this opportunity at Hunger Task Force through mutual contacts. I was familiar with Hunger Task Force through various food and fundraising events that the radio group would hold to support the food bank. I had contacts at the agency and knew the good work Hunger Task Force did. Further, I grew up as one of those “free lunch kids” at school and my family had to rely on our church’s pantry on-and-off throughout my childhood. Hunger is a topic I know personally and feel strongly about.

What do you do at your current job at the Hunger Task Force? As the Director of Development, I lead a department whose job is to raise funding and secure food donations to assure our network of pantries, meal sites, and shelters have an adequate food supply to meet their need. In 2013, we raised $7 million and delivered over 10 million pounds of food. Development at Hunger Task Force also means overseeing public relations and marketing, branding and donation events, relationship building, speaking engagements, a whole lot of writing in a lot of different voices (grantwriting, newsletters, e-mail blasts, website), and just overall “getting stuff done.”

How has your sociology background and education influenced or affected your work and career? I truly believe that almost any career success is based on relationships you build, whether it’s with your colleagues, your boss, your board of directors, or in a non-profit’s case, our donors. Sociology, being the study of human social behavior, provides a strong base of understanding that helps you learn how to build and maintain these relationships. It’s so important for a non-profit to educate the public and create greater awareness of their mission, which makes marketing and public relations an important aspect of what we do. Targeting specific demographics and developing creative materials that inform and lead people to action has sociology written all over it. The great thing about sociology is that you can utilize it everyday personally and professionally.

What are your plans for the future? Professionally, I’m going to continue to work with our donors and partners to make sure hunger in Milwaukee is a problem that is handled in the short-term and make progress to eliminate the problem long-term. We have a variety of opportunities for engaged supporters to get involved in our mission, whether it is hosting a food drive, volunteering to sort food or work an event like Summerfest or State Fair, joining our advocacy team called Voices Against Hunger, or even spending time at our 200-acre farm in Franklin, where we grow fresh produce to deliver free of charge to our network. We really have something for everyone who wants to “join the Force.” Personally, I’m going to enjoy watching our seven-month old daughter Ellie grow up alongside my wife, Angie. Anything over and above that is gravy.

Any advice for our current sociology majors? Sociology touches all aspects of life. Don’t put yourself into a box when you think about the paths a sociology degree can lead you down. It is one of the most flexible degrees you can earn. And in a very broad sense, I’d share these tips for undergrads as they prepare for their career after graduation: 1. Send thank you cards after first meetings and interviews. Not emails. Cards. 2. Wear a suit for interviews even if they don’t specify that you should do so. 3. Be kind to everyone you come into contact as you work your way up the ladder, whether they are an intern, an administrative assistant, or a company president. You never know who will be in a position to help you as you progress on your career path and it’s easier to ask for a favor from someone who doesn’t’ think you are a jerk. Also, don’t take for granted the easy access you have to Oakland Gyros while you go to UWM. I live in the Mount Mary neighborhood of Milwaukee and I still make the trip at least once a month to get carry out.
Alumnus Interview: Georgiann Davis

When did you graduate from UWM with your MA? How did you end up at UWM?
I graduated with my MA in sociology in 2006. I chose UWM because I was offered an incredible funding package, including a Chancellor’s graduate student award. More importantly, I knew UWM would be a great place to cultivate my skills before beginning my PhD training.

How would you describe your experience as a sociology MA student and teaching assistant at UWM?
I had great experiences both inside and outside of the classroom. I was a teaching assistant for Introduction to Sociology and for undergraduate statistics. In the classroom, I learned a lot from the core courses, and I also found my electives – survey methodology, questionnaire design, and cultural sociology – some of the most useful and enjoyable courses out of all of my education. I was very well prepared to begin my PhD studies. At the time, UWM did not offer a PhD in sociology. If it did, it is very likely that I would have stayed at UWM.

How did you end up doing your PhD work at the University of Illinois-Chicago (UIC)?
I applied to seven doctoral programs. To my surprise, I was admitted, with full funding, to more than half of them. I chose UIC because of their broad specialization area: race, ethnicity, and gender inequalities. I thought I wanted to study medical specialization at the doctoral level as I did at UWM for my master’s thesis, but I wasn’t sure. So, the broad specialization area seemed to be the perfect fit. Also, I am from Chicago, so it was nice to study at “home.”

How did you end up as an assistant professor at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville (SIUE)?
I went on the academic job market very selectively during my fifth year of doctoral studies. I was very fortunate to have received two tenure-track job offers. I accepted SIUE’s offer because, in many ways, SIUE reminded me a lot of UWM – it offers a terminal master’s degree in sociology, many of SIUE undergraduate students are first-generation college students, and there is a fair amount of racial diversity on our campus.

Tell us about your current teaching and research projects at SIUE.
This is my third year at SIUE. Although I was hired to teach gender and sexualities, I’ve been teaching a lot of statistics to both undergraduate and graduate students. I love teaching statistics, so this is just fine. I also recently taught a graduate seminar on the sociology of the body. I’m finishing my first book which will tell the story of how intersex became a contested disorder of sex development. It is based on 65 interviews with adults with intersex traits, medical experts, and parents of children with intersex traits. I’m currently under contract with New York University Press. With the support of both an internal and external grant, I also recently started my next project on children with intersex traits. Children with intersex traits have, quite simply, been ignored by researchers for far too long.

How has your sociology background and education from UWM influenced or affected your work and career?
It comes as shock to many of my colleagues that I’m currently doing qualitative research, yet am quite skilled at teaching undergraduate and graduate statistics. I credit this skill to my time at UWM. I was very fortunate to leave the program full of quantitative expertise. Not many sociologists feel equally comfortable with qualitative and quantitative research.

What are your plans for the future?
Once my book is in press, I will shift all of my attention to my new project and hopefully produce one or two articles from my preliminary data. I’m also in the process of preparing two grant proposals which, if funded, will help me continue with the next stage of my research on children with intersex traits. On a more personal level, I hope to do a lot more traveling.

Any advice for our current graduate students or for alumni thinking about returning to grad school?
I always approached my graduate studies like a job. While I did work part-time (in addition to being a teaching assistant) throughout all of my graduate training (including at UWM’s parking garage!), I always prioritized my studies. I feel all graduate students should work together and form a departmental community. I’d also encourage students to attend and present at academic conferences. The Midwest Sociological Society and The Society for the Study of Social Problems are great places to start. Sociologists for Women in Society is also a great organization. To this day, I “force” myself to present preliminary findings at conferences. I usually get great feedback and am sure to stay productive. I also believe in taking breaks. Even when I have a long list of things to do, I’m known to stop what I’m doing and take a day or two completely off – no email, no computer. I find this escape really helpful and reenergizing. It is sort of like a recharge. If I work on low energy for too long, it tends to catch up with me and I end up being far less productive than if I just would have taken some time off to recharge.

Join your fellow MA graduates on our LinkedIn group: http://tinyurl.com/ljaub4l
Senior Nakita Hickles is a Sociology major who has interned at Running Rebels.

Running Rebels is a Milwaukee-area community organization that works with at-risk youth, providing mentorship, after-school programming, job preparation, and athletics.

As an intern, Nakita worked with youth as a mentor and after-school tutor, in preparation for her career as a youth counselor.

“To be a sociology major, you have to have an interest in people, in humans, in how society functions. In my internship, I’m learning how to be a role model and how to be a confidant at the same time.”

Amanda O’Day, Director of Mentoring and Youth Services at Running Rebels, notes the value of interns and the growth of the internship program over the past five years. “We’ve really started using the interns to work directly with the youth because we felt they enjoyed their internship more and it made a big difference to the youth.”

Watch Nakita’s video story at: http://youtu.be/8z2_sKtx7q8

What about you? We want to hear from you.

Did you have a great internship experience or have you been working in your dream job? We would love to hear from you. Please share your story with us for possible inclusion in future newsletters. Your success is something we are proud of and can serve as an inspiration to others.

Even if you aren’t ready to share your story quite yet, please keep in touch. We would like to make sure we have your email address on file. We promise not to fill your in-box but would like to be able to reach you with important information like job openings that we hear about.

You should have recently received an email from our Alumni Association with your Alumni ID number so that you may review your own profile and update your contact information at alumni.directory.uwm.edu. Or, you can send your contact information to let-sci@uwm.edu.

We look forward to hearing from you!
Gordon Gauchat, Assistant Professor, Sociology, received his PhD from the University of Connecticut (2010). Previously, he was a post-doctoral fellow at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. His current research examines the influence of public understanding of science on democratic institutions and the politicization of science in economically advanced societies. A portion of this research is funded by the National Science Foundation in hopes of improving measurement of public trust in, understanding of, and everyday use of scientific knowledge. His research interests also include globalization, urban political economy, and sociological theory. “I am eager to enter a young and vibrant Department of Sociology here at UWM. And, I am excited to engage and learn from the local community.”

Oriol Mirosa, Assistant Professor, Sociology and Global Studies, was awarded a PhD in Sociology and Rural Sociology from UW-Madison (2012). While there, he taught several sociology courses including Classical Sociological Theory, for which he received the Excellence in Teaching Award for a Lecturer. He previously studied at the Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, Great Britain, where he received an MPhil in Development Studies. His research explores the global governance of water and its impact on how vulnerable populations access water in the developing world, with a particular focus on Bolivia and South Africa. His latest publication (with Leila M. Harris) is “Human Right to Water: Contemporary Challenges and Contours of a Global Debate,” *Antipode*. “I am very excited to be joining the faculty at UWM, and I look forward to developing my work on water with the help of the many resources that UWM has to offer on the subject. I hope to contribute my global approach to the study of water provision at UWM.”

Aki Roberts, Assistant Professor, Sociology, received a PhD in Sociology from the University of New Mexico (2001). Prior to arriving at UWM in January, she was Assistant Professor of Sociology at the University of New Mexico. Her main research interests are crime, criminal justice outcomes, and quantitative methods. Recent research topics have included the role of victim’s and offender’s race/ethnicity in crime clearance; lifestyle and routine activities as factors in homicide of the elderly; and distinguishing permanent and temporary thefts when examining American cities’ differing motor vehicle theft rates. “UWM seems to be a good place to engage in research and teaching. The students in my undergraduate course this spring were very capable and eager to learn.”

John Roberts, Professor, Sociology, received a PhD in Sociology from Cornell University (1992). Before joining UWM this spring, he was Professor of Sociology at the University of New Mexico. His research interests include social networks, quantitative methods, organizations, and criminology. Recently he has collaborated with archaeologists in research on networks of settlements in the American Southwest, AD 1200-1450. “I have enjoyed getting to know the faculty, students, and staff in my department, and have been impressed with UWM and the city of Milwaukee.”

Celeste Campos-Castillo received a PhD in Sociology from the University of Iowa (2012). She is currently a post-doctoral fellow at Dartmouth College and will join the UWM faculty in the fall of 2014. Her current research topics include understanding how patients with stigmatizing health conditions manage concerns over the privacy of health information, how health information technologies may impede or facilitate patient-provider communication, the formation and resiliency of interpersonal trust, and how framing of information can elicit motivation to achieve desired goals. A recently-funded project examines patients’ trust in their providers’ appropriate use of their health information, something that most patients do not worry about, yet it appears to be critical for patients with stigmatizing health conditions. “I look forward to joining the UWM community, and being involved in the exciting new changes in the department and across campus.”

Faculty Research Profile: Assistant Professor Marcus Britton

Check out our fall 2013 video story of Professor Britton discussing his research on race, housing, and place-based inequality. His most recent study looked at the relationship between residential segregation and very pre-term birth. He and his colleague Heeju Shin (also a UWM Assistant Professor of Sociology) did find a correlation between residential segregation and very pre-term birth. http://youtu.be/AKDuWra7feE
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