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Women's Research Institute of Nevada Newsletter

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Women's Research Institute of Nevada

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Ten Years and Growing

Director’s Message

by Joanne Goodwin

WRIN received two significant accolades in the midst of the worst year in academic funding. 2009 has been a year in which student fees increased, salaries declined, class size enlarged, and positions went unfilled at the state’s institutions of higher learning.

Against that harsh background we are pleased to announce that WRIN received national recognition from the National Council for Research on Women and was awarded their inaugural Emerging Center Award.

The award recognizes a member center that has “experienced a significant change in mission or growth within the last five years.” The NCRW includes nearly 120 national and international centers of research. I accepted the award in New York City at the annual conference in June and enjoyed hearing selection committee members tell me how impressed they were with what WRIN had accomplished.

In addition, the Eleanor Kagi Foundation, a Lynn Bennett legacy bestowed two gifts upon WRIN that allow the institute to continue with our research and education agenda in spite of draconian cuts to public funding.

Bennett had been a major supporter of UNLV before her untimely death in 2006. She created the Eleanor Kagi Foundation to honor her mother and to assist activities that positively impact women (see article inside). All of us at WRIN are profoundly grateful to the Foundation trustees for supporting WRIN’s work in Nevada.

What will the next ten years bring for WRIN? We know that our reputation has begun to attract graduate students who desire to work with the Institute. We continue to pursue funding through research grants to support our existing projects. And, we will work with state foundations to expand upon the good work of the Kagi Foundation to support positive development for women and girls through research and education.

More people have begun to recognize the role that WRIN plays in our community, the state, and with the NCRW, the nation. Our plan for the next ten years is to build upon our successes, learn from our missteps, and build a firm base of financial support.

Join us.

Why are so few women in academic leadership?

This is the question that Johns Hopkins University’s provost and president sought to answer in 2002 when they established the University Committee on the Status of Women. The university leaders and committee agreed that the cultivation of women leaders “was essential to efforts to promote gender equity at the university.”

Sufficient evidence already exists that illustrates the manifestation of the problem. Appointments at lower ranks, longer periods to promotion, lower rates of retention, and less recognition for awards and achievements, all of which contribute to lower salaries have been found in numerous studies. Yet, the question remains: what explains these patterns?”

The Hopkins study found several themes. 1) Paths to leadership are slower in large part because recruitment occurs less frequently among women and shrinks the pool. 2) Around-the-clock demands and an increasing range of responsibilities make the jobs unappealing to many women. 3) Current women leaders do not receive appropriate rewards or recognition for the work they perform. 4) The informal network of leaders more often excludes women than men.

The authors noted that some disciplines have greater involvement by female faculty and that the sciences and engineering had great difficulties recruiting and keeping women.

The pool comprised female faculty drawn from across the university from all ranks (half were either full professors or in high-level administrative positions and half were from assistant and associate ranks). After interviews, comments were culled and themes identified. Finally, the Hopkins faculty themes were compared to findings from published studies. The report advised that further research needed to be done on the causes of these well established patterns.
WRIN Adds Two More Oral Histories

During the last academic year, the Women's Research Institute published two additional oral histories as part of the community builders series. These two new oral histories, on Barbara Agonia and Gene Segerblom, shed important light on the history of Las Vegas and the role of women in education and politics in southern Nevada.

Barbara Agonia moved to Las Vegas in 1969 and within two years began working at the newly formed Clark County Community College [now CSN]. As one of the original faculty members at the college, Agonia spent a great deal of time promoting the college. She also worked in student outreach and retention.

Agonia’s dedication to the community extended beyond the community college and she became an advocate for women in Las Vegas. Under the leadership of Florence McClure, she became active in rape crisis education. In 1980, Agonia helped get a women’s center established at the community college to help women beginning or re-entering the college system. Her commitment to the community carries on with Agonia’s membership in Soroptimist International. She has also demonstrated a dedication to the Women’s Research Institute of Nevada and we are honored to have her as one of our longest serving Community Advisory Board members and first President of the board.

Barbara Agonia’s oral history tells the story of her move to Las Vegas when it was just a small town and details her involvement in the community over the last thirty years. It proves invaluable in understanding the impact of one committed individual.

The last two categories were in job areas dominated by men: construction and extraction industries, and installation and repair occupations. Women comprise only 2.6% and 4% of all workers in those areas respectively. Researchers continue to study the reasons that the gap persists. The two most frequently offered explanations suggest that employment discrimination or employee “choice” account for much, but not all of the gap. See http://www.iwpr.org for more information.

Gene Segerblom comes from a line of community-minded Nevadans and followed in both her grandfather’s and mother’s footsteps to serve in the Nevada State Legislature.

In 1940, Gene Segerblom moved to Boulder City. She worked as a high school teacher for many years and her husband Cliff worked as a photographer. In 1979, voters elected her to the Boulder City Council where she worked to protect the arts among other community efforts. In 1993, she began serving her first of four terms in the Nevada State Assembly. As a legislator, she worked to protect the rights of local fishermen and for the preservation of the Boulder Dam Hotel and Museum.

In 2006, her son, Tick, made history when voters sent him to Carson City as a freshman member of the Nevada State Assembly. His election made him the fourth-generation of his family to serve in the legislature. Gene Segerblom remains active in the community, through her membership in the American Association of University Women and a number of other local groups. She continues to volunteer in her adopted hometown of Boulder City.

Together these two oral histories add to the story of southern Nevada over the last half-century. They illustrate the impact individual women have had on the progress and development of Las Vegas.

The Wage Gap Persists

As another Women’s Equality Day passes (August 26), women and men are nearly equal participants in the workforce, yet women as a group continue to earn less. The Institute for Women’s Policy Research examined wage ratios in over 500 occupational categories and found only five occupations where women earned as much or more than men.

Counselors, special education teachers, and science technicians had wage parity or slightly higher wages for the same job. The last two categories were in job areas dominated by men: construction and extraction industries, and installation and repair occupations. Women comprise only 2.6% and 4% of all workers in those areas respectively. Researchers continue to study the reasons that the gap persists. The two most frequently offered explanations suggest that employment discrimination or employee “choice” account for much, but not all of the gap. See http://www.iwpr.org for more information.

Women included in “Green” jobs training

As indicated in the wage gap article above, economic parity has a greater chance of occurring when “non-traditional” fields of employment are open to all capable workers. The U.S. Department of Labor wants to engage communities to get the word out. The Women’s Bureau in the DOL has taken the responsibility to ensure that women have access to these new jobs. WRIN will work with Assemblyman Joe Hogan and others in the Las Vegas valley to assist in data collection or in any other way that utilizes the Institute’s staff skills.

Gifts of Tribute

Give someone special in your life special recognition and help WRIN at the same time. Make a donation to WRIN in honor of or in memory of a significant person. Your donation will be recognized in our newsletter and our webpage. Thank you.
Leadership Award Announced
In January 2009, the Women’s Research Institute of Nevada presented the WRIN Leadership Award to Pat Mulroy, General Manager of the Southern Nevada Water Authority and the Las Vegas Valley Water District.

WRIN decided on a community wide award to build upon its work developing and recognizing leadership among women in the community. The Award recognizes individuals who:

- have achieved distinction in their field of endeavor
- have had a positive impact on the development of southern Nevada
- and who have demonstrated their dedication to mentor the next generation of women leaders.

The inaugural event, “An Evening to Honor Pat Mulroy,” proved to be a great success as over 200 people from the community and university came to celebrate her dedication to improving the lives of Southern Nevadans through conservation efforts, responsible use of natural resources, and providing education to explain the need for conservation. WRIN applauds her strength, dignity, and wisdom in making the tough choices needed to ensure a secure future for all southern Nevadans.

Remarks made by Pat Mulroy’s colleagues and friends lightly roasted the honoree. Among those who shared stories about Ms. Mulroy were Chips Barry, Manager of Denver Water; Maureen Stapleton, San Diego County Water Authority General Manager; and Kay Brothers, Deputy General Manager at Southern Nevada Water Authority. After receiving the award from Dr. Goodwin, Director of WRIN, Ms. Mulroy gave remarks as well.

The event also served as a fundraiser and educational platform for WRIN.

The event will be renamed the Eleanor Kagi Foundation, a Lynn M. Bennett Legacy—WRIN Leadership Award.

The WRIN Advisory Board is already making preparations for the event to be held early next year.

Gender Research Roundtables
This academic year marks the 5th year of our noon-time research series featuring the work of UNLV faculty. The Institute expands the forum for academic research on women and gender through the talks. In fall 2009, the subjects range from prehistoric households to incarcerated women, and urban inequality. During Spring 2010, we offer talks on beauty pageants, welfare, and medieval mystics. The complete list is elsewhere in the newsletter. All are welcome to attend. If you would like to offer a talk on your research, please contact the director at joanne.goodwin@unlv.edu.

Author and Ford Foundation Officer speaks at UNLV
Author and former Ford Foundation officer, Jael Silliman, visited UNLV in April as the guest of WRIN, the Women’s Studies Department, and the Jean Nidetch Women’s Center. Silliman spoke on transnational feminism to a group of approximately fifty students. She also gave a workshop on the fundraising climate for the sponsors.

WRIN Outreach
Women’s History Month (March) is always a busy time for WRIN. This year, Dr. Goodwin participated on a panel recognizing “The Women of Clark County” for the Clark County Centennial celebration. This panel and others may be accessed from the ch. 4 website.

As part of our mission to facilitate education statewide on the accomplishments and history of Nevada women, NEW Leadership program manager Diana Rhodes facilitated a videoconference between the students at Great Basin College and Ruby Duncan.

Ask a woman to run for office.
A recent study by the Center for American Women and Politics on state legislators confirmed what scholars have long known: While almost half of men in state legislatures are “self-starters” who decided to seek office entirely on their own, only about a quarter of the women fit that description. In contrast, a majority of women say they were recruited to run – they hadn’t thought seriously about running until someone else suggested it. So ask a woman to run! For more on women in politics, go to http://www.cawp.org.
NEW Leadership Nevada enjoys its 7th successful year!

WRIN hosted another successful year of the National Education for Women’s (NEW) Leadership Nevada program during June 2009. Representing each institution in the Nevada System of Higher Education, twenty-five additional students have joined the growing NEW Leadership Nevada alumnae network, putting the total number of graduates at 175.

WRIN has had the privilege of hosting the NEW Leadership Nevada program since 2003, when it was chosen as the southwestern partner of the Center for American Women and Politics (CAWP) at Rutgers University.

NEW Leadership helps develop students as community leaders and encourages civic engagement through intensive workshops and panels with established women leaders. With an emphasis on networking and mentorship, students are connected with women in politics, business, academia, law, gaming, and the non-profit sector.

NEWL participants Yesenia Fuentes, Jessica Sotelo, Marilu Heredia, Sarah Guthrie-Angvik, and Cariela Santana with Keynote speaker Punam Mathur. The students this year met a range of successful women leaders, including a one-on-one session with Marybel Batjer, VP for Public Policy and Communications at Harrah’s; a closing dinner hosted by Assemblywoman Kathy McClain and joined by Assemblywoman Marilyn Dondero Loop; and a number of panels that included UNLV faculty and community leaders, such as Flo Rogers, General Manager of Nevada Public Radio. Students learned about the importance of networking, mentoring, and diversity through a number of intensive workshops and exercises.

Punam Mathur, VP for Human Resources at NV Energy, was the highlight of the week, serving as speaker at the 2009 NEW Leadership Nevada Keynote Reception and Dinner. One student’s response was, “Punam’s speech taught me that there are no failures – only different paths to success!”

Preceding the Keynote dinner, the students really shined during the Networking Reception. Each student received a box of personalized NEW Leadership business cards and attended an interactive networking workshop earlier that day. By the networking dinner, the students were very excited to test out their newly-learned networking skills and managed to impress, not only us, but many of the community leaders in attendance.

Roughly 180 people attended the Keynote, sponsored by Harrah’s Entertainment and MGM Mirage, with many university and community members attending in support, including Dean John White, William S. Boyd School of Law; former Regent Thalia Dondero; and Dean Chris Hudgins, College of Liberal Arts who gave warm welcoming remarks at the dinner.

Students emerge from NEWL with a sharper sense of their leadership potential having gained a number of skills from networking to resume-building. Along with skill-building and learning from community leaders, the students also leave with a sense of commitment to civic engagement and personal success.

We continue to develop our alumnae after they graduate from the six-day program. One alumna, Judi Brown (2007) returned to the program as a Faculty-in-Residence (FIR) to facilitate discussion and mentorship among students and speakers. Three other alumnae, Jennifer Carr (2003), Lindsay Beirne (2006), and Jer Roberson Strange (2007) also returned to the program as speakers to share their NEW Leadership experiences and professional development. The WRIN staff was also pleased to have Maria Luisa Parra Sandoval (2005) and Monique Sulls (2007) work as Program Assistants during this year’s conference.

NEWL Spotlight: Assemblywoman Kathy McClain

WRIN and NEW Leadership Nevada spotlight Assemblywoman Kathy McClain, for her friendship and major support of the program since its inception. For the past few years, McClain has hosted at least one dinner event for the students, and actively engaged each and every one of them – to learn more about their educational and professional paths.

During the closing night of the 2009 NEW Leadership program, McClain hosted a dinner for the students where they ate the Assemblywoman’s delicious cooking while they shared their thoughts and experiences from the week. Assemblywoman Marilyn Dondero Loop joined the event as she discussed women in local politics. The dinner ended with the WRIN staff presenting Kathy with an appreciation award for her continued support of NEW Leadership Nevada.

McClain’s support extends beyond the week-long program. She has worked hard at the state level to secure funding for NEW Leadership. She made sure that legislators and other community leaders knew about the program’s significance.

She also helped bring national attention to the Nevada NEW Leadership program. Last summer, she set up a panel devoted to NEW Leadership at the National Council for State Legislators (NCSL) annual conference. Program Director Diana Rhodes and former Program Director Julianna Ormsby traveled to New Orleans to speak about the importance of the program and the ways that state legislators could develop NEW Leadership programs in their states.

What explains her commitment to WRIN and NEWL? “The program is an outstanding example of women promoting women and the power of leadership training,” McClain explains. “The aspirations of these women (young and older) have really been an inspiration to me – to live up to their standards.”

Kathy McClain has represented Assembly District 15 for six legislative sessions and is a strong advocate for elder rights and women’s rights. She is currently campaigning for the 2010 Senate election in District 7.
Punam Mathur Gives Lively and Stimulating Keynote Address

Punam Mathur, VP for Human Resources at NV Energy, presented the 2009 NEW Leadership Keynote address. A nationally acclaimed leader in diversity and community affairs made her a strong and inspirational speaker for the students and those in attendance.

Mathur joined NV Energy in April 2009 after thirteen years in the gaming industry, most recently serving as Senior Vice President for Corporate Diversity and Community Affairs for MGM Mirage. Mathur currently serves as the Chairperson of the Board of Trustees for Three Square, a non-profit organization dedicated to eradicating hunger in southern Nevada. She also sits on the Advisory Board of Habitat for Humanity- Las Vegas. An avid supporter of education, she is a member of the president’s advisory task force on diversity at UNLV, and co-chair of the Nevada Partnership for Inclusive Education.

Though her address hit on a number of topics related to leadership, a main theme was that of dealing with failure and intimidation. She told students that failure can be viewed as a learning experience and often an unexpected path to success. Mathur emphasized the point that one does not have to change oneself to be successful; in fact, being true and sticking to convictions are the qualities of great leaders.

Alumnae in Action

Maria Luisa Parra Sandoval (2005) is an AmeriCorps Member and Volunteer Liaison, serving her one year of service at Legal Aid Center of Southern Nevada. Recently, First Lady Dawn Gibbons presented Ms. Parra-Sandoval with the AmeriCorps Member of the Year Award (2008-2009) for extraordinary national service. She was recently accepted to Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government, where she will be working toward a Masters Degree in public policy.

Lindsay Beirne (2006) is the Community Affairs Coordinator for MGM Mirage. In addition to serving as the Secretary and Treasurer for the MGM Mirage Voice Foundation she is currently assisting with the Alpha Complex, an organization which connects Las Vegas locals with the community culture and activities beyond the Strip.

Evelyn Marcelina Rangel-Medina (2005) is currently the Policy Director for the Green-Collar Jobs Campaign at the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights, a strategy and action center working for justice, opportunity and peace. Evelyn advocates for policy solutions that build a green economy strong enough to lift all communities out of poverty. She works to simultaneously fight pollution and create pathways out of poverty through education, job training and green-jobs creation to transform disadvantaged communities and communities of color in California.

Students and Staff go to Carson City

WRIN staff and six NEW Leadership Nevada alumnae went to Carson City for Grassroots Lobby Days (GLD) during March 2009. WRIN offered a limited number of scholarships for students to attend the event and to continue their leadership training. GLD provides an opportunity to learn more about the Nevada legislative process meet with representatives, and attend legislative committee hearings and floor sessions.

What made the trip a truly memorable experience was the opening night WRIN & Friends Reception Dinner, hosted by 2003 NEW Leadership Nevada alumnna Heather McCutcheon Ware, former NEWL staff member Jennifer Merideth, and their partners.

Heather McCutcheon Ware is part of the inaugural 2003 class of NEWL. She currently owns a software consulting business in Carson City called Ware Consulting.

Jennifer Merideth, a former NEWL staffer and graduate of the Boyd School of Law, is an attorney for the Law Office of Kenneth V. Ward in Carson City.

WRIN applauds them both for all the work they put into the evening and congratulates them on their success since NEW Leadership Nevada!
Titus puts WRIN in the Congressional Record

On March 17, during the discussion of a resolution supporting Women’s History Month, first-term Nevada Congresswoman Dina Titus rose to support the bill and recognize several women in the state. Those mentioned included Tina Nappe, environmental activist; Dr. Peg Rees, Director of the Public Lands Institute; Sheila Leslie and Chris Giunchigliani for their public service on renewable energy and smart growth, respectively. Titus continued, “These many accomplishments are being documented, analyzed and disseminated to the public by the Women’s Research Institute at the University of Nevada in Las Vegas under the able direction of Dr. Joanne Goodwin.” Thank you, Congresswoman Titus.

Thank you to our sponsors!

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Great Basin College
United Healthcare Services
Altria Client Services
National Security Technologies
The Williams Foundation
Soroptomist Club of Metropolitan Las Vegas

Eleanor M. Kagi Foundation Gift.

WRIN received two gifts from the Eleanor Kagi Foundation to support the work of the institute. The Foundation was established in December 2006 by Lynn Bennett who wanted to honor her mother. One of the foundation’s purposes is to concentrate on issues with impact on women. “Lynn Bennett had a great admiration for UNLV and had been a major contributor to the school,” says Bryan Dziedziak, a trustee for the Kagi Foundation. “WRIN is about supporting women and bettering women’s lives in Southern Nevada, so it was a natural focus for us.” The gift came at an important moment as state-funding has declined seriously and WRIN is a self-supporting institute. The gift enables the institute to support a graduate student and continue its Leadership Award fundraising dinner. The WRIN Leadership Award will be renamed for Eleanor Kagi. (See the article on Pat Mulroy in this issue).

Film premier brings community collaboration

WRIN hosted A Single Woman, a film on the life of Jeannette Rankin, and Kamala Lopez, the film’s director in February. Active in western state suffrage campaigns, Rankin became the first woman elected to Congress in 1916. In addition to suffrage, she supported child welfare measures, civil liberties, international peace, and civil rights. Co-sponsors included the League of Women Voters, American Civil Liberties Union, and the UNLV Women’s Studies Department.

First undergraduate research award winner selected

This past year the staff and advisory board of WRIN created a new award for the best research paper by an undergraduate student on the history of women in the United States or on any subject in women’s studies. The award honors Caryll Dziedziak’s service to WRIN as she retired from her position as founding Assistant Director. Tyler Parry received the award for his honors thesis, “The Paradox of Progress: Hildegard of Bingen in the Age of Transition,” under the supervision of Professor Elspeth Whitney (History).

Wilma Mankiller keynote for Conference

“Resilience in Difficult Times” is the focus of the 4th annual conference of the Nevada Network of the Office for Women in Higher Education of the American Council on Education. This year’s conference is October 16 on the Cheyenne Campus of the College of Southern Nevada. Workshops offer skill-building and resources ranging from grantwriting to digital resumes. The former chief of the Cherokee nation, Wilma Mankiller, offers her advice in a keynote titled “Overcoming the Odds.” For more information or to register, go to https://cedwebserver.unlv.edu/CourseStatus.awp?--093CO3120.

SAVE THE DATE!

WRIN would like to invite you to celebrate our tenth anniversary at an open house reception with us on Wednesday, October 14, 2009 in the Marjorie Barrick Museum.

Invitations forthcoming.
Advisory Board Members Spotlight

Shweta Bhatnagar
Shweta Bhatnagar currently leads the Public Affairs team for the Southern Nevada Water Authority and Las Vegas Valley Water District. She serves as a local, state, and federal government affairs liaison and conducts lobbying activities for the organizations during legislative sessions in Carson City.

Prior to joining the Authority in 2004, Shweta worked as a staff assistant at SUSTAIN, a non-profit organization whose mission is to improve nutrition in developing countries through food science and technology.

Shweta is a native Las Vegan whose parents immigrated to the United State from India in 1974. She graduated from George Washington University with a Masters in Public Administration in 2004, and graduated from the Honor College and received a B.A. in Political Science and Economics from UNLV in 1998.

A board member since 2008, Shweta says, “As a UNLV Alumni myself, I am honored to be a member of WRIN’s Community Advisory Board.”

Linda Mack Smith
Linda Smith, a member of the Community Advisory Board at WRIN since 2003, has spent most of her professional life as a federal employee and manager within the state of Nevada. She enjoyed a long professional career with the Atomic Energy Commission (now the U.S. Department of Energy) at the Nevada Test Site. She progressed to the position of Deputy Manager of the Nevada Operations Office, and was one of the highest graded females in the Department’s field structure.

Since her retirement from federal service, Linda has continued working with federal organizations and contractors in a consulting status on a variety of administrative and management issues.

Linda initially became interested in WRIN because of its programs which are designed to improve the lives of women in Nevada. In particular, she was impressed with the results of the NEW Leadership Nevada program which is focused on college women, inspiring them to take on public leadership roles. Linda explains that her mother, Isabelle Mack, who was a Southern Nevada journalist, was widowed at an early age and always emphasized the importance of higher education and ‘working independence’ to her daughters.

Thank you to our individual donors!

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Publications Available from WRIN

The following publications are available for the cost of reproduction, handling, and postage from our offices. Please contact WRIN if you would like copies at (702) 895-4931 or wrin@unlv.edu.


The Status of Women and Girls in Nevada (2005), Nevada Women’s Fund with chapter contributions from Joanne Goodwin, Ph.D. and the Center for Business and Economic Research at UNLV. $20.


Looking Back at Nevada Women, two-part video series with mini-documentaries on women's contributions to the state. $20.

Upcoming Events

Wed. Oct 7, Noon, CBC-B225A
Barbara Roth, Engendering Prehistoric Households in the Southwest
Gender was a major structuring principle of household organization in the Mimbres River Valley of southwestern New Mexico. Yet, given that the houses were occupied over 1000 years ago, it is sometimes difficult to "find" gender roles and gender interaction in these houses. Roth discusses the challenges of reconstructing gender in the past as well as the insights to be gained about households with a gendered viewpoint.

Wed. Oct 14, 4-6 pm, WRIN Tenth Anniversary Open House, Barrick Museum
Join us in celebrating the achievements of WRIN over the last ten years.

Wed. Nov 4, Noon, CBC-B225A
Ann Cammett, The Status of Incarcerated Women in the State of Nevada
This talk will focus on the status of incarcerated women in the state of Nevada. The presentation will feature the work of the students of Boyd Law School’s Family Justice Clinic, which will explore the particular concerns of women involved in the criminal justice system.

Wed. Dec 2, Noon, CBC-B225A
Tiffany Howard, The Perceptions of Self and Others
Using data from the Multi-City Study of Urban Inequality, 1992-1994, this study evaluates the role identity adoption plays in emphasizing the distinctions that exist between the political attitudes of immigrants and those of U.S. citizens from the same racial/ethnic group.