In Todd Lafrenz’s fall 2008 chemistry classes, students worked on an inventory of overhead lighting on the Saint Paul campus. With help from campus facilities, the students counted over 3,000 bulbs, not including those in the library, one of the largest buildings on campus. “Almost all of the four-foot fluorescent fixtures on campus use 32-watt bulbs,” according to Lafrenz. Students learned that lower wattage bulbs with a different color spectrum could make a difference. With Metropolitan State’s 2008 electric bill for the Saint Paul campus at over $375,000, changing to more efficient lighting can save money and help the environment. “These new bulbs are initially more expensive, but the additional cost is recovered over the life of the bulb.”

While using different bulbs can save energy, Lafrenz’s students learned that changing habits can have an even bigger impact. By making sure that lights are off when rooms aren’t in use, the university can save eight times as much energy as it saves by changing to lower wattage bulbs.

Lighting is just one of the issues Metropolitan State is tackling in an effort to become a sustainable campus. As part of the American College and University Presidents Climate Commitment (ACUPCC), the university has agreed to initiate actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to work toward the goal of becoming carbon-neutral.

Lafrenz recently received a small grant from the Minnesota Schools Cutting Carbon program to spearhead sustainability efforts on campus. The first step has been to convene an ad hoc committee of students, faculty and staff to discuss ideas. Lafrenz believes that students are crucial to these continued on page 2
The real value of having student-led initiatives is that students know what’s going to work for their lifestyles. We’re not trying to tell anyone they have to do this; we are hoping everyone will instead say ‘I’d like to do this.’ It completely changes the motivation.” Lafrenz hopes that it will be students, not just faculty, who will convince the administration to implement new measures. “When students sit down in front of the administration, sometimes they have a really strong voice, especially if they have a loud voice. If a hundred students show up and say, ‘Hey, we feel the same way as our teachers, we’re going to help make it happen,’ then all of a sudden things start to change.”

In fall 2009, Metropolitan State can apply for a more substantial grant from Minnesota Schools Cutting Carbon to further sustainability efforts. “Right now, we are afforded an opportunity to choose how we’re going to make a difference,” says Lafrenz. “Sustainability efforts like recycling, car-pooling and water and electricity conservation may be inconvenient to some, but now we can choose how to be inconvenienced. If we do too little now, we may eventually not have a choice about what changes will be made.”

Lafrenz is excited about some of the sustainability efforts already underway on campus. For example, in Rikki Wagstrom’s math class, students calculate their ecological footprints while in Julie Maxson’s environmental science class, students study the design of the university’s rain gardens. On a broader scale, campus facilities have updated the emergency exit signs to LED lights, which consume very little power. In addition, Metropolitan State plans to install a wind turbine on campus this summer—an impressive feat for a school within a major urban area. The university also plans to address a range of environmental concerns including student transportation and parking, paper use and recycling, and the generation and disposal of hazardous chemicals from campus lab activities.

For more information on joining Metropolitan State’s developing sustainability efforts, e-mail Professor Todd Lafrenz (todd.lafrenz@metrostate.edu).

STEM programs are blooming

College of Arts and Sciences faculty are currently involved in a number of exciting STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) projects.

Bringing girls into STEM  Last summer, faculty in the math and natural sciences departments brought 17 middle school girls to campus for MPOWER. The five-day summer camp exposed girls to the opportunities, challenges, and excitement of STEM careers. Initiated in 2005, the program is currently under the guidance of math and science faculty members Cindy Kaus, Rikki Wagstrom, Sarah Hansen and Julie Maxson.

At the heart of MPOWER is hands-on learning. In past years, participating girls have studied the golden ratio while making stained glass windows; learned how GPS equipment works; built 3D scale models of buildings from blueprints; studied wind turbine design and carbon footprints; and learned how to tune a pop bottle using pressure frequencies. The program is free to any middle school girl from Saint Paul. The organizers of MPOWER are now working on the program for summer 2009.

Reaching out to underrepresented groups  Natural sciences faculty member Ramin Daghigh, working with Angelique Calotescu in Metropolitan State’s Financial Management Office, received a grant of over $14,000 from the National Science Foundation to support students who are underrepresented in STEM fields. The LSAMP (Louis Stokes Alliances for Minority Participation) funds have been used to establish a science tutoring
Student and alumni news

Eric Anderson (alumnus, Writing) received a promotion to senior editor of Street Thunder magazine, published by the North American Membership Group. His work helped secure four awards for excellence at the Minnesota Magazine and Publications Association competition, November 2008.

Adam A. Hill (alumnus, Social Science) was awarded first place in the Caroline Rose Undergraduate Paper Competition at the 2008 Annual Conference of the Sociologists of Minnesota in Rochester, October 2008. His paper was titled “Finding Historical Place: How Education Develops Students into Citizens.” Hill’s faculty sponsors were Janet Enke and Monte Bute.

Jill McEachern (Writing) published an article, “Going Green and Riding High While Bundled Head to Toe,” for the online magazine, Have Fun Biking, December 2008.

Dave Mondy (Writing) performed a story at MPR’s In the Loop StorySlam, December 2008.

Mohammad Sarwar (Writing) was the recipient of the 2008 Robert L. Carothers Distinguished Student Writers Award at Metropolitan State. Each year the Carothers award is given to one student at each of Minnesota’s state universities.

Rei Sudo (Theater) was in the Japanese production of an Australian play, Windmill Baby, by Aboriginal playwright David Milroy, December 2008. She also translated the play and worked as the dramaturge.

Nate Thomas (alumnus, Writing) published the poem, “Grapeshot,” in the spring 2008 issue of Whistling Shade.

Robert Velez (Social Science) was selected to participate in the Ralph Bunche Summer Institute at Duke University in June 2008. The Institute is sponsored by the American Political Science Association.


program within Metropolitan State’s Center for Academic Excellence. The grant also provides funding for several Metropolitan State STEM majors to participate in conferences, workshops, seminars and research activities.

Strengthening teachers A couple of STEM initiatives focus on teachers. Julie Maxson in the Natural Sciences Department, has organized a one-day “mini-summit” that provides information to STEM instructors in MnSCU institutions on the latest technological innovations for teaching math and science. The event is scheduled for April 17 on the Metropolitan State Campus. In addition, Maxson secured a MnSCU grant that provides scholarship money to students in the university’s Urban Teacher Program who are preparing for teaching careers in STEM fields. The grant supports adult students who face the challenge of balancing the demands of work, school and student teaching.

“The Obama administration is very interested in promoting and supporting new developments in the areas of energy, environmental science and technology. Metropolitan State needs to take advantage of these opportunities.” Julie Maxson, earth scientist and faculty member in the Natural Sciences Department.

For more information on STEM at Metropolitan State, contact Interim Dean Becky Omdahl (becky.omdahl@metrostate.edu).
Gallery to be renamed after Gordon Parks

The Third Floor Gallery, located in the university’s Library and Learning Center, will soon become the Gordon Parks Gallery. It’s more than a name change.

Gordon Parks, who grew up in Saint Paul and attended Central High School, was a major twentieth century figure in the visual, literary and performing arts. Combating systemic racism, he overcame poverty to emerge as the first African American artist to direct a major Hollywood film and to become one of America’s leading photojournalists. Parks is best known for directing the film, Shaft, and for his 24-year tenure as a photojournalist for Life magazine.

Metropolitan State recently unveiled a plan to rename the Third Floor Gallery as the Gordon Parks Gallery. The name change not only links Metropolitan State’s gallery to a major figure in twentieth century culture, but it reflects and enhances the gallery’s commitment to diversity in the arts.

“We are truly honored to rename the gallery for Parks. It fits so well with what we do here in terms of meeting the needs of underserved students,” says Erica Rasmussen, director of the gallery and professor in the Communication, Writing and the Arts Department. Rasmussen notes that the renaming became a reality when Robin Hickman, Gordon Parks’ great niece and executive producer of SoulTouch Productions, gave her support to the project.

The renaming, according to Rasmussen, should bring other changes to the university and community as well. “We expect that future exhibitions will bring new audiences into the gallery. In addition, we plan to expand our outreach in the Saint Paul Public Schools, bringing more children to campus for exhibitions and workshops. These kids will know that they’re welcome here at Metropolitan State.” Some of the outreach efforts will focus on establishing ties with the Gordon Parks High School and enhancing connections with the city’s East Side, one of the most diverse communities in Minnesota.

Rasmussen also plans to return photography to the College of Arts and Sciences curriculum; “I would like to see our students find out, as Gordon Parks did, that the camera can act as a tool of communication.”

Rasmussen is working with the university Foundation to raise a $250,000 endowment for the renamed gallery. A public grand reopening of the gallery is planned for 2010.

For more information on the renaming of the gallery, contact Erica Rasmussen at erica.rasmussen@metrostate.edu.
Faculty and advisor news

Nancy Black (Social Science) published the article, “Las Operaciones Misioneras de la Orden Mercedaria en su Encuentro con la Poblacion Indigena Lenca de Santa Barbara de Tencoa, Honduras,” translated as “Mercedarian Order Mission Operations among the Lenca of Santa Barbara de Tencoa, Honduras” in the journal Yaxkin, 2009. Yaxkin is a publication of the Honduran Institute of Anthropology and History.

Donna Blacker (Communication, Writing and the Arts and CAS Advising) received an M.F.A. in creative writing from Hamline University, January 2009. Her capstone project was a memoir entitled “Almost Normal for Now.”


Monte Bute (Social Science) was a featured speaker at the “Liberty Parade” during the Republican National Convention protests. He wrote four opinion pieces for the Star Tribune and Pioneer Press in 2008–2009. He also published two book reviews in the spring 2008 issue of the American Sociological Association’s journal, Contexts.


Fred Carpenter (Communication, Writing and the Arts) with the assistance of student worker, Kou Vang, developed a Grade Point Average (GPA) calculator for Metropolitan State advising. The calculator enables users to determine what students need to do in future classes to reach specified GPAs and completion requirements.

Scott Chazdon (Social Science) is the Research and Evaluation Coordinator for the University of Minnesota Extension, where he led a study entitled “Readiness for Engagement: A Qualitative Investigation of Community Social Capacity.”


continued on page 6

Dubrovnik
by Sonya Luhm

In this place, home to no one but the few who think to make it
I recline, undistracted by my bare skin cradled by flattened stone, sun-warmed and stoic in the cove. Beads splash at my chest then down, below breast drip slow to rump where puddled seawater palms me like a lost toddler. I listen out onto the turquoise shimmer beckoning with shy waves.

I am squeamish of the snails though brown and soft and slow, but I drop into the gentle laps and once below my locks float in a ghostly manner of their own, mimicking the grounded greens.

I bob as an infant and watch, mesmerized by the two clouds above consuming the sky like curtains closing, until one kisses the other on the forehead.

Sonya Luhm is majoring in writing
Faculty and advisor news, continued from page 5


Kristi Frykman (Communication, Writing and the Arts) was a presenter for the Journal/Poetry/Art Therapy Conference in Denver, Colo. in June 2008. In June 2009 she will be teaching written and visual storytelling at universities in Uganda.


Jeanne Grant (History) presented a paper and served as a discussant on a double panel on the topic, “Is There a Czech Revolutionary Tradition?” at the National Convention of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies, November 2008. Her paper was titled, “Distinguishing the Religious, Political and Legal Elements of Late Medieval Revolution in Hussitism.”

Kathryn Kelley (Communication, Writing and the Arts) cowrote and received two grants from the MnSCU Center for Teaching and Learning. One was for the conference, “Globalizing Higher Education in Minnesota: You Have a Role,” and the other was for the conference, “Vitality, Viability and Visibility: A Women’s Studies Discipline Workshop.”

Kathleen Laughlin (History) was named project director for “Team Hillary/New England Oral History Project: A Study of an Historic Campaign,” at the Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy, the McCormack Graduate School of Policy Studies, University of Massachusetts–Boston, November 2008. She was also named an editorial board member of “Women and Social Movements in the United States, 1600–2000,” a Web site based in the Center for Gender Analysis at the State University of New York, Binghamton.

Ed Bok Lee (Communication, Writing and the Arts) is a 2009 Loft Mentor Series Poetry Mentor to four winners in the poetry category. Bok Lee also published the essays, “Sit and Fish,” in KoreaAm Journal and “Across Asian Middle America: Fort Myers, Fla.,” in Hyphen Magazine. He is a contributor to the first CD produced by the The Equilibria, a spoken word series at the The Loft.


Beth Mayer (Communication, Writing and the Arts) recently had her short story, “The Implausible Etiquette of Smelt,” accepted by The Sun Magazine for 2009 publication. Her flash-fiction has twice been selected for MiniStories, a quarterly contest sponsored by mnaartists.org.

Rose McKinney (Communication, Writing and the Arts), president of Risdall McKinney Public Relations, recently completed her term as president of the Minnesota chapter of the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA). She is a member of the national volunteer leadership continuum task force for PRSA’s national membership.

Nancy O’Brien (Communication, Writing and the Arts) cofacilitated the study abroad program, “Egypt in Transition,” sponsored by the Upper Midwest Association for Intercultural Education, January 2009.

Tom O’Connell (Social Science) has been named chair of the board of Civic Media, a nonprofit organization that develops radio and Web-based public affairs content. The organization is committed to bringing a voice to communities and a perspective that is often missing from mainstream media. O’Connell also appears regularly as a commentator on local social and political issues.

Sumiko Otsubo (History) presented the paper, “History of Eugenics in East Asia,” at the International Society for the History, Philosophy, and Social Studies of Biology, Off-Year Workshop at Kobe University, Japan, November 2008. She has also served as an executive board member for the Midwest Japan Seminar, 2006–2009.

Nancy Sather (Natural Sciences) delivered programs that relate present day prairie natural history to nineteenth century landscape descriptions, summer 2008. She was project coordinator and presenter for a state sesquicentennial grant to the Prairie Ecology Bus Center in Lakefield, Minn.

John Schneider (Natural Sciences) has been renamed the chair of the Game and Fish Fund Citizen Oversight Fisheries Subcommittee, in connection with the Department of Natural Resources.

Gail Smogard (Communication, Writing and the Arts) developed and directed the workshop, “The Honey Harvest,” by Elizabeth Fentress, which was a winner in the North American Actors Association’s 2008 play reading contest.

Susan Marie Swanson (Communication, Writing and the Arts) was the writer for the picture book, The House in the Night, Houghton Mifflin, 2008, which won the 2009 Caldecott Award for outstanding illustrations. Beth Krommes was the illustrator.

Pamela Valfer (Communication, Writing and the Arts) contributed to the exhibit, “Touch: A Survey of Contemporary Drawing,” at the College of St. Catherine, February 2009. She also received a 2009 Artist Initiative Grant from the Minnesota State Arts Board.

Andrew Ward (Practical Philosophy and Ethics) was one of the invited keynote speakers at the Second National Congress on the Un and Under Insured, and the National Congress on Health Reform, Washington, D.C., September 2008.


Doug Rossinow (History) was elected vice president of the Peace History Society. Rossinow also served as an advisory consultant for the National Public Radio documentary “Campaign ‘68,” which aired in October 2008.

Scott Rubsam (Communication, Writing and the Arts) once again directed The Diary of Anne Frank at the Park Square Theatre, 2009. During the years Rubsam has directed the play, four Metropolitan State theater majors have had roles in the production or have understudied.

The Affectionate Octopus
by Lawrence Moe

The twisted end could not be hid of what an octopus once did: she tried to embrace her well-armed feller, but hugged instead a ship’s propeller. It spun and through the water slid—then oh, you crazy mixed-up squid!

from Hudibrastic Shaggy Herrings from the Cerf
Greetings College of Arts and Sciences faculty, staff and students!

Many of you may be feeling the uncertainties of these times. Widespread economic challenges will affect our university and college, as they will every corner of higher education in our state. One expectation we have here at Metropolitan State, however, is that our enrollments will grow. The College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) will respond by offering current and incoming students the classes needed for majors and minors in the arts and sciences as well as general education requirements.

With an eye toward growth, one exciting CAS project has been the pre-design for a new science building to be located on the Saint Paul campus. The science building, which is now being ranked for possible inclusion on the MnSCU bonding list, would offer up-to-date facilities, including labs for such courses as biology, human anatomy and physiology, microbiology, chemistry and organic chemistry.

The arts and sciences are as important now as they have ever been. We continue to hear that more and more businesses need people who can analyze problems, envision solutions, think creatively and communicate strategically. The study of literature, history, philosophy, ethnic and religious studies, the arts, mathematics, and the sciences positions students to function productively in a changing work environment. As the news items in this issue suggest, CAS is well poised to provide exciting programs and opportunities that will have a real impact in students’ lives and on our community.

From Interim Dean Becky Omdahl