

The Sociology INVESTIGATOR

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY, UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA, GAINESVILLE, FLORIDA, 32611

Launching the Conference of the Social Sciences

William Marsiglio with Ramon Hinojosa and Namita Manohar

“What do you think about graduate students and faculty developing some type of in-house conference for next year?” Ray Hinojosa, a Ph.D. student of mine, asked me this question while we chatted in the lobby, between sessions at the National Council on Family Relations meetings in Orlando, November 2004. Though somewhat skeptical at first, the idea grew on me during the next few months as I edited versions of Ray’s written proposals for the project. Professor Charles Gattone joined our email exchanges midway through the process and he and I became faculty advisors to the project.

Last spring, 2005, Ray became the Chair of the original student steering committee comprised of Matt Van Voorhis, Namita Manohar, Colleen Cain, William Jawde, Orli Zaprir, Danielle Dirks, Dana Berkowitz, JeffriAnne Wilder, and Billy Jeffries. Without a pre-existing roadmap to follow, the steering committee creatively sought to turn the proposal into a conference. Matt agreed to build a website and took web design seminars and did independent reading to polish his skills. Budgets were compiled and presented; public relations teams (Billy, Colleen, JeffriAnne, and Namita) went out to drum up interest in the conference; and incoming abstracts, papers, and inquiries were managed (William). Ray, Matt and Orli acquired funding for the conference while Dana was involved in publicity management and in soliciting participants for the conference. Orli lent her expertise to design and publish the conference program. Thus, by fits and starts, the committee worked to turn an idea into an annual happening—the *Conference of the Social Sciences*.

The conference morphed into an event providing graduate and under-

graduate students an opportunity to present their research in a professional setting while gaining invaluable experience in all aspects of organizing a professional meeting. The initial meeting on Saturday, October 29, 2005 was by all accounts a great success. It included five sessions (Race and Ethnicity; Sociology of Health and Illness, Public and Political Sociology; Culture; and Families, Gender, and Sexualities). A total of 19 papers were presented by sociology graduate students as well as students from other departments. Graduate students also served as session moderators. About 100 students and faculty attended the all-day affair that included a buffet lunch. Generous financial support to sponsor the event was provided by Ms. Mika Harris, a former undergraduate student in the Department and local realtor.

Looking to the future, the organizing committee has been busy making plans for the second conference scheduled for Saturday, October 21, 2006. The student committee, now fifteen students strong, with Namita as Chair, is in the process of establishing the conference event as an annual Department and University function. To ensure the conference becomes an annual event, the students successfully applied to the University for formal organizational status: *Society of the Social Sciences at the University of Florida* (SSS at UF). At this point, the organization’s key mission is to organize the meeting. The organizing committee has five formal subcommittees: logistics, publicity management, fund raising, media management, and presentation. In addition, the committee is exploring options for making the conference more interdisciplinary while expanding it to include several other universities in Florida. Anticipating an

even bigger turnout, next year’s program will incorporate concurrent paper sessions and a separate poster session for both graduates and undergraduates.

The faculty and students will consider options for integrating the event more directly into the Department’s training mission. Because professional socialization is an important facet of graduate education, the *Conference of the Social Sciences* should come to play a unique role in training our Masters and Ph.D. students, as well as our undergraduates who have ambitions to pursue advanced degrees. Most of these students have their sights set on becoming university professors, researchers, or leaders in organizations dealing with important social issues.

Reflecting on that November afternoon lobby chat, when I initially responded with a cynically arched brow and scrunched face to Ray’s query, little did I know what a truly remarkable project would emerge from that conversation.

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Graduate Student Conference Organizing Committee: (front row, left to right) Dana Berkowitz, JeffriAnne Wilder, Colleen Cain, Orli Zaprir, Namita Manohar; (back row, left to right) William Jawde, Billy Jeffries, Ray Hinojosa, Matt vanVoorhis

Funding the Road to Research

Interdisciplinary collaborations boost federal grants for CLAS

Dreaming about roads is what keeps Stephen Perz awake at night. The associate professor of sociology has received five grants to date to help solve a simple question with complex answers: What happens when you build a road in the middle of the Amazon?

"I came out of graduate school as a social demographer studying environmental issues," he says. "The more I studied various populations, the more I started to see the larger picture in terms of how populations use and, in some cases, abuse the land, and how they impact the environment and vice versa."

Since 2001, Perz has collaborated with colleagues in many disciplines playing the research grant lottery and hitting the jackpot five times, receiving more than \$800,000 from the National Science Foundation (NSF) and NASA to fund research in Amazonian portions of Brazil, Bolivia and Peru.

Perz makes up a growing number of CLAS faculty who are applying for and often receiving federally funded research dollars. For the 2004–2005 fiscal year, CLAS experienced a 26 percent increase in federal awards, and the current fiscal year is no different according to the college's associate director of research and grants, Margaret Fields.

"External funding awards from federal agencies has continued to increase during the first quarter of the new fiscal year," she says. "We have a total of \$13,424,934 from federal agencies that represents 90 percent of total awards to date."

Last year, UF garnered \$494 million in research funding, and CLAS accounted for roughly 10 percent with \$47.4 million, behind the Health Science Center with \$257.1 million (52 percent), the College of Engineering with \$63.3 million (13 percent) and IFAS with \$84.4 million (17 percent). All other UF colleges and units earned a combined \$41.8 million (8 percent).

"When research grants are talked about in a liberal arts and sciences college, the traditional hard sciences tend to get more attention," says CLAS Associate Dean for Research Lou Guillette. "While they do bring in big dollars, there is a growing trend in the number of faculty within the social sciences and humanities applying for and obtaining federal grants, and many times their research proposals are quite interdisciplinary, pooling expertise from across departments and colleges, which I think accounts for much of their success."

Perz is working with colleagues in CLAS, including geographer Jane Southworth, as well as faculty and graduate students in other colleges at UF who meet regularly as the "ROADIES" working group. Perz also has colleagues at other US universities, including Michigan State and Columbia, as well as several universities in South America, all teaming up in what he describes as a complex series of projects.

"Essentially, we're looking at how, where and why people build roads, and what new roads and road paving will mean for the future of the Amazon in terms of positive and negative social and environmental processes," explains Perz. While roads in the Amazon are generally built to gain access to natural resources, the specific resources sought, the benefits they bring to local communities, and the ecological implications of exploiting them differ from place to place.

"Roads help people earn livelihoods, but they can also cause social conflicts and degrade the ecosystems on which local residents depend," he says. The Amazon has enormous biological diversity, so



UF Sociologist Stephen Perz stands in front of a sign in Assis, Brazil near the tri-national frontier where Brazil, Bolivia and Peru meet. At right is the Trans Oceanic Highway before it was widened and paved. When completed, it will link the tri-national frontier to the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans.

road-building projects are prompting new conservation efforts, making the region especially important for us to be studying right now."

A section Perz is particularly interested in is known as the MAP region, made up of areas in three countries that are dealing with road-related issues—Madre de Dios (Peru), Acre (Brazil) and Pando (Bolivia). "When the TransOceanic Highway is finished there, the MAP region will be linked to both Atlantic and Pacific ports, and through them exposed to the global economy, which is hungry for natural resources."

Perz says MAP is the most biodiverse region in the world, and the stage is now set for unprecedented changes there. "The question is whether changes facilitated by roads will improve or worsen forest conservation, economic performance and social equity. MAP now has a social movement to address these issues through participatory environmental planning, and that movement is calling for more research on which it can base its planning proposals to ensure the best possible outcomes."

More research is what Perz would like to pursue, as well as focus on establishing networks

among scientists. "There is a clear science agenda here. We're working with faculty and students from four universities in Brazil, Peru and Bolivia. There are many social actors in this complex scene, so we have to get the social scientists down there talking to the botanists, and the residents talking to the scientists, and the politicians listening to and understanding the science."

At the end of the day, Perz says his sleepless nights are for a good cause. "I'm doing all this to advance a model of environmental science that is interdisciplinary enough to take the social sciences seriously," he says. "Ideally, research should be paired with democratic processes for environmental governance, as facilitated by popular social movements to which policy makers will listen. This means that research must be directly linked with investments in building regional universities to strengthen their ties to stakeholders, politicians and state agencies. Otherwise, governance, sustainability and similar notions about a sound environmental future are pretty words, but nothing more."

A longer version of this article appeared in the November 2005 CLASnotes, the newsletter of the UF College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.



Celebrating an Anniversary

The end of the spring term marked the 100th anniversary of the first sociology course taught at the University of Florida in 1906 and the 80th anniversary of the creation of a separate Department of Sociology in 1926. As the campus shifts from the hubbub of the academic year to the quieter pace of the summer term, it's natural to reflect in this anniversary year on what we are doing today to ensure the success of the Department in the next decade.

On May 6, I attended the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences commencement ceremony to greet the new sociology graduates as they walked across the stage. I find the ceremony truly delightful as the students' energy, optimism and joy spreads to everyone in attendance. Commencement is also a reminder of the enduring commitment we have to our undergraduate and graduate students. The most visible commitment is seen in the classroom, but there's so much

more involved in developing and maintaining an undergraduate and graduate program. I'd like to highlight three activities of the past year that will help ensure the Department's success in coming years.

The Department granted its first MA degree in 1931 and its first Ph.D. in 1954. A critical task for the future is ensuring that we provide students with opportunities to become professional sociologists. An important component of this task is encouraging them to present their research before professional audiences. On the front page of this issue of the *Investigator*, Bill Marsiglio writes about the research conference that graduate students organized last October and which promises to become an annual event. In addition, our graduate students are very active in attending and presenting papers at professional conferences. More than 20 of our students have presented papers at national or regional professional

meetings this year.

Another task is ensuring that we offer an up-to-date curriculum to our undergraduates and graduates. Over the past few years, the Department has focused on developing a research and teaching program in environment and resource sociology, a topic that we're convinced will become more central to public policy in coming years. With the start of the fall term, Brian Mayer, a 2006 Ph.D. from Brown University will be joining our environment group—Stephen Perz, Christine Overdeest, and Charles Wood. His arrival will mean a greater variety in environmental courses that we can offer as well as an increase in the research opportunities available to undergraduates and graduates. This issue of the *Investigator* reprints an article on Stephen Perz's research that appeared earlier this year in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences alumni newsletter, *CLASnotes*.

As that article makes clear, external funding of research grants is increasingly important to a variety of disciplines, including the social sciences. Research grants allow faculty to do their research and play an important role in graduate education. We're able to support more students on assistantship than would otherwise be possible and provide them with research experience. This year marks a high point in the level of funding awarded to our faculty. We have received a total of \$880,000 in research funds during this fiscal year so far, dwarfing the \$80,000 we received just five years ago.

As always, we value your support and interest in the department. If you'll write to us about the exciting developments in your lives, we'll share them with your friends in a future issue of the *Investigator*. Best wishes for a relaxing and enjoyable summer.

John Henretta
Chair, Department of Sociology

Degree Recipients 2005–2006

Ph.D. Degrees

Guillermo Rebollo-Gil

Advisor: Hernan Vera
"Entre Cafres y Balnquitos: Perceptions of Race and Racism in Puerto Rico"

Stephen Rice

Advisor: Alex Piquero
"General Strain Amid Restoration: An Examination of Instrumental and Retaliatory Offenses"

Bradley G. Tripp

Advisor: Constance Shehan
"Fatherhood and Crime: Examining Life Course Transitions Among Men in Harlem"

Master's Degrees

Rajesh A. Ghoshal

Advisor: Kendal Broad and Charles Peek

Colleen R. Cain

Advisor: Hernan Vera

Robin P. Dungey

Advisor: Monika Ardelt

William L. Jeffries IV

Advisor: Barbara Zsembik

Ana C. Siqueira

Advisor: Charles Wood

Monica J. Morris

Advisor: Constance Shehan

Jean T. Callihan

Advisor: Hernan Vera

Adam Garcia

Advisor: Hernan Vera

Namita N. Manohar

Advisor: Barbara Zsembik

Sabrina J. Ward

Advisor: Marian Borg

Jaminette DeJesus

Advisor: Milagros Pena

William P. Jawde

Advisor: Hernan Vera

Maura M. Ryan

Advisor: Kendal Broad

Outstanding Alumni Award for Eric Wagner

At the UF Homecoming in November 2005, Dean Neil S. Sullivan honored Dr. Eric A. Wagner with the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences Outstanding Alumni Award. This award, given annually, recognizes the distinguished career contributions made by University of Florida graduates.



After earning his bachelor's degree from The Ohio State University in 1964, Dr. Wagner became a graduate student at the University of Florida, receiving a master's degree in political science in 1968 and a Ph.D. in sociology in 1973. He was named to the sociology faculty at Ohio University in 1968 and became chair of the department of Sociology and Anthropology in 1974, serving three consecutive terms until his retirement in 1997.

Throughout his career, Dr. Wagner has written numerous articles and books on Latin America, the sociology of sports, and urbanization. In 2004, he received the Founders Citation, the highest honor presented by the Ohio University Board of Trustees, for his years of service to the university. He has served as president of the Planned Parenthood of Southeast Ohio and as president of the Midwest Association of Latin American Studies.

Following his retirement, Dr. Wagner moved to Gainesville and is active in the First Presbyterian Church. He also publishes a Turkey Creek neighborhood newsletter and is the director of the Gainesville Duplicate Bridge Club.

Please Consider a Gift to the Department

Gifts from our alumni and friends allow us to fund a wide array of activities to enrich the life of the department that otherwise would be impossible. In addition to covering the production and postage expenses associated with our departmental newsletter, the *InvestiGator*, we use the funds in a variety of other ways that benefit our students. We provide a cash award to accompany the "J.S. Vandiver Teaching Assistant of the Year Award," and we hold an annual reception to welcome our new students. A solid base of alumni support is one of the principal factors that distinguishes the best universities and departments from the rest, and we hope you will be able to help us this year with a gift of \$50, \$100, or more.

Gifts may be made online or by mail. To give online, point your browser to the Sociology Department contribution page (www.soc.ufl.edu/support.htm) and follow the link to the secure online giving site.

Or, mail your gift to the Department (Department of Sociology, PO Box 117330, University of Florida, Gainesville FL 32611-7330). Checks should be made payable to the "University of Florida Foundation-Sociology."

Thank you for your continued support to the Department.



UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

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Address Service Requested

Alumni Updates

Jeff Appel, BA 1989, MA 1993, JD 1993. Jeff opened the Law Offices of Jeffrey E. Appel, P.A. in Lakeland, Florida on January 1, 2006.

Joseph Felt, MA 1972. Joseph writes, "I have been retired since June 2002, after 33 years with the Probation Division of the State of New Jersey."

Virginia Mulle, Ph.D. 1993. Ginny is now Associate Dean in the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Alaska-Juneau. This is her 12th year at the university, where she is also an Associate Professor of Sociology.

Keep your classmates up to date! Please use this form for address changes and/or to tell us what you are up to. Mail your update via post to the address below or email Professor John Henretta (jjch@soc.ufl.edu). We want to hear from you!

Name: _____

Address: _____

Date Graduated: _____

Present Activities: _____

E-mail: _____

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