Greetings from the Head of Sociology: Donna Barnes

The department had a successful 2012-13 academic year. It conducted a national search for a new tenure-track faculty member and succeeded in hiring its top candidate, Shiri Noy. Additional details on Assistant Professor Noy are provided in the Faculty News section of the newsletter.

The department excelled in terms of the accomplishments of its current and past students. One major, John Degenhart, won a prestigious undergraduate creative writing award at UW last spring and is featured in the Student Awards section of this newsletter. Six former students are enrolled in doctoral programs in sociology, and six more former students have recently been hired as Assistant Professors of Sociology. The accomplishments of these former students are highlighted in the Alumni News section of the newsletter. Last, but certainly not least, are the accomplishments of Susan Pamerleau, a sociology major (Class of 1968): She achieved the rank of Major General in the Air Force, served as senior vice president of USAA providing financial services to military families, serves as a member of the UW Foundation Board, and is now the newly elected sheriff of Bexar County, Texas! Reflecting her stature as an alumna who has generously given back to UW, the university chose her to be the Grand Marshal of the Homecoming Parade this fall.

Department faculty also had a successful year. Assistant Professor Anna Zajacova and her research collaborators received quite a bit of media attention from newspapers and blogs for their research on the widening education gap in mortality among white women in the U.S. Assistant Professor Matthew Painter received accolades for his teaching skills: He was the recipient of an Extraordinary Merit in Teaching Award, as well as a “PIE” (Promoting Intellectual Engagement” in the First Year) award. These successes, as well as others, are discussed further in the Faculty News section of the newsletter.

I want to thank alumni and friends who have financially supported the Department this past year. I would like to draw your attention to the recipients of the Flittie Scholarship Award and the Meeks Summer Research Award, who are highlighted in the Student Awards section of the newsletter. These awards would not be possible without the support of donors. I would also like to express gratitude to Amy and John Wilbourne who established the Wilbourne Excellence Fund, which is a major source of support for educational enrichment activities within the department. Their fund and donations from dozens of alumni to the department’s general Foundation account are crucial in allowing the department to weather the financial challenges created by recent state budget cuts at the university.

Best regards,

Donna Barnes
**Faculty News**

Assistant Professor **Shiri Noy** joined our faculty this fall. We are delighted to have her as the newest addition to our department. She earned a PhD in sociology this past summer from Indiana University, a top 20 doctoral program. Her research interests include political sociology, sociology of development, globalization, and comparative methods (with a strong interest in Latin America). She has already published two articles: “Graduate Students’ Perceptions of their Advisors: Is there Systematic Disadvantage in Mentorship?,” *Journal of Higher Education* and “New Contexts, Different Patterns? A Comparative Analysis of Social Spending and Government Health Expenditure in Latin America and the OECD,” *International Journal of Comparative Sociology*. She also has seven research manuscripts in progress. This fall, she is teaching a section of our introductory sociology course and is also teaching the required graduate Research Methods course. Her flexibility in teaching at all levels is a major asset to our program.

Assistant Professor **Matthew Painter** had a banner year. He published an article, “The Role of Cohabitation in Asset and Debt Accumulation during Marriage,” in the *Journal of Family and Economic Issues*, a well-regarded demographic journal. He has an impressive eight additional papers under review at various sociological journals. He was also the recipient of an Extraordinary Merit in Teaching Award from the College of Arts and Sciences at UW, as well as a “PIE” (Promoting Intellectual Engagement in the First Year) award. In regard to the latter award, nearly 200 nominations were received from freshman and sophomore students at UW, with only 33 award finalists selected. The department benefits immensely from having faculty like Matthew who perform strongly in both the research and teaching aspects of their jobs.

Recent research by Assistant Professor **Anna Zajacova** on the widening education gap in mortality among white women in the U.S. is receiving significant attention from the media. She and her collaborators found that white women who dropped out of high school are dying on average five years earlier than their educational equivalents in the previous generation. This is an unprecedented longevity decline that contrasts with a sweeping increase in life expectancies during the 20th century in most populations. The widening mortality gap was found largely to be the result of growing disparities in economic circumstances and health behaviors, especially the employment status and smoking habits of women with different levels of education. This study was only one of eight that Anna got published this year. So it is hardly surprising that she has received an Extraordinary Merit in Research Award from the College of Arts and Sciences.
Faculty News (continued)

Professor Richard Machalek has accepted an invitation to co-edit a volume of solicited, original contributions for a book entitled *Evolutionary Analysis in the Social Sciences* to be published by Paradigm Publishers. The invitation was extended by Jonathan H. Turner, a prominent sociological theorist and his colleague, Alexandra Maryanski, both in the Department of Sociology at the University of California, Riverside. This will be a large volume comprising up to about 40 chapters contributed by leading social and behavioral scientists working in evolutionary and ecological areas of inquiry.

Professor Malcolm Holmes, with co-authors Brianna Best and Eric Wodahl, published an article, “Waiving Away the Chance of Freedom: Exploring Why Prisoners Decide Against Applying for Parole,” in the *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*. This paper grew out of the work of Brianna Best, who was a student in our graduate program and chose to explore in her thesis research the reasons why almost one-third of prisoners eligible for parole in Wyoming do not apply. It is great to have faculty like Professors Holmes and Wodahl who are willing to work with graduate students to get their thesis research published.

Student News

This section highlights recent graduates from our undergrad and MA program who are now enrolled in doctoral programs in sociology.

Chris Holmes, who graduated in 2011, was accepted into the University of Wisconsin-Madison, the top sociology doctoral program in the country. He also recently received a revise-and-resubmit decision on a paper, “Education as ‘The Great Equalizer’: Health Benefits for Black and White Adults” (co-authored with Professor Anna Zajacova), submitted to the *Social Science Quarterly* journal. This is quite an accomplishment for a student who has only just begun his graduate studies!

Sherri Sasnett successfully defended her Master’s thesis, “Are the Kids All Right: A Qualitative Study of Adults with Gay and Lesbian Parents,” in Spring 2013. She taught the introductory sociology course, SOC 1000, for the department this past summer and then headed to Boulder, Colorado to begin the doctoral program in sociology at the University of Colorado. Although she is extremely busy and adjusting to the heavy demands of the doctoral program, she has reported that she loves being part of that program. We wish her the best!
Student News (continued)

Matthew Thompson successfully defended his Master’s thesis, “Kids and Guns: The Impact of Children and Parenthood on Adult Support for Gun Control,” in 2011. He is now in the doctoral program in sociology at the University of California-Davis. His research interests focus on conservative social movements, including the gun rights movement. Methodologically, he is interested in applying social networks analysis to social movement processes.

Ryan Gunderson, who earned his M.A. from our program in 2011, is in the doctoral program in Sociology at Michigan State University. His areas of specializations include environmental sociology, social theory, political economy, and animal studies. His tentative dissertation title is “Nature, Sociology and the Frankfurt School.” He expects to complete the doctoral program in 2014 and has already begun searching for Assistant Professor positions. He should not have any problem securing a great position since he already has eleven publications, with five additional papers under review!

L. J. Panas, who earned a M.A. from our program in 2010, has completed all of the coursework for the doctoral program in the Population Health Sciences program at the University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston and has finished his qualifying exams. His poster presentation, “Mortality Difference for Hispanics and Non-Hispanic Whites Living in Five Southwestern States” won Best Poster Presentation in Public Health at the National Student Research forum. Recently LJ was the lead author on a paper, “Physical Performance and Short-Term Mortality in Very Old Mexican Americans,” accepted for publication in the journal *Experimental Aging Research*.

Unfortunately, the department also has sad news to share: Mate Pleic, who earned a Master’s from our program in 2009 and was a doctoral student in sociology at the University of New Mexico, died from a brain aneurysm in mid-December 2012. The Department at UNM held a memorial service for him on January 12, 2013. Several former UW sociology students who had been in the same UW graduate cohort as Mate sent memories to be read at his memorial service. He was a very bright young man who livened up our department while he was here. To say that he loved to talk is an understatement, and he also set a record with his 300+ page thesis, “The Anti-Bureaucratic Revolution: The Political Elite’s Perception and the Violent Breakdown of Yugoslavia.” He will be dearly missed by his friends at both UW and UNM!
**Student Awards**

**Alpha Kappa Delta** is the international honorary society for sociology. The AKD chapter at UW recognized its new inductees at the Graduation and Honors Award Banquet held last April. This year five sociology majors were inducted and eight majors received their Honor Cords to wear during the Arts & Sciences Commencement ceremony.

**Jake Degenhart** won a prestigious creative writing award at UW last spring. His entry, entitled “The Brass Girl of Bardou,” won rave reviews. He was amused when the judges expressed shock that he was a sociology major! He is currently an undeclared graduate student at UW enrolled in a Writer’s Workshop course offered through the Department of English. We wish him the best. Whatever path he chooses as he considers various graduate options, we are confident that he will find success!

**Amy Sarandopoulos** was this year’s recipient of the **Flittie Scholarship**. This scholarship recognizes academic excellence among our undergraduate majors. The faculty selects the recipient(s) from a pool of majors who are graduating seniors and have a minimum 3.5 grade point average in their sociology courses. Amy was an amazing student with almost straight As in her sociology coursework and an overall GPA of 3.94. She was the type of student that faculty relish having in their courses. Her high GPA was particularly impressive since she also competed as a varsity athlete on UW’s soccer team. Upon graduation, she returned to her native country of Australia and is planning a career in Social Work.

**Janelle Rottweiler Simpson** was the recipient of the 2012 **Meeks Summer Research Award**. The Meeks Memorial Fund was established in honor of Chet Meeks, a former undergraduate major who later completed a PhD in sociology. He was an Assistant Professor at Georgia State University at the time of his death from cancer in January 2008. The scholarship is competitively awarded to support summer research projects. Janelle’s research project focuses on assessing the significant fertility differentials between the civilian population and the military. The gray-haired faculty in the department bask in her accomplishments in part because she is the daughter of J. D. Rottweiler, who completed our graduate program in 1992.
Alumni News

The department is very pleased to announce that six of its former students have recently secured Assistant Professorships. This is quite an accomplishment, both for them personally and for department faculty, who can take pride in having mentored them!

Candace May completed our Master’s program in 2006 and then entered the doctoral program in sociology at Colorado State University. She earned her doctorate in 2011 and began teaching as an instructor at CSU and was a temporary instructor in our department in Spring 2013. She now has a tenure-track position as an Assistant Professor of Sociology in the Department of Sociology, Anthropology, & Child and Family Studies at the University of Louisiana-Lafayette. She is teaching courses on Political Sociology, Rural/Urban Development and Change, and Environmental Sociology. She is also conducting research on coastal restoration in the Gulf following the BP disaster, with a focus on how the disaster affected local livelihoods.

Jeffrey Jacquet completed our Master’s program in 2005. He earned a doctorate from Cornell University in 2013 and is now an Assistant Professor of Sociology and Rural Studies at South Dakota State University. His broad areas of teaching and research interest are environmental sociology and the impact of energy development on communities. He and his wife are the proud parents of a son, August Thoreau Jacquet, born this past summer on August 5th.

Michael Strand completed his Bachelor’s degree at UW in History and Philosophy. However, he also took courses in our department and decided to pursue a graduate degree in sociology. He earned both a Master’s and PhD in Sociology from Notre Dame. This fall he began his position as Assistant Professor in the Department of Sociology at Bowling Green State University. He is interested in all things theoretical, including classical and contemporary social theory, critical theory, and the philosophy of social science. His empirical research crosses disciplinary boundaries and focuses on explaining social and cultural change.

Tim O’Brien was an undergraduate sociology major at UW who graduated in 2005. He went on to earn a Master’s and PhD from Indiana University, a top 20 doctoral program in sociology. He joined the Department of Sociology at the University of Evansville this fall. His primary interests are in sociology of law, sociology of science, and political sociology. Among his current research projects are an examination of how social characteristics of expert witnesses matter for the construction of scientific expertise in courts and how individual-level perspectives on science and religion shape political conflict in the U.S.
**Alumni News (continued)**

**Cody Warner** was an undergraduate sociology major at UW who earned his Bachelor’s in 2004. He briefly attended our Master’s Program (earning an Ellbogen Outstanding Graduate Assistant Teaching Award) before transferring to the doctoral program in sociology at Penn State. He studies the intersection of crime, incarceration, and social stratification. His current research examines how ex-inmates navigate the housing market following their release from prison. He is also interested in crime and offending during the transition to adulthood, as well as protest policing and social control. He joined the Department of Anthropology and Sociology at Montana State University as an Assistant Professor this fall.

**Aaron Roussell** earned a Master’s degree from our department in 2007. He recently completed the doctoral program in Criminology, Law, and Society at the University of California, Irvine. He has written on rural methamphetamine use through the lens of social disorganization theory and has studied the dynamic structural correlates of violent and property crime across the rural-urban continuum. He is methodologically eclectic and is involved in a five-year ethnographic field work project in South Los Angeles in regard to interracial violence and the constitution of power between police and residents. This fall he joined the Department of Criminal Justice and Criminology at Washington State University as an Assistant Professor.

**Donor Information**

The department is very appreciative of financial donations. Past donations have helped fund guest speakers; the activities of our student club, OASIS (Organization of Active Students Interested in Sociology); merit scholarships for sociology majors; research scholarships for our graduate students; and student participation in regional professional conferences.

The easiest way to make a donation is with a credit card through the secure online web link: www.uwyo.edu/giveonline. When designating the gift recipient, select the College of Arts and Sciences. Then specify that the gift should be directed to the Department of Sociology. Also, please note the following appeal code: N14SC. If you wish, you may further direct your donation to one of our special funds: The Flittie Fund, which supports scholarships for our top-performing undergraduate majors; the Meeks Memorial Fund, which supports summer research awards for our graduate students; and the Wilbourne Excellence Fund, which supports educational enrichment activities throughout the year.

If you prefer, you may call the Foundation’s toll-free number: (888) 831-7795 to make a donation. You may also mail your donation. Please make your check payable to the UW Foundation/Department of Sociology and send it either directly to the UW Foundation, 1200 East Ivinson St, Laramie, WY 82070-4159 or to the Department of Sociology, Dept 3293, University of Wyoming, 1000 E. University Ave, Laramie, WY 82071.