passing as white: anita hemmings 1897
the social health of the nation
food for thought: darra goldstein '73
september 11th: vassar reacts
the watson fellowship
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on the cover Anita Hemmings, class of 1897, the first African-American woman to receive a degree from Vassar. Photo courtesy of Vassar Libraries' Special Collections.
You Are Not Alone

ON THE MORNING OF SEPTEMBER 11TH, I WALKED THROUGH THE ENTRANCE OF REAGAN NATIONAL AIRPORT INTENDING TO CATCH THE USAIRWAYS SHUTTLE TO LAGUARDIA.

The night before over 400 Washington-area alumnae/i and Vassar administrators had attended a Vassar-sponsored reception at the National Building Museum to honor architect Cesar Pelli. I was thinking of Pelli as I walked into the airport — recently and elegantly redesigned by him — when an unexpected sight met my gaze — a group of airline pilots standing in front of the electronic departure screens. It was so incongruous that I was, at first, amused.

The pilots looked a bit lost. Something in the way they stood — rock still, faces devoid of expression — drew me to them. The usual blue/black departure screen had been converted to a television screen and showed the twin towers of the World Trade Center. I thought, “This is a movie” and turned to the pilots for reassurance. Their faces were the color of ash.

A surreal calm settled over me and I watched myself turn and walk quickly to the ticket counter. My flight — all flights to New York were delayed indefinitely. An unsettling thought rose up inside me. I tamped it down in my mind, but it rose up again. I was alone.

I sped to Union Station to catch up with Bob Pounder and Jennifer Dahnert, who had attended the Pelli event the previous night. I boarded the 10:00 a.m. train and decided that I would slowly walk row by row looking at the travelers. If my colleagues were on the train, I would find them because I didn’t want to be alone. I did find them, and we embarked on a 10-hour odyssey back to Poughkeepsie. All that day we talked and worried about the Vassar alums we know in New York and D.C.

The next morning I went into the AAVC offices to find that the staff had been getting calls from alums looking for friends, from faculty and administrators searching for former students. I gathered the staff together, and we talked about the need to reach out to each other — the need to feel connected and not alone. From that discussion arose our Alumnae/i Check-In page on the AAVC Website. We had no idea that the response would be so overwhelming but we were proud to be able to provide some small service in the face of such sorrow.

The need to gather as a community is natural and reassuring. That lesson was made clear to me in a very personal way on September 11th. As we travel to meet with alumnae/i, as we gather in online communities, and come together in the pages of this magazine, we know that our Vassar ties are strong. Our education and the friendships we form — not only in the years spent as a student but later as the continual alumnae/i community — these things sustain us and continue to draw us back to the safe haven that is Vassar. In recent weeks we have seen many more alums coming back to campus to find solace and comfort from our pastoral campus. But if you cannot come back to campus, do not despair we are always with you.

Now, more than ever, we at AAVC are committed to sustaining our Vassar worldwide community. As long as you have Vassar, you will never be alone.

BY PATRICIA DUANE LICHTENBERG ’90, AAVC EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
In Memoriam

Sorrow has befallen us through the loss to cancer this summer of our trustee, Liz Weder Quinlan '59. Liz was the AAVC president when I first became president of Vassar. In her charming, effective way, she tutored me about the mysterious ways of Vassar and helped to shape the AAVC of today. The regular every-five-year reunion schedule replaced the dysfunctional cluster system under her leadership, and she also established the Joint Coordinating Council, at a time when coordination was direly needed. Liz fought her battle against cancer with courage and grace; I know we shall all miss her lovely smile and constant optimism.

Marilyn Kaplan '60

In Memoriam

With Nan Bennett Kay's '60 death on August 20, 2001, I lost a cherished friend. We were born one week apart, entered kindergarten together, were summer beach playmates, and attended Vassar together. When, as president of the class of 1960, I had difficulty identifying a classmate to chair our 25th reunion, my friend Nan agreed to serve as co-chair. As we met regularly at a halfway point between Boston and Rhode Island to plan our reunion, I came to value Nan's strong leadership skills. Nan continued her leadership of the class as gift chair of our 40th reunion and class president. She served the college as a member of the Development Leadership Council during the Campaign for Vassar and established the Frances Goldin Scholarship Fund in honor of her mother. This year she was elected to the Vassar Board of Trustees. Nan was also a respected leader in the Boston community, serving as a trustee for Facing History & Ourselves and the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Her commitment to children was exemplified in her role as a committee chair at Harvard School of Public Health's Center for Children's Health and her extraordinary work as chair of the board and co-chair of the capital campaign for the Children's Museum of Boston.

Through her recent years of illness, Nan balanced her commitment to Vassar and her community organizations without diminishing her time to her roles as a devoted mother, proud grandmother, and the loving wife of Stephen Kay. I am grateful to have known her warmth, energy, courage, and enthusiasm. We will miss her.

Marilyn Kaplan '60

Gov. Pataki's Recent Educational Pledge

Dear President Fergusson:

We read with great interest this morning [Sept. 19] of Governor Pataki's pledge to provide free educational assistance to families of the World Trade Center victims; this includes firefighters, police officers, and emergency medical personnel who have or may lose their lives in the process of attempting the recovery of bodies. Governor Pataki is proposing to cover tuition, room and board, books...all the necessary components one needs to partake of higher education. The Governor has noted his plan would cover both state and city colleges and universities, as well as private colleges and universities in the state of New York.

We believe Vassar should go a step in this direction as well. Not only would it be a bold move by one of New York's most illustrious institutions of higher learning, it would also be very heartfelt and dramatic statement of support for our nation at this emotional time. We are proposing that the college award students who qualify for admission, according to academic criteria set forth by the admissions office, the opportunity to get a Vassar education gratis. These students — akin to Governor Pataki's formula — would be spouses, children, and step-children of the WTC victims and the aforementioned rescue workers. It would also be wonderful should you wish to extend this aid to Pentagon bombing victims; however, the crux of the Governor's plan is New York State victims/New York State institutions.

Madame President, it would truly be a magnificent enterprise if Vassar were to take the lead in this amongst her fellow New York colleges and universities. We cannot urge you strongly enough to consider this. We cannot imagine anyone on the faculty or on the Board who would not support you here. Further, we think it would be an fitting tribute to the college that has turned out the current head of the American Red Cross, as well as a former New York Congressman.

Sincerely,

H. Blair Beiss '80
Alson J. Matsuura '80
Maureen Clark Matsuura '80

Re: Gov. Pataki's Recent Educational Pledge

Vassar meets the full need of all admitted students, which includes not only tuition, room and board, but also the cost of books, personal needs, and trips to and from home. The Governor's kind extension of aid would thus be augmented by Vassar's aid, up to any student's full need. We are thus part of the effort to offer scholarship aid to the children of the victims and have been working with the state group of independent colleges and universities to stress our commitment to meeting these needs.

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FRANCES D. FERGUSSON
President, Vassar College

Hello From the Class of 2005

Graduating from high school was no easy task. I left the world as I knew it to travel up the Hudson to begin a new life. Upon arrival I was apprehensive, just as many freshmen were. But over time I have come to realize and appreciate all that is Vassar. A welcome sense of community is readily experienced everywhere on campus. People are friendly, professors are thoughtful and the food really isn't that bad. So here's a warm "hello" to all the alumnae/i from us, the class of 2005. We are proud to be at Vassar...and loving every minute of it! Many thanks to you all for paving the way for our futures. We can only hope to live up to the hospitable Vassar standards the alumnae/i before us have set.

John Delap '05

Corrections

In the fall '01 VO, the name of the donor of the Carolyn Grant '36 Endowment was listed incorrectly. The correct name is Carolyn Grant Fay.

The correct title of Ralph LoCascio's '50 novel listed in the fall '01 VO is Alone in Winter.

Unfortunately, not all submissions can be included in this space. Please visit www.aavc.vassar.edu/vq/winter2001/letters.html to read all letters to the editor.
A mural project and public garden space are adding a new dimension of growth to evolving town-gown relations in Poughkeepsie. Vassar students teamed up with a local elementary school to create a community mural and garden on Raymond Avenue, in Vassar’s neighboring Arlington district.

The mural was designed by Vassar students Rosa Kessler ’03 (pictured above, left) and Hillary Angelo ’03 based on drawings completed by kindergarten through fifth-graders at Arthur S. May Elementary. Painting was ongoing and open to all volunteers every Saturday in September. It concluded at the September 22 Arlington Street Fair, where painters ranging in age from 3 to 70 worked on the project together.

The Arlington Street Fair is an annual event that began three years ago as a combined effort of the Arlington Business Association, Vassar College, and the Vassar Student Association. Collegeview and Raymond Avenues are blocked off for the day. Dozens of vendors and clubs offer sidewalk sales, food, crafts, and information; Vassar’s Office of Athletics sponsors coaching clinics on the Alumnae House lawn; kids’ activities are held at Arthur S. May Elementary; and a live entertainment stage features the likes of the Vassar Night Owls and Pete Seeger.

The mural was sponsored by BIG ART, a program coordinated by Sam Speers, director of the Office of Religious and Spiritual Life, that focuses on large-scale public art projects as a medium for exploring community and social change. BIG ART’s unofficial motto is, “when we make things together, we discover that together we can make things change,” according to Speers. The creation of the mural illustrates this motto perfectly.

Plans are not stopping any time soon — in the future, the students hope to convert the vacant lot adjacent to the mural (which is owned by Vassar) into a usable green space for college and community events. “We envision a raised bed garden with open spaces and sculpture installations,” Angelo said. “Both the theme of the mural itself and the eventual use of the space will, we hope, serve as inspiring and enduring reminders of the sustained need for vision, growth, communication, and the arts, for our communities and ourselves.”

—Veronika Ruff ’01
What’s on Your Nightstand?

In case Oprah’s recommendations are not the law of the land for your nightstand, the VQ asked some Vassar professors what they were reading in their spare time. You may no longer attend their lectures, but they can still pass on some words of wisdom.

James Steerman

professor of drama and film

“At the moment, I’m reading War and Peace by Leo Tolstoy. I read it, or was supposed to read it, as a freshman in college; but, for a variety of reasons, I think I mainly skinned it. I started to read it again after noting in Nelson Mandela’s autobiography, Long Walk to Freedom, that he had found Tolstoy’s book very powerful and meaningful when he read it while in prison in South Africa. I’m now about 700 pages into War and Peace at present and [agree with Mandela].”

Molly Nesbit ’74

associate professor of art

“Upon the recommendation of Rachel Whiteread, the British sculptor, I have been reading Primo Levi’s The Periodic Table, translated by Raymond Rosenthal. It is easy, once opening it, to see why a sculptor would like this book written by a paint chemist. It collects the elements of the periodic table, many of them sculptors’ materials, into stories: stories taken from nature, about nature, for nature. They are also the stories that tell something of Primo Levi’s life.”

Rachel Kitzinger

professor of classics

“I am on the last pages of Cold Mountain by Charles Frazier. I love it because it’s beautifully written and the best contemporary version of the Odyssey I know. I’m about to read The Right Hand of Sleep by John Wray, about a man returning to his Austrian village from Russia in 1936.”

Seungsook Moon

assistant professor of sociology

“I am reading Anchee Min’s Becoming Madame Mao. It is a novel based on the life story of Jiang Ching, the wife of Mao Tsetung. It’s a wonderful read, and I certainly recommend it.”

Randy Cornelius

professor of psychology

“For pleasure, I’m currently reading Lorrie Moore’s Who Will Run the Frog Hospital?, which I’ve had on my nightstand for a couple of years and am just now getting around to reading. It’s a coming-of-age novel of sorts and explores some of the darker aspects of familial and romantic relationships in Moore’s characteristic penetrating, no-nonsense prose.”

John McCleary

professor of mathematics

“I keep a few books going — choice depends on mood: Much Depends on Dinner, by Margaret Visser, is a discussion of a simple meal and all the history, science, and social impact of its ingredients. An Instance of the Fingerpost, by Iain Pears, is a historical novel about Newton’s Oxford. One of the chapters is written from the point of view of the famous mathematician John Wallis, and so the book caught the attention of the history-of-math crowd. [And then there’s] Der Steppenwolf by Hermann Hesse. I have to work a bit to read a novel in German, but it is fun. This novel was a favorite from my college days.”

—Compiled by Veronika Ruff ’01

Vassar’s Hot

Vassar was named one of nine “Hot Schools” for 2002 in the Kaplan/Newsweek How to Get Into College Guide. According to the publication, America’s most ambitious high school students are drawn to a “new breed of schools.” Vassar was added to this list (which includes Vanderbilt, Hampshire, Wesleyan, University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, Oberlin, Tulane, Emory, and Franklin Olin College of Engineering) because of its interdisciplinary academics, proximity to New York City, and 40-percent increase in applications over the past five years. —V.R.
Breaking News: Vassar Takes On an Emerging Field of Study

As media now seep into nearly every part of our lives, a group of Vassar professors—representing various departments and interests—is collaborating with students and administrators on the Media Studies Development Project (MSDP), an effort to establish a program major that approaches the study of media in a multidisciplinary manner.

Although the group is still forming the intellectual and organizational foundations of the media studies program, momentum is indisputably building. Over the summer, students remained on campus to work with professors at the Media Studies Summer Institute; and this semester, the first media studies course, Approaches to Media Studies, is filled to capacity.

“The student interest in media studies is clearly very high. Every course dealing with media generates a lot of interest,” said Thomas Porcello, co-director of the MSDP and assistant professor of anthropology. “And although there are 40 to 50 regularly taught courses with fairly significant media content, there is no central place to make the obvious connections between them.”

Students in different departments work to concentrate in media studies (albeit unofficially) every year, through carefully chosen courses, advisers, and thesis topics. Those enrolled in the new media studies course, in fact, are majoring in departments ranging from urban studies and political science to biopsychology and English. One student in the class, drama major Amanda Wallwin '02, said she enrolled in the course to combine her own interests in theater and technology.

Kate Wood '02, a sociology major by default (she said she would have liked to have been a media studies major), is the MSDP’s student intern. She believes that media studies will be exceedingly popular at Vassar. “As a culture, we are increasingly mediated, and at the same time we are increasingly concerned with the media,” she said. “The kinds of issues examined within media studies are extremely pertinent to the way we live today, and I think that many students will want to take on these kinds of questions.”

Although media have more recently expanded in technological advancement and societal impact, the idea of critically studying media is not new to Vassar. Helen D. Lockwood ’12, former professor of English and founder of Vassar’s Program in American Culture, invented an early version of media studies during her long tenure at Vassar (1927–1956). According to a 1952 college catalogue, Lockwood’s Contemporary Press course was a seniors-only offering in the English department that focused on the “philosophy of free speech and communicating today’s world.”

In her 1971 commencement remarks, Elizabeth Runkle Purcell ’31, former chair of Vassar’s Board of Trustees, spoke of the influence both Lockwood and her class had on decades of Vassar students. “Her teaching was electrifying; she wanted nothing less than to rouse the unaware,” recalled Purcell. “Her influence changed my outlook on the purposes of living and made me feel forever unsatisfied with not quite knowing and not quite doing.” (To read more about Lockwood’s impact on Vassar, see www.aavc.vassar.edu/vq/winter2ool/extras/)

This long history and student demand, along with the current global shift toward a more highly mediated society, makes formal media studies programs seem like a natural progression in higher education. Seven of Vassar’s peer institutions—Carleton, Connecticut, Hamilton, Macalester, Pomona, and Swarthmore Colleges, and Washington and Lee University—offer some type of media studies program. Nevertheless, Vassar’s MSDP has faced many challenges in creating this new path of study—the largest being to clarify and define “media,” according to William Hoynes, professor of sociology, co-director of the MSDP, and director of the Media Studies Summer Institute.

The MSDP is working to ensure that the program’s purpose and offerings derive from a diverse combination of disciplines, departments, and perspectives. “We’re all cautious about doing this slowly and carefully,” said Hoynes. “Faculty time has been invested in conversations of theories, concepts, research methods, and the roles of practices connected to media... Rather than have a fixed definition, the multidisciplinary nature of this initiative is likely to continually foreground the
Participants in the first Media Studies Summer Institute, led by Professor of Sociology William Hoynes (standing, left)

various theoretical frameworks, methodologies, and definitional questions surrounding the study of “media,” Hoynes said.

Film major Brainerd Taylor ’02, who participated in the summer institute as a media scholar, believes a media studies program could not work in any other way. “Media studies will *requisitely* remain multidisciplinary [because] its breadth is *so* great,” he said. “And that’s a good thing.” His classmate Wood agreed, she said that neither students nor professors can adequately address media studies while wearing “disciplinary blinders.”

Those involved in defining the MSDP are strongly dedicated to the challenging task of constructing a program that stays true to Vassar’s educational mission. Professors Hoynes and Porcello emphasize the importance of keeping media studies within the liberal arts framework, rather than allowing it to become a vocational course of study for those who want to enter the field of journalism. “We are not basing our program on any other school’s. We are trying to build a distinctively Vassar media studies program that builds on and extends our existing curricular strengths,” Hoynes said.

ChyChy Ezeh ’02, a science, technology, and society major (who, like Wood, would have liked the opportunity to declare a media studies major) said Vassar administrators, faculty, and trustees need to push harder for such a program — one that allows students “to apply both theory and practice in the real world,” and thereby does not “detract from the liberal arts experience.”

The Media Studies Summer Institute, which was partly funded by the college’s Mellon Foundation grants, attempted to tackle some of these major issues. Eleven students worked full-time on projects with professors; they also completed individual multimedia research and a collective design project. Four of the students were selected from Vassar’s Center for Electronic Learning and Teaching (CELT) as “student mentors” to train the others in digital media production and design; six (chosen from over 40 applicants) were there as “media scholars,” representing different academic backgrounds and Wood participated as the media studies intern.

Participants worked in the library’s new Media Cloisters with state-of-the-art technology to assist them. Their projects ranged from creating Webcasts of WVKR radio shows, databases of sound recording technologies, and a promotional film for a Vassar grad’s New York City stage production to assisting with the conception of a syllabus for the first media studies course. Professor Hoynes said that these collaborative projects were meant to connect the students with each other and to faculty members in an innovative manner.

While interest in the MSDP continues to expand and intensify, there is no planned date for tagging media studies a new major at Vassar. “We have the student and faculty interest as well as the support of the dean of the faculty’s office, and we all agree that this is a curricular direction worth exploring,” Hoynes said. “But the timing depends on the resources.”

MSDP co-director Porcello said that the most pressing need is for the program to obtain a stable financial base that will guarantee professors’ availability to offer regular courses. Support for funding is growing, he says, but it’ll likely be another three to five years before the program obtains “major” status. •

—Veronika Ruff ‘01
VASSAR REACTS

ON SEPTEMBER 11TH, THE CONTENTS OF VASSAR WERE CLOSE TO COMPLETE. HOWEVER, WE HAVE INCLUDED THIS SPECIAL SECTION TO SHARE WITH ALUMNAE/I HOW SOME MEMBERS OF THE VASSAR COMMUNITY REACTED TO THE TRAGEDIES IN NEW YORK, WASHINGTON, DC. AND PENNSYLVANIA. IN ORDER TO COMMUNICATE MORE THOUGHTS AND COMMENTS, AAVC ALSO HAS CREATED A SPECIAL SEPTEMBER 11TH MEMORIAL ON THE AAVC WEBSITE (WWW.AAVC.VASSAR.EDU).

VASSAR TAKES IMMEDIATE ACTION
After the terrorist attacks of September 11th, the Vassar community was quick to respond. Within hours, a large-screen TV and phone banks were set up in the Villard Room for students to watch the unfolding events and contact their loved ones. The following day, President Fergusson held a community gathering on the library lawn. The on-campus efforts to console, counsel, and support the Vassar community continued the rest of the week: The Chapel was open 24 hours a day; the Counseling Service extended office hours and held seminars on dealing with grief; faculty and house fellows held discussions in classes and residential halls, and the community attended candlelight walking meditation circles. In addition to these events, faculty members moderated a panel to over 400 people from the Vassar and Poughkeepsie communities on the civil and political implications of the terrorist attacks.

In the days and weeks following, a need to participate in the healing process grew. To help on-campus groups organize and facilitate planning related to the tragedies, the college created a September 11th Task Force. Events this semester included a service and planning of a memorial garden near Ely Hall; a library Website to educate students on topics related to September 11th; and a lecture by Paul Loeb, author and scholar, about what it means to be a citizen today. In addition, two more panels are planned for this semester, and next semester, a half-unit course on terrorism will be sponsored by international studies and American culture. In all of these events, the college is attempting to allow multiple points of view about the causes and consequences of September 11th to be expressed.

STUDENT LEADERSHIP STRONG
In addition to ceremonies remembering those lost and those touched by the tragedy, the Vassar community made special efforts to reach out to members of the Muslim and Jewish communities. "I've been very proud of the way student religious leaders have taken an active role in a wide variety of outreach efforts — Muslim students have organized a fund drive for the Red Cross, Roman Catholic students gathered supplies for rescue workers, students from many different religious and volunteer groups are working to compile data for the regional blood drives, and members of the Jewish, Christian, and Zen meditation communities have organized special services, gatherings, and discussions to support one another and welcome others," said Sam Spear, director of the Office of Spiritual and Religious Life.

According to Vassar Student Association President Adrienn Lanczos '02, some students "saw in the tragedy a renewed need to encourage peaceful international relations, and have since developed and joined in grassroots movements to that effect. Also, there was a letter-writing campaign organized urging leaders and peer institutions to realize the importance of peaceful methods in this difficult time." However, Lanczos went on to state, "Not all students were united in their broader political stance, but it seems as if most Vassar students have expressed a sense of frustration with those who would allow misinformed prejudices and impulsive reactionary politics to guide the domestic response of our wounded nation."

In a letter to President Bush, many students, faculty members, administrators, and staff, praised the President for his efforts thus far as well as urging him “to continue to use the channels of diplomacy and law to bring the terrorist criminals to justice, and counsel all possible restraint in the use of force. The war on terrorism must be a war on poverty and ignorance at home and abroad, as well as a war on those who perpetrated the crimes of September 11. It must not be a war on foreign cultures or foreign populations.”

REMEMBRANCE
Unfortunately, the Vassar community was not left untouched by the terrorist attacks; we lost two alumni. Ruth Keter '80 was director of research for Fiduciary Trust, and Mark Schwartz '75 was a bond broker for Cantor Fitzgerald. Our heartfelt condolences go out to Ruth's and Mark's friends and families and to all those touched by these events. —Samantha Soper '91


"I will remember watching, with horror, the twin destruction wrought by terrorists on the towers of the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Unlike all but a very few Americans though, I viewed those events from a vantage point half a world away in the capital of the Central Asian country of Kyrgyzstan, Bishkek. All that separates me from the apparent refuge for many of those responsible for the terror, Afghanistan, is the tiny nation of Tajikistan, about the size of the state of Wisconsin. I find myself, quite literally, in a frontline state witness to a tragedy of unprecedented magnitude."

JAMES A. MITCHELL ’75, KYRGYZSTAN, BISHTEK

"I worked on the 103rd floor of 1 World Trade for three years, and in the World Financial Center for five years. About two weeks after the attack on the WTC, I went to Ground Zero. Like everyone else, I felt devastated. How could I ever help my children feel safe when the Twin Towers, so seemingly permanent and stable, could be destroyed in a matter of minutes? With these thoughts, I went to Vassar for the Volunteer Leadership Conference. What a relief to see the campus—at least that part of my life still existed! As I talked with alums and walked around I realized that it was not so much the sight of the campus that gave me such a sense of stability and continuity; rather it was the feeling of community and affiliation that made me feel better. That’s what I decided to tell my children—it’s not so much the things in our lives that matter, it’s the relationships that we create and nurture."

BARBARA PARRY ’83, MORRISTOWN, NJ

"I take enormous pride and no little comfort in the national effort to rouse ourselves in solidarity with one another and with a host of nations around the world that insist mass terror is simply not an acceptable instrument of political strategy."

SIDNEY PLOTKIN, PROFESSOR OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

"Enormous solidarity is being expressed over here...heartwarming in an otherwise chilling time."

EVELYN BORNER DUNWOODY ’65, LONDON, ENGLAND
It's almost impossible to talk with Darra Goldstein '73 without salivating. She has a knack for spouting out mouth-watering descriptions of even the simplest foods: her Russian grandmother's rugelach, her first thick slathering of freshly churned butter after growing up in a margarine household, a recipe for "the most amazing cheesecake I had ever tasted" scribbled on the back of an envelope by a casual acquaintance at a party (she still has the envelope; the acquaintance is now her husband).

She seems to have a food memory associated with everyone she knows—like her Vassar roommate, who had a crock of tutti-frutti on the windowsill at all times. Ever since high school, when she poured over the Women's Day Encyclopedia of Cookery and spent all free time cooking for her parents, Goldstein has been a food lover. After graduating from Vassar, she went on to teach Russian at Williams College and published academic work on Russian poetry, art, and literature. At the same time, she wrote cookbooks, including The Georgian Feast: The Vibrant Culture and Savory Food of the Republic of Georgia (University of California Press, 1999), which won the Julia Child Cookbook Award.

Goldstein wanted to write her dissertation on food and Russian literature, "because it seemed to me that food wasn't just used in some symbolic way...it really got to the essence of what many literary works were about." Told that food wasn't a topic for serious inquiry, she abandoned the idea, but continued to harbor an interest in food. She went on to teach Russian at Williams College and published academic work on Russian poetry, art, and literature. At the same time, she wrote cookbooks, including The Georgian Feast: The Vibrant Culture and Savory Food of the Republic of Georgia (University of California Press, 1999), which won the Julia Child Cookbook Award. Eventually, her desire for a way to integrate her scholarly inclinations and her love of food got the better of her, and Gastronomica was born.

Make no mistake, this is not another Food and Wine magazine. Goldstein describes Gastronomica as a "crossover journal" in that every issue has three very scholarly articles, along with many other well-informed yet less academic ones. "It's meant to appeal to a very broad range of people," she said. The inaugural issue featured an exploration of the history of McDonald's, poetry by Louise Glück, a lengthy discourse on turtle soup, and a sketch called "The Romans of the Day" (depicting heads of lettuce). Over the course of three issues, clothing, art, industrialization, literature, etymology, film, and furniture have all been explored, all through the prism of food. "I'm trying to show that you can approach any subject through food," she said, "and in depth."
W

ile an academic approach was of utmost importance, Goldstein set out to create a magazine that would appeal on a visceral level as well as an intellectual one — much like her cookbooks, which are renowned for their appearance as well as for their content. The goal was to design something different from the scholarly jour-
nal, "which doesn't pay much attention to aesthetics," she said. "Food is
seen close-up does our trick to some degree, but perhaps only to be merci-
fully gobbled up by a gras-
hopper. If the im-
gages aren't always pleasing, then all the better, said
Goldstein. "I think

that in

chocolate-covered extraordinary Dean Crawford, has helped her connect
with contributors, many of whom are on the Vassar faculty. Other
contacts have been forged through her board of directors, which includes
Jim Stark, '71, an award-winning film producer and old friend, whose

"She has an inquiring mind and an insatiable love of food,"
Stark said of Goldstein. And while he eagerly
takes credit for her first
discovery of an array of
Goldstein pub-
lishes the magazine
almost completely by
herself. "I have a part-
time managing editor,"
Goldstein explained,
"but mostly it's just me at
my desk."

The task of single-hand-
edly editing a quarterly schol-
aryl journal in one's spare time
may seem daunting, but for
Goldstein, Gastronomica is
part of a larger mission. The attitude
that once prevented her from
writing her dissertation on food has been

changing, and she hopes that
Gastronomica will help facilitate this change by encouraging people to
look at food as a serious field of study. This is in part why having a well-
known publisher like the University of California
Press is so important — Goldstein hopes their reputation
will lend credibility to both the magazine and
the field.
"I think one of the reasons that [food stud-
ies] has been locked down upon in intellectual circles
is because it's so basic, that some people have felt it's
not worthy of intellectual inquiry," she said. "I say
that it was starting to be something of a wasted
people were addressing, and it seemed necessary to
found a journal that would bring greater credibility to
food studies in academia.

Goldstein's own academic work has recently
taken a culinary turn — she is currently teaching a
course on Russian cuisine through the Russian Culinary
Culinary Center. The course has the highest enrollment of any she
has taught in 18 years at Williams — a sign of progress
for food studies. As for her own college career, Gol-
dines spoke of a seminar on Pushkin in her senior year at Vassar with Richard
Greg. "He instilled in me a passion for learning," she said. "I can't see a
direct connection between that and Gastronomica, but it's [about] being
open to different modes of expression, and feeling a passion for your
subject."

There may not have been an opportunity to study food in college, but
like any good Vassar student, Goldstein found outlets for her passions
outside the classroom. She fondly recalls making risotto in the all-night tak-
ery on Raymond Avenue for freshly-drawn dorm-ins at 2 a.m.,
and breaking into the Joselyn kitchens late at night in the days before
central dining. (She confessed to stealing food, but quickly admitted, "At
least I didn't steal the silverware like others did.") Her roommate recalled that
Goldstein had a master oven in her room in which she made — no,
toast — chocolate-chip cookies.

A

another part of her contribution to the development of the field
of food studies, Goldstein hopes that Gastronomica will give her a chance to mentor budding food writers.

"If I can help people find a career in food journalism and get them started," she said, "then that's a won-
derful thing — and exciting as publishing someone who already famous.

She encourages students seeking a career in food writing to get in touch.

Goldstein also hopes the magazine will provide a forum for debate on
food-related issues. "One thing Gastronomica does," she said, "is present
different viewpoints, sometimes in the same issue." In the first issue, two
back-to-back articles examined the global food supply chain. Was it

strongly argued that biotechnology is
the key to solving world hunger? These two writers could not
stress enough. "But I think it's important that all of the differ-
rent voices be heard, so that people can make up their minds for themselves.

There's a plethora of food magazines out there," said Paul Russell,
Vassar English professor and Gastronomica contributor, "all of which
are entirely and pleasingly superficial, with lascivious photographs and pretty,
thin text. Our national obsession about food has increased, but our
discourse about food can never become more sophisticated. This
magazine presents us with an opportunity to do better. The premise behind
it is that thought enhances rather than detracts from the sensual quality
of food, or of anything else."

Already Goldstein has brought out the latest food-
ies in her contributors, who until Gastronomica's
appearance had never paid much attention to the
subject. Stark, who was called on board for his film
work connections, now finds himself a contributing
reviewer of Tortilla Soup, a Mexican-American remake of Ang
Liesli. "I read, Drink, Man, Woman, and keeping his eyes
open for more food-related films. "I'm sure I can keep
writing about food and film," he said, "which was
previously a big interest of mine but has now become
the other, and finds that he had always

been writing about food and had never been
consciously aware of it. "The characters in my novels
can taste," he pointed out.

Yes, "We have to taste," Goldstein concurred.
And she has, with Gastronomica, set the table for a serious,
thoughtful, provocative, sensual discourse on food.

Let all who are hungry come and eat. 0

Brown's Park 28 is a graduate student and freelance writer living in New York City.
When Anita Florence Hemmings applied to Vassar in 1893, there was nothing in her records to indicate that she would be any different from the 103 other girls who were entering the class of 1897. But by August 1897, the world as well as the college had discovered her secret: Anita Hemmings was Vassar’s first black graduate—more than 40 years before the college opened its doors to African Americans.

PASSING AS WHITE

BY OLIVIA MANCINI ’00

In the late 19th century, Vassar’s atmosphere might have been best described as aristocratic. Since its opening in 1861, the prestigious women’s school had catered almost exclusively to the daughters of the nation’s elite. Had Hemmings marked her race as “colored” on her application, her admittance to the college most certainly would have been denied.

“She has a clear olive complexion, heavy black hair and eyebrows and coal black eyes,” a Boston newspaper wrote of a 25-year-old Hemmings in August 1897. “The strength of her strain of white blood has so asserted itself that she could pass anywhere simply as a pronounced brunette of white race.”

And pass she did, until her white roommate voiced suspicions about Hemmings’ background to her own father only a few weeks before the class was due to graduate.

The father hired a private investigator to travel to Hemmings’ hometown of Boston. There it was discovered that homemaker Dora Logan and janitor Robert Williamson Hemmings had conspired with their daughter to keep her race a secret.

“We know our daughter went to Vassar as a white girl and stayed there as such. As long as she conducted herself as a lady she never thought it necessary to proclaim the fact that her parents were mulattoes,” Hemmings’ father told newspaper reporters when the story broke later that summer.

Hemmings had proven herself an impressive student, mastering Latin, ancient Greek, and French, and, as a soprano in the college choir, had been invited to sing solo recitals at the local churches in Poughkeepsie. She was described by her classmates as an “exotic beauty,” and many believed her heritage was Native American.

No minutes survive from the board meetings that were held to determine Hemmings’ fate, but the Providence Journal reported that a “crest-fallen” Hemmings appealed to college President “Prexy” Taylor, “with the result that the girl was awarded her diploma.” “[She] took a prominent part in the exercises of class day, and no one who saw the class of ’97 leave the shades of Vassar suspected Negro blood in one woman voted the class beauty,” said the Journal.

That Hemmings would have attempted to pass through Vassar’s gate as a white woman was not unusual for the time period, said Joyce Bickerstaff, Vassar Africana studies professor. Bickerstaff happened upon Hemmings’ file in 1989 while conducting research in Vassar Libraries’ Special Collections.

“There were large numbers of African Americans at that time and into the turn of the century [for whom passing] was a means to gain opportunities in education,” said Bickerstaff, who is now working on a book about the Hemmings family, tentatively titled Dark Beauty. “The country was under laws of segregation, and those families who had risen to that level of educational aspiration or economics were still excluded from most of the elite institutions.”

“Passing” has typically opened doors to more than just education, said Africana Studies Chair Gretchen Gerzina. “You get benefits economically and professionally and financially in terms of housing, jobs, and all those things denied to you,” she said. “People who want good jobs, who want opportunities, pass. That doesn’t mean they pass in their private lives, but they use it to have access to opportunities.”

Hemmings, heartbroken by the scandal,
returned to her old neighborhood in Boston after graduating from Vassar. She worked for several years as a cataloguer in the Boston Public Library. In 1903, she married Dr. Andrew Jackson Love, a physician practicing in New York City. The couple settled in Manhattan and lived as whites. Like his wife, Love had been passing for years. A graduate of the historically blacks-only Meharry Medical College in Tennessee, Love instead listed his alma mater as Harvard University Medical School.

"Those who pass have a severe dilemma before they decide to do so, since a person must give up all family ties and loyalties to the black community in order to gain economic and other opportunities," wrote scholar F. James Davis in his book, *Who Is Black?*

In some families, the ties to black roots have been so long broken that later generations are shocked to discover their real heritage. Such was the case with Hemmings' great-granddaughter, Jillian Sim. Sim, now a writer working on a book about her family, did not discover the family secret until 1994, when she was informed by a friend of her grandmother's. She described her reaction to the news in her essay, "Fading to White," published in *American Heritage* (February/March 1999).

"I was surprised by how little surprise I felt...I have reddish brown hair, and it is very fine. I have blue eyes, and you can easily see the blue veins under my pale-yellow skin. I was ignorant enough to think of blackness in the arbitrary way most of white society does: One must have a darker hue to one's skin to be black. I look about as black as Heidi."

With secrecy of utmost importance, there are no numbers to indicate how many African Americans crossed over to the white world to search for better chances, but the practice is well documented.

In the late 1920s, Nella Larsen published two novels for which she would become known as a respected author of the Harlem Renaissance. *Quicksand* (1927) and *Passing* (1929) both deal with the psychology of racial passing.

"It's funny about 'passing.' We disapprove of it and at the same time condone it. It excites our contempt, and yet we rather admire it. We shy away from it with an odd kind of repulsion, but we protect it," says *Passing* protagonist Irene to her husband, Brian.

Irene — who is light-skinned enough to pass but doesn't try to — is confronted with the fictitious residence," said the 1897 report. "Miss Hemmings has been too prominently and publicly identified with her parents' people to allow any good excuse for the ignorance of her lineage which is attributed to her instructors and associates at Vassar."

Andrew and Anita Hemmings Love, on the other hand, raised their children — Ellen, Barbara, and Andrew Jr. — as whites, sending them to the demanding Horace Mann School in Manhattan and to an exclusive whites-only camp in Cape Cod. According to Sim, Hemmings' mother came to visit the Love

The Vassar College Glee Club. Anita Hemmings is the fourth from the right.

house just once during her daughter's married life and was made to use the servants' entrance.

Ellen Love, Sim's grandmother and Anita's daughter, discovered the truth about her racial heritage only by tracking down her own grandmother, Dora, on Martha's Vineyard in 1923. Ellen took the secret to her grave, telling not even her own family.

"My great-grandmother was the first black graduate of Vassar College. And there was the real secret," wrote Sim. "This was why my grandmother would not, could not, speak of her family. Grandma's mother had been born black, and she had left her black family behind to become white. An irreversible decision. A decision that would affect all the future generations of her family. I thought of my faceless black ancestors who watched their daughter Anita leave them behind for better opportunities, for a better life as a white woman. She had to pass as white to educate herself. She had to abandon the very core of who she was to educate herself."

Like her parents before her, Hemmings conspired with her daughter to keep her race a secret in order to allow her to attend Vassar.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 68
It takes investment and risk to produce great growth.
—Thomas A. Watson, Sr.

Imagine receiving funds to spend your postgraduate year studying fly-fishing in Latin America, lunar festivals in Southeast Asia or snowboarding in the Alpines. Investigating the evolution of diversity in the U.S.—an entire year to travel anywhere. These are just a few of the topics of the fellowship. The Watson Fellowship is an annual five thousand dollar grant to support graduate and undergraduate students in their studies. The Watson Fellowship was established in 1958 to provide financial support to outstanding students from around the world who wish to study at leading universities and to engage in a year of independent study abroad. The fellowship is named after the founder of International Business Machines, Thomas J. Watson, Sr.

Veronica Ruff '01

Wanderlust 

and the Watson Fellowship

BY VERONIKA RUFF '01
"The Fellowship Program provides fellows an opportunity for a focused and disciplined wanderjahr of their own devising — a period in which they can have some suscease from the lockstep of prescribed educational and career patterns in order to explore with thoroughness a particular interest," reads the Watson brochure. "During their year abroad, fellows have an unusual, sustained, and demanding opportunity to take stock of themselves, to test their aspirations and abilities, to view their lives and American society in greater perspective, and, concomitantly, to develop a more informed sense of international concern." Fellows are not permitted to return to the U.S. during their Watson year, nor are they allowed to formally study at foreign institutions. They are encouraged to visit countries in which they have never before spent a significant amount of time, and their projects should reflect interest in, and commitment to, specific concerns.

Amy Vogelaar '92
WATSON PROJECT Working with midwifery organizations to learn more about women-centered childbirth practices and health care systems

"There are so many images I treasure." — Amy

Watson Project: Intentional Communities: Cooperative Living and Communal Responsibility, Betts’ project sent her to international communities. She worked in the communities to make herself a member rather than a visitor.

WATSON LOCATIONS The Netherlands, Sweden, Honduras, and Guatemala

WHY? Vogelaar stumbled across her interest in midwifery while searching for a paper topic for her sociology class (Sex, Gender, and Society). The women’s studies major became “completely fired up about it — they say midwifery is a calling!” Vogelaar, Vassar’s first Watson Fellow, says the moment she heard about the fellowship, she knew it was a perfect way to pursue her interests.

WATSON CHALLENGES “Different cultures reacted very differently to me. The Dutch have a network of midwives who are very welcoming, and they were wonderful teachers. But the Swedish were much more formal and private, somewhat foiling my project there. I became extremely frustrated, but the Watson Foundation encouraged me to experience the culture rather than worrying about the particulars of the project itself. In Central America, it was very challenging to even find the midwives because they were working in rural communities without phones. But the Watson is about coping in the world, going with the flow, and learning about life...I most cherish the times that were difficult. If I got through that, I can get through anything.”

WHAT NOW? Upon return from her Watson year, Vogelaar could not stand still. “I never traveled before the Watson, but I’ve been traveling constantly ever since.” She bought a car and drove across the U.S. before settling down to work as a sex educator for Planned Parenthood. This winter, she will complete her program at the Seattle Midwifery School.

NEXT STOP Bahrain, where she hopes to someday start a home-birth business.

Karin Betts '93
WATSON PROJECT Titled “Intentional Communities: Cooperative Living and Communal Responsibility,” Betts’ project sent her to international communities. She worked in the communities to make herself a member rather than a visitor.

WATSON LOCATIONS Israel, India, Denmark, and Scotland

WHY? Betts, an international studies major, worked at an educational summer program before her senior year at Vassar. Global Youth Village was conceived and run out of a community of Americans with similar spiritual and moral commitments. “I was intrigued by the sponsoring community,” she says. “They were able to achieve much more as a community than they would have as loosely grouped individuals.” Her Watson project was intended to allow her to more deeply examine such communities around the world.

COMPARING COMMUNITIES During her seven months in Israel, Betts worked at two very different kibbutzim. At the older kibbutz, Regavim, she worked alternately in their plastics factory, ostrich farm, and kitchens. At Yahel, a Reform Judaism kibbutz in the Negev Desert, Betts worked in the community’s kosher dining hall. In southern India, she lived and worked at a community-based training center.

"This is me with Ibu Sudartha in Bali last May." — Karin
for lower caste and “untouchable” people, where she edited their English-language materials. After expanding her project to visit several spiritual communities in India (“Something about India spins the mind and soul in spiritual circles”), she headed to Western Europe to work with a folk high school in Denmark and a new-age community in Scotland. Betts says the only community she truly felt part of was Kibbutz Yahel, where a resident Vassar alumna warmly took her in.

WHAT NOW? “My experiences over the course of my Watson year made the notion of a traditional nine-to-five job unacceptable to me. They gave me an appreciation for the rewards of physical labor, and for the pace of slower, more purposeful cultures. The Watson opened up the world to me in such multidimensional ways that I want always to live somehow in the midst of its chaos and diversity.” Betts is now designing and leading educational tours in Bali, Java, Komodo National Park, and Borneo, Indonesia.

Eric McGlinchey ’95
WATSON PROJECT Exploring the economic transition and trade routes of former Soviet Central Asia

WATSON LOCATIONS Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Estonia, Japan, and China

WHY? McGlinchey first became interested in the topic when he traveled the Trans Siberian Railroad during his junior year abroad in Yaroslavl, Russia. “The train to China was a living stereoscope: Looking out the window at 54 kilometers per hour, things change slowly, Russia bleeds into Asia; geography and facial features change almost imperceptibly. I made fast friends of my travel companions — Russian, Caucasian, Mongolian, and Chinese shuttle traders plying their goods between Moscow and Beijing. I returned from my first Trans Siberian trip eager to travel other trade routes among the newly independent states of the former Soviet Union, and the Watson Foundation kindly set me back on the rails.”

FINDING HIS OWN ROUTE Although he would come to spend more than three months on trains during his Watson year, McGlinchey set up a home base in Yaroslavl. His first destination was the immense Tien Shan Mountains in Kyrgyzstan. There he felt lost without any sort of methodological plan to analyze the culture of the shuttle traders and knowing nothing of the region’s glacier travel, technical climbing, or mountaineering. He forged on to the historic cities of the silk route: Osh, Kyrgyzstan, and Bukhara and Samarkand, Uzbekistan. For his next journey, McGlinchey met up with Vassar friends to travel from Tartu, Estonia, to Kobe, Japan. He then made a solo return to Beijing to conduct interviews with members of the Russian training community before training north to Urumqi, China, a hub for the Pakistani-Chinese-Russian trade. For the final third of his Watson year, McGlinchey stayed off the rails and devoted his attention to the Moscow bazaars, “the hub of all post-Soviet trade.”

WHAT NOW? “The Watson year introduced me to three continuing loves: field research, mountaineering, and, of course, Central Asia. I’ve been fortunate that I can combine all three.” In 1999 McGlinchey returned to Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan as an IREX (International Research and Exchanges) research fellow, spending weekdays in archives and weekends in the mountains. He is now in his final year of his dissertation at Princeton. “When not chained to my desk, I’m roped up with my climbing partner on the Shawangank cliffs just across the river from Vassar.”

Jessica Lawrence ’95
WATSON PROJECT Observing the social and political dynamics of conservation efforts and their impacts on small communities in forest regions

WATSON LOCATIONS Belize, Guatemala, and Indonesia

WATSON CHALLENGES Lawrence said that it was incredibly challenging to be on her own, without any structure. “I was rootless, trying to find meaning.” She volunteered at organizations in each location, mainly shadowing and observing, but she felt isolated much of the time, especially since she is not fluent in Spanish or Indonesian. She also felt as if she could potentially be in danger, as a woman, and was thankful she had taken self-defense classes at Vassar, which helped her keep her sense of danger realistic. But in the end, Lawrence said, it was the lack of structure that made her experience worthwhile. “It’s liberating, and incredibly wonderful that the Watson supports you to be eccentric and unique, without academic guidelines.”

FAVORITE WATSON EXPERIENCE “Living with local families in the forest regions and seeing the dynamics of corruption woke me up to the reality of what happens at ground level. Plus, since I was independent of any institution and not there to fund, people shared their despair and hopelessness, without promoting their projects. My being unattached allowed people to trust me with their stories.”

WHAT NOW? After her year living among forests, Lawrence went on to study them more formally at the Yale School of Forestry. She now works for the Rainforest Action Network in San Francisco.

Oren Rosenberg ’96
WATSON PROJECT Studying the ecology and evolution of infectious diseases, such as malaria, AIDS, and rabies. Rosenberg collected data for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s field stations and completed a veterinary project in the Serengeti National Park.

WATSON LOCATIONS Guatemala, Kenya, and Tanzania

WHY? “I was a biology major at Vassar. In my junior year I took John Long’s class on evolution and got really interested in the evolution of infectious diseases — how the populations of organisms that cause these diseases are altered
by human behavior and environmental changes.”

FAVORITE WATSON EXPERIENCE
His time in the Serengeti, surveying the domestic dog population in the area just outside the park for rabies and canine distemper virus. “In years past, these diseases, after being transmitted from domestic animals, had been responsible for the deaths of many carnivores living inside the park. For example, in 1994, one third of the lions living in the Serengeti were killed by canine distemper virus.”

WHAT NOW? Rosenberg is currently in his third year of the M.D./Ph.D. program at Yale University School of Medicine. He does not think he would be on this track if he hadn’t done the Watson. “It made me realize that whatever you do has a context — you can’t just sit in your research laboratory and forget about the rest of the planet.”

Cheryl Scheffler ’98
WATSON PROJECT Studying alcohol and drug addiction: the laws surrounding them, different forms of treatment, and their impact on societies

WATSON LOCATIONS England, Switzerland, Scotland, and the Netherlands

WATSON CHALLENGES “My receipt of the Watson was a bit unusual. I am, and was in 1998 when I got the Watson, an older student. I began my higher education at Vassar in my early 40s. [It was life-changing] in every way. I no longer had any of my roles to fulfill: mother, grandmother, daughter, girlfriend, etc. I knew no one. I was an older adult traveling on a youth’s budget. I had never been out of the country. I learned to shift my way of thinking about my topic. The American way is not the only way, but that took living in [a different] culture to experience why and how another way might work within another culture.”

WHAT NOW? Scheffler was accepted to a graduate social work program at Smith, but deferred for the Watson. When she returned, Scheffler was unsure what she wanted to study the policy that she no longer agreed with. But she went to Smith, and is now working at the St. Frances Counseling Center in Dutchess County, where she works with people with co-occurring disorders (substance abuse and chronic mental illness). “The Watson gave me compassion and tolerance that I didn’t have from learning and training in this country,” she said.

Emily Porter ’99
WATSON PROJECT Exploring transitions in Buddhist nun communities by living in, and among, diverse nunneries across Asia

WATSON LOCATIONS Nepal, India, China, Thailand, Taiwan, and Mongolia

WHY? A philosophy major, Porter became interested in how people lived philosophies while she studied in China during her junior year. She spent weekends visiting temples, monasteries, and nunneries; eventually, complicated questions brewed surrounding the seemingly limited situations of women practitioners. “I was confused as to why, within a philosophy that views things such as gender as having only a conventional, not a solid or ultimate reality, women would be denied certain opportunities to practice just because they were women.” She decided to use her Watson year to continue seeking answers to these questions, by integrating herself in these communities as much as possible. During her year she attended His Holiness the Dalai Lama’s teachings and helped set up the sixth International Conference of Buddhist Women.

FROM VASSAR TO WATSON “A Vassar education and a Watson Fellowship offer similar settings in the sense that both refrain from placing a lot of external requirements, rules, and guidelines for how to proceed through the space of their experience… The Watson offers a sacred openness, a spacious workshop for the mind to explore its own limitations and abilities. [Meditation Master] Chogyam Trungpa [Rinpoche] once described meditation as giving a wide open, luscious field to a restless cow. The Watson could be similarly described. It is within such a spacious opportunity that one has the chance to see the self-imposed limits of one’s own imagination.”

Margot Stiles ’99
WATSON PROJECT Examining the tradition, ecology, and community of fisheries by looking at the ways in which people other than scientists and environmentalists (“the 90 percent of the population that isn’t interested in the environment”) impact conservation efforts

WATSON LOCATIONS New Zealand, Chile, and South Africa

WHY? Stiles first studied a system of fishing territories during her junior year abroad in Chile. The biology major started thinking on a local level, wondering in what ways members of fishing communities become directly involved in conservation. For her Watson year, she returned to Chilean fishing communities, as well as local groups tied to marine national parks in New Zealand. She added South Africa to the itinerary mid-Watson, as many people she met along the way strongly recommended that Stiles experience South African fisheries as well.

FROM VASSAR TO WATSON “I came to Vassar because I could study biology combined with other coursework. Putting together my interests at Vassar was like putting together my project for the Watson. Both were flexible...”
and creative... The Watson showed me that science can be applied, and it made me think broader and more creatively in terms of what I can do with my life.

**WHAT NOW?** Stiles devoted her professional life to a water clean-up plan for the state of Washington upon her return to the U.S. In September, she migrated south to begin a graduate program in oceanography and marine ecology at the University of California at San Diego.

**ARTISTIC ADVENTURE** Stiles began in London, which he claims is home to the best art and music in the world. In India, he researched “raves” in Goa and traveled in various other states working toward an integration of Hindustani and electronic music. In Australia, Stiles found himself more connected with the community and artistically productive. His favorite Watson moments took place when he was living in Varanasi, a holy city in India. “Varanasi is just packed with temples and holy men, musicians and music, wild monkeys and water buffaloes, sound and fury... I would just walk around with my microphone all day. Everything was full of beauty, and I would steal off with my laptop and integrate some of it into my compositions... I couldn’t have been happier.”

**WHAT NOW?** Stiles said his Watson year was “hands-down” the best year of his life, and that it helped him determine the next stage of his well. He recently began the M.F.A. program for electronic arts at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute.

**WATSON LOCATIONS** Thailand, Cambodia, and Laos

**WHY?** “In the West, there is very little awareness or appreciation for the beauty of this region’s art form. Furthermore, in Cambodia and Laos, the classical dances are still in an extremely fragile state due to the countries’ legacies of war and genocide, particularly under the Pol Pot regime. My work is driven by an urgency that is propelled by my passion for the arts and the people in this part of the world.”

**STATUS REPORT** Darling, who lived in Japan before Vassar and spent a semester in Vietnam during her junior year, just recently began her Watson journey. “Already I have learned so much about Thailand, the richness of the country and its people, the culture and the different approaches to life. That being said, I have also learned a lot about myself in the past couple of weeks as I’ve been trying to carve out a new life here. I can’t really imagine where I will be in one year, in what kind of space, but if my life continues at the rate it’s going right now, this will be an extremely rich growing experience.”

**WHAT NEXT?** “I can’t keep track of how many people have asked me this question... in truth, I have no idea.”

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**Jesse Stiles ’00**

**WATSON PROJECT** Investigating and creating for the electronic music/art scene. “What I got was the best music I’ve ever written, and what I gave was the best music I’ve ever written.”

**WATSON LOCATIONS** England, India, and Australia

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**Nicole Darling ’01**

**WATSON PROJECT** Documenting and preserving classical dances through photography, photographic collage, and oral histories

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**VASSAR’S WATSON FELLOWS’ TOPICS**

1992 **Amy Vogelaar** Women-Centered Childbirth and Health Care

1993 **Karim Ahman** Perceptions of Personal Freedom in Post-Communist Russia

1993 **Karim Betts** Cooperative Living and Communal Responsibility

1994 **Michael Ash** Photography

1994 **Simone Flynn** Fiction Writing

1995 **Tasha Gill** The Veil and the Female Elite in Muslim Societies

1995 **Eric McGlinchey** Russia’s Economic Transition

1995 **Jessica Lawrence** Conservation, Education, and Rainforest Communities

1996 **Earl Hadley** Religion and Economic Development: Allies or Enemies?

1996 **Oren Rosenberg** Disease Ecology

1997 **Nicola Virgill** declined Fellowship offer

1998 **Cheryl Scheffler** Addiction: Treatment, Laws, and Societal Impact

1999 **Emily Porter** Buddhist Nuns in Transition

1999 **Margot Stiles** The Tradition, Ecology, and Community of Fisheries

2000 **Jesse Stiles** Electronic Music

2001 **Nicole Darling** Documenting Classical Dances
Imagine you are a baseball fan. Now consider what it would be like if the only information you had on your favorite team was two to three years old, that is, in the year 2001, you were looking at 1998-99 statistics. You would be getting data on many players who had already left the team, your team might now have a different manager, and the newer players would not even show up. You certainly wouldn't know what was going on with your team right now.

This seems absurd, yet this is precisely the situation we encounter when we seek information about the social problems of this nation. In the year 2001, data on infant mortality, youth suicide, poverty, inequality, health care coverage, and other similar problems are typically two to three years old when made available. Journalists who cover stories about social problems often put in an apologetic caveat when citing these data: "the last year for which data are available." But the lateness of our social problem data, their lack of timeliness, suggests very clearly what we think is important in this country — and what we do not. And imagine how difficult it is to plan rationally or think through the critical problems of this nation on the basis of such outdated information.

Getting back to our baseball metaphor, imagine once again you are a fan, and that you want to follow your team's successes and failures. Instead of turning to the sports section of your daily newspaper, consider what it would be like if you had to figure out where in the newspaper your baseball stories might end up on any given day. Are they in the national section, the metro section, the business section, the science page, the style section, or the health section? Where will they be reported this time?

Once again, oddly, this is precisely the situation for information on social problems. Stories about social issues have no journalistic "home," or no "beat," in newspaper parlance. They show up willy-nilly in different sections on different days, depending upon their angle. Few editors are "in charge" of stories on social problems and few reporters have major responsibility for covering issues such as welfare reform, Social Security, Medicare, day care, health care, or other similar public policy issues. They simply show up, as the day's events might dictate; but the continuity, frequency, and context of these stories are vitiated as a result. Consequently, we know less about the shape and form of our social conditions in this nation than we do about our favorite sports teams.
NOW FOR ONE FINAL RETURN TO OUR SPORTS METAPHOR, IMAGINE THAT YOU WERE FOLLOWING YOUR FAVORITE baseball team without all the statistics commonly made available that help you understand how the team is doing. You would have no earned run averages for your pitchers, no batting averages for the players, no win/loss record for the team. You would have no summary measures of stolen bases, runs batted in, or errors committed. You would have to try to remember individual actions; your perception of the team would be more anecdotal than comprehensive. You would know far less.

And again, this is much the situation for information on social problems. The style of number crunching that goes into baseball statistics is rarely done for social conditions. While figures for individual problems exist, broad summary measures that tell us how we are doing overall are lacking. Are we doing well? Are we doing poorly? How is our population faring? Are we better or worse off than last year? Has this been a stronger decade or a weaker one?

Sports is not the only arena in which we keep timely data that are readily available and clearly summarized. An even better example is the way we monitor the economy and keep track of our economic behavior. This is information we want to know and which we deem important. The necessary tools are there.

THERE CAN BE LITTLE DOUBT ABOUT THE TIMELINESS OF ECONOMIC data. In contrast to the two-to-three-year-old data on social problems, the Dow Jones Average is issued every 60 seconds. EVERY 60 SECONDS! Other stock indexes are issued on a similar timely basis, minute by minute, hour after hour. Most economic indicators are routinely and predictably issued on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis.

And these economic data are certainly readily available. Unlike the episodic and fragmented coverage of social problem stories, every newspaper has a business section — often two: both national and international. Most radio stations include an economic report in their hourly summary of the news, as do television news shows. Indeed, these days, entire radio stations and cable channels are devoted exclusively to economic news.

The wealth and variety of summary measures in our economic coverage is a standard by which to judge how it should be done. In addition to stock indexes, there is the Consumer Confidence Index, the Consumer Price Index, the Index of Leading Economic Indicators, the Gross Domestic Product, and the balance of payments. There is no facet of our economy that we do not measure, precisely and predictably.

The timeliness of economic data, their ready availability, and the range of summary measures that are provided help make us, as a nation, knowledgeable about the economy. Because we are inundated with data on what is up and what is down, which parts of the economy are strong and which are softening, we have a sense of where we stand on any given day, and in any given year, compared to other years. We know whether employment is good, whether it's a buyer's or seller's market, whether downsizing is frequent, whether the stock market is bullish or bearish. We know these things because we are told about them, regularly, and in considerable detail.

Now consider how little we know about our social well-being. Is the infant mortality rate of the nation widely publicized? Can the man/woman on the street casually reel off the current data on youth suicide? Do we know much about the changing rates of poverty or inequality? And what about the less visible aspects of our social life? In health care, we can provide a figure for the numbers of people who currently lack health insurance: 43 million. But even this horrendous figure tells us little about the quality of the nation's health care, the anxiety brought about by fears that one cannot cover one's health care bills, the long waits in emergency rooms, or the depersonalization we might experience in the corridors of our nation's hospitals.

How can this situation be rectified? How might we improve the quality, frequency, timeliness, and accessibility of what we need to know about our nation's social health? One approach is to look at how other industrial nations address these issues. They are doing better. While the United States is first in the world in the production of economic measures, we lag behind on social measures. One vital element that we lack is a national social report of the kind produced in just about every industrial nation in the world — except the United States.

A national social report provides a periodic review of how a country is doing on a broad range of social issues. The first report of this kind was produced in England in 1970 and was called Social Trends. France soon followed suit in 1973 with a similar document entitled Données Sociales. In 1974 the Netherlands published Social en Cultured Rapport, Norway produced its Sosial Utrykt, and Spain released its Panoramica Social. Since that time virtually every industrial nation has created a national social report, an annual or biennial summary of their nation's social health, typically issued by the Central Statistical Offices of their governments.

WHAT IS THE VALUE OF SUCH A REPORT? IT CREATES A BENCHMARK, AN OFFICIAL STANDARD, a reference point for an assessment of how a nation is doing. Its publication is usually noted on the front pages of the major newspapers of a nation, and it provides a distinct moment, a point in time, for a nation to take stock. Are we doing better? Are we doing worse? In what areas? Can these trends guide public policy? Where should we invest our resources? It provides a degree of rationality to a process that is too often politically charged, and it allows, at minimum, an agreement on the baseline — Where do we stand? — even when solutions or approaches may differ greatly.

The United States has no national social report, and that empty space urgently needs to be filled. Social policy debate in America often boggs down under the weight of conflicting visions and misinformation. We have few
agreed-upon national gauges that tell us where we are and few official yardsticks to judge real progress gained and lost. In their absence, the more extreme forms of rhetoric, ideology, partisanship, and pandering too often take over.

To address some of the most serious gaps in the reporting of social issues, I, along with my husband

Marc Miringoff and my colleague Sandra Opdyke, have embarked upon several projects intended to provide new models for social analysis in the United States. One of our principal projects is the creation of what we have entitled The Index of Social Health, published annually since 1987.

The Index of Social Health is a broad-based gauge of the social well-being of the nation, similar in concept to the Dow Jones Average or the Gross Domestic Product. But instead of measuring the movement of the market or the magnitude of economic growth, it monitors social conditions. It is a barometer of our nation’s social state, a clue to how we are doing. It draws on available government data for 16 social indicators, such as infant mortality, child abuse, child poverty, teenage suicide, health insurance coverage, income inequality, and alcohol-related traffic fatalities, and it combines them into a single number for each year, going back to 1970. The Index shows that while the social health of the nation was strong in the early 1970s, it has stagnated since that time (see The Social Health of the Nation: How America is Really Doing, Oxford University Press, 1999).

Among the 16 indicators are many problems that have worsened since the 1970s. Child abuse reports are at an all-time high, averaging a 33-percent increase in the past 10 years alone. Lack of health insurance, with all its attendant problems, is close to its all-time high, having increased steadily throughout the 1980s and 1990s. Income inequality, or the gap between the rich and the poor, is hovering around its highest point in 32 years. Teenage suicide, though improving in the 1990s, has worsened markedly over the years.

A few indicators have improved since the 1970s, including infant mortality and alcohol-related traffic fatalities. But even here, serious problems remain. The infant mortality rate for black infants is more than twice that of white infants. Nearly 16,000 people died in alcohol-related traffic accidents in 1999 (the last year for which data are available). Traffic fatalities, both alcohol- and non-alcohol-related, are the leading cause of death for individuals between the ages of 5 and 24 and the third leading cause of death among adults ages 25 to 44. Another indicator, child poverty, has improved somewhat during the 1990s, but the United States continues to have among the worst child poverty rates in the industrial world.

This portrait of the nation’s social health, as measured by the Index of Social Health, is vastly different from the picture of prosperity we heard for over a decade. What it shows is an aspect of American life that has been too frequently ignored. It has been largely omitted from our national discourse, and the public dialogue has suffered as a result. Had this view been more widely debated, more fully integrated into our vision of America, we might have acted more vigorously to address our most serious problems, and the nation’s social health might be far stronger than it is today.

Highlighting this omission is the striking contrast in the paths of our nation’s social health and its economic health. While the Gross Domestic Product of the nation, for example, has steadily risen, our social health has slumped. A rising tide has clearly not lifted all boats.

To advance the dialogue further, during the past two years we have sought, in our work, to go beyond what can be measured by government statistics to pursue some of the deeper aspects of our nation’s social health through the administration of a National Social Survey. The survey, first conducted in June 2000, is scheduled to be conducted again in January 2002. In the National Social Survey we ask not only whether people are employed, but how they feel about the rewards and satisfactions of their work. Are they working just for the money? Do they feel overworked? Do they think their work contributes to society? In health care, we ask not only about people’s insurance coverage, but also about their experience as patients. Do they receive sufficient medical information? Are they treated like individuals or like a number? We ask how safe people feel in their homes, how they view the schools their children attend, how often they struggle with their finances.

We have released the findings of the 2000 survey in a new publication entitled The Social Report — a document that begins the process of creating a national social report for this country (Fordham Institute for Innovation in Social Policy, 2001). It is only one model for how this might be done, and we urge the development of a report that has the official imprimatur of government, a report that can be used by many segments of society.

Finally, we have begun during the past year to formulate yet another portrait of the nation by delving into the social health of the nation’s 50 states. In recent years, the states have gained new importance. They have been granted greater authority for formulating and implementing social policy, particularly in the areas of health care and welfare reform. The state-by-state profiles we have compiled show a stunning diversity in the nation’s social health. Some states are doing well on almost every indicator we measure — including child and youth well-being, income, wages, safety, and health care. Others are doing poorly across the board, ranking toward the bottom of

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About Books

CITYSCAPES: A HISTORY OF NEW YORK IN IMAGES
by Howard B. Rock and Deborah Dash Moore, Professor of Religion
Columbia University Press, 2001

Through stunning visuals, from engravings and etchings to lithographs and paintings to drawings and photographs, Vassar Professor of Religion Deborah Dash Moore and Florida International University Professor of History Howard B. Rock bring together diverse historical works — from political and economic analyses to ethnic and gender studies — to tell New York City's story from the early 17th century through the end of the 20th century.

In her acknowledgments, Professor Moore praises two Vassar Ford Scholars, David Lobenstine '98 and Rachel Weinstein '01, for their "hard work, enthusiasm, and dedication." Lobenstine unearthed archival photographs of 20th-century New York and Weinstein prepared photographs for submission to Columbia University Press.

—Samantha Soper '91

NANTUCKET SPIRIT: THE ART AND LIFE OF ELIZABETH REBECCA COFFIN
by Margaret Moore Booker
Mill Hill Press, 2001

"In the death of Elizabeth R. Coffin on June 21, the class of 1870 has lost not only one of its best loved members but also a woman who, like her class-mate Ellen Swallow Richards, made a distinguished contribution to American life."

—1870 Class Correspondent Mary A. Mineah, Vassar Quarterly, November 1930

Not only did Elizabeth Coffin's life touch so many of her fellow classmates, but her spirit and work affected and continue to affect those who learn about her. Margaret Moore Booker's interest in Elizabeth Coffin began long before she became curator of the Egan Institute of Maritime Studies at The Coffin School. But it wasn't until after extensive digging through Vassar Libraries' Special Collections and many conversations with Vassar Historian Elizabeth Daniels '91 that Booker's interest in Coffin's life and art came to fruition in Nantucket Spirit.

Like her mentor and lifelong friend Maria Mitchell, Coffin was an independent spirit during an era when women were expected to marry and bear children. With Mitchell's friendship and the support of Henry Van Ingen, Vassar professor of art, Coffin sought a career in a male-dominated environment. In 1872 she became the first American woman
accepted at the prestigious Hague Art Academy in the Netherlands and the first person in the United States to earn a master's degree in fine arts, from Vassar in 1876.

Coffin's artistic achievements made a distinct mark in the New York art world and put her at the forefront of American women artists of the time. Through her paintings, Nantucket's people, landscapes, and once-rural lifestyle are forever captured. Although Coffin was celebrated and recognized during her lifetime, her work and life are relatively unknown today. (In fact, her most enduring contribution seems to have been her work as a patron of the arts, educator, and philanthropist.) Using extensive research, family letters, and color illustrations, Booker brings to life an artist whose story and work is richly deserving of wider recognition.

In 1920, at Coffin's 50th class reunion, a retrospective exhibition of more than 70 of her works were displayed in Taylor Hall. Today, there are 11 pieces of Coffin's works in the Frances Lehman Loeb collection and many pieces hang in The Coffin School and the Nantucket Historical Association.

Booker is scheduled to lecture on Elizabeth Coffin at reunion in June 2002. Contact Booker at 508.228.2505 for more information.

—Samantha Soper '91

MARIA MITCHELL:
A LIFE IN JOURNALS AND LETTERS
edited by Henry Albers,
Professor Emeritus of Astronomy
College Avenue Press, 2001

Henry Albers has been intrigued by Maria Mitchell, Vassar's first professor of astronomy, and the observatory-home built for her since he arrived at Vassar in 1958. Very early on, in a closet in the observatory, Albers discovered glass photographs of the sun dating back to the 1870s and made by Mitchell's students.

These whetted his appetite for other original material relating to the 19th-century American female scientist. He combed the Vassar archives and others in Nantucket (where she lived from birth in 1818 until coming to Vassar in 1865), the U.S., and Europe.

A well-traveled scientist, Mitchell was a loving and beloved teacher and a staunch proponent of women in science and society. She educated herself in science primarily because of her interest in mathematics and was self-supporting from the age of 18 until her death in 1889. This was an extraordinary accomplishment for a 19th-century middle-class woman, as was her discovery in 1847 of the comet that now bears her name.

The book consists of extensive diary excerpts covering Maria Mitchell's time in Nantucket, and then at Vassar, with explanatory and summary statements by Albers to cover the eclipses. The journals focus on her reactions to the world around her, with little concerning her personal life — although much is commented on regarding Julia Ward Howe and other persons she knew in various feminist and scientific societies.

Vassar alumna/i may find the material about the early days of our college particularly fascinating. Entries and letters attest to Mitchell's continuous battles with the administrators and trustees over the disparity of salary between this famous American scientist and her fellow (male) faculty members at the college.

In 1882, Mitchell noted a lecturer's comments on the study of medicine by women that it would be better for the husband always to be superior to the wife. "Why," she asked her diary, "and if so, does not it condemn the ablest women to a single life?"

Maria Mitchell had strong views about women's education and who should have it. She did not believe in scholarships to support the poor to attend college, since their home work was needed by their families. She wanted women to have the opportunity to progress but felt they needed to be in a position to take advantage of the opportunities made available by an institution like Vassar.

A better way, she wrote to a friend after her retirement, "is co-education."

For travelers, Mitchell's reactions to a year in Europe before Vassar, to field trips with students to observe eclipses in the American West, and to a voyage to Russia all provide glimpses of the hardships as well as the pleasures of travel 150 years ago. This volume tells us not only about Maria Mitchell, but also about women's lives and how important our college has been in changing them. It includes illustrations, some showing small details about life at Vassar and in the observatory.

—Molly Geiger Schudet '48
The Ethan Zone: Vassar Guy Attempts Surviving Reality TV

Maybe this will help the general public finally understand that Vassar isn’t an “all-girls” school anymore — Vassar alumnus Ethan Zohn ’96 is a contestant on the third season of the hit CBS reality show, Survivor. You can read all about Ethan’s progress in Africa on the VQ Website, www.aavc.vassar.edu/vq/winter2001/extras/. And here is an insider’s look at Zohn (now a professional soccer player) that CBS won’t give you — his record as a Brewer soccer goalie. —V.R.

Career (1992-1996) Stats as a Brewer Goalie:

63 games
5,959 minutes played
340 saves
73 goals against
23 shut-outs

Beyond Vassar

Books

NONFICTION
LEAVING THE LIFE
Lesbians, Ex-Lesbians and the Heterosexual Imperative
by Ann E. Menasche ’72
Onlywomen Press, Limited, 1999
Through interviews with life-long-never-het erotsexuals, married lesbians, ex-lesbians, and self-defined bi-sexuals, Menasche “attempts to increase our understanding of the institutions that limit and define our choices as women. Such feminist inquiry always forces us to look critically at our own lives and that of the women and men around us.”

AMERICAN HERITAGE
Book of Great American Speeches for Young People
edited by Suzanne McIntire ’73
John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2001

CONNECTING
The Enduring Power of Female Friendship
by Sandy Granville Sheehy ’67
William Morrow & Company, 2000

MAKING BABIES, MAKING FAMILIES
What Matters Most in an Age of Reproductive Technologies, Surrogacy, Adoption, and Same-Sex and Unwed Parents
by Mary Lyndon Shanley, Professor of Political Science
Beacon Press, 2001

HARDCORE FROM THE HEART
The Pleasures, Profits, and Politics of Sex in Performance
by Annie Sprinkle, edited by Gabrielle Cody, Associate Professor of Drama
Continuum, 2001

PAINTED ON A COBWEB
Travails and Travels of a Young Woman at the Turn of the Last Century
by Polly McLaughlin ’34
Goose River Press, 2000

BECK
The Art of Mutation
by Nevin Martell ’97
Pocket Books, 2001

POETRY
MOTHER TONGUE
by Wendell Hawken ’66
Argonne House Press, 2001

GRILL POWER
by Holly Rudin Braschi ’76
QVC Publishing, 2000

YOU LOOK BEAUTIFUL LIKE THAT
The Portrait Photographs of Seydou Keita and Malick Sidibé
by Michelle Lamunière ’88
Harvard University Art Museums and Yale University Press, 2001

FICTION
THE DEADHOUSE
by Linda Fairstein ’69
Scribner, 2001

CARLEY’S SONG
by Patricia Sprinkle ’65
Zondervan Books, 2001

THE ART AND POWER OF BEING A LADY
by Noelle Cleary ’88 and Dini von Mueffling ’88
Atlantic Monthly Press, 2001
Up to the Challenge

"If I’d known how hard it would be, I don’t know if I’d have the courage to do it again," confessed Adam Wilson ’92, referring to co-founding The Griffin School in 1996. Based in Austin, TX, The Griffin School’s mission is to be a college-preparatory high school fostering genuine relationships in a creative learning environment that enables students to think critically, demonstrate logic, and solve real-world problems. In this diverse learning community, staff create innovative educational models that empower students to enjoy education, overcome challenges, and create direction for their lives.

How does one “start” a high school? Wilson’s formula required a lot of hard work, enthusiasm, and dedication. After graduating from Vassar with a degree in mathematics, Wilson moved to Austin and “jumped right into teaching.” Through teaching, Wilson experienced the “fallout of the public school system: students who have great potential, but who are often dispirited and disenfranchised from their experience at school” he recalled. “There is a real need for different kinds of educational environments.” Wilson wanted to “offer a more flexible environment to help kids who may fall through the cracks at other schools."

Some of Wilson’s coworkers shared his beliefs, and discussions of starting their own school began. “We were all teachers, so we had no experience in administering a school or running a business,” Wilson noted. “But, whether it was our naiveté or just gumption, we thought, ‘Why not?’ We fed off of each other’s enthusiasm and just blazed ahead.”

The first few years were difficult; but now, as The Griffin School begins its sixth year, it “has a life of its own; there are systems in place, and a tradition and culture has been created out of nothing,” Wilson observed.

Today, The Griffin School offers a college-prep curriculum in a creative learning environment. Wilson believes that students learn best through individual interaction with instructors and in an atmosphere that allows for them to be creative and expressive. The school currently serves 65 students in grades 9 through 12; classes have an average of eight students. The curriculum emphasizes community development and requires that all students be involved in service both to the school community and to the larger community of Austin.

While the nonprofit school is funded primarily through donations and tuition, tuition assistance is available where there is a need. “We have a lot of kids who attend who normally would not be able to afford a private school,” Wilson said, noting the diversity of socioeconomic status among students.

In addition to being co-founder and director of the school, Wilson also teaches. His wife, Caroline, works in the school office maintaining attendance records and other systems, and seven-month-old son, Sawyer, provides smiles and giggles for the students, faculty, and staff alike. For more information about The Griffin School, contact Adam Wilson at adamw@griffinschool.org or 512.434.5797.

— Samantha Soper ’91

The Griffin — a mythological creature, part lion and part eagle — symbolizes the union of strength and wisdom. Kevin Greenblat ’91 created the logo. A graphic designer living and working in Austin, TX, Greenblat has won several gold and silver Austin Advertising Federation ADDY Awards. He most recently won the District Advertising Federation Award for a design that is now entered in the National Competition.
VASSAR WOMEN IN THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY BRAVED THE BITING COLD THAT ACCOMPANIES most Poughkeepsie winters for the annual Winter Carnival. This daylong event, held on Sunset Lake and Hill, joined faculty and students together for skiing, ice-skating, sledding, and other winter festivities. Classes competed against one another in relay games and sporting events, and, at the end of the day, the class with the most points was awarded the rose-and-gray Winter Carnival banner. The juniors took the banner in 1922, the Winter Carnival featured in the picture above. —M.B.
Matthew Vassar clearly wanted to leave a legacy, but he probably wasn’t expecting it to extend to feline friends. Somehow, no other name seemed appropriate for the tiny kitten Betty Spencer Noyes ’40 found near Main Circle during the 1995 reunion weekend.

Noyes heard a strange noise late one night. She found a sickly kitten, with no mother in sight. Noyes brought the “ugly, howling” animal back to Cushing to sleep in the laundry room. (Noyes’ reunion roommate didn’t appreciate the cat’s squealing.) Early the next morning, Noyes met an alumna, a doctor who always carried emergency formula in her car. The new-fangled friends nursed the kitten to health, and Noyes took “Matthew Vassar” home to join her other three cats. “No one thought he would last long,” Noyes said. “But now, Matthew Vassar’s the biggest cat you will ever see!” —V.R.
Chill Out

Last July, both the oldest and the youngest members of an Arctic expedition were Vassarites. Jane Plimpton Plakias '42 met Sam Woodworth '04 when the two disembarked from the Russian nuclear ice-breaker, Yamal, to step foot on the North Pole. "We met, literally, on top of the world," said Plakias. "And we had a champagne toast to Vassar!" While the younger VCer took a "polar dip," the elder blew kisses to her '42 classmates. "Merely because of our common experience of Vassar, an instantaneous bond was forged, and each of us was, for the remainder of the voyage, much in the company of the other," Woodworth said. —V.R.
Several generations of Vassar students may fondly recall taking weekend walks down Cedar Avenue to the Kimlin Cider Mill. When it was a working mill, Kimlin was a popular café serving doughnuts and apple cider, and showcasing antique collections. A group has formed to preserve the now-decrepit Kimlin — one of the oldest cider mills in the U.S. — and its surrounding land (which abuts the Vassar Farm). If you have historical items concerning the mill or for more information, contact Lisa Weiss, president of the Cider Mill Friends of Open Space and Historic Preservation, Inc., at 845.462.2516 or cidermillfriends@cs.com. — V.R.
A Rosey Hue

Kelly Williams '99 is the recipient of the 2001-2002 Rose Fellowship in the Creative Arts, an award made possible by a bequest from the estate of W.K. Rose, a professor in Vassar's English department from 1956 to 1968. Rose wrote, "My objective in creating this fellowship is to provide a worthy young artist with a chance to be free after college to get on with his work as an artist. It is also my hope that this fellowship will attract to Vassar in greater number the kind of student that it proposes to aid." The fellowship encompasses writing, the visual arts (including film and video), and music composition. It is open to all Vassar graduates under the age of 36 who have not previously attained substantial recognition in their field.

Williams plans to use the fellowship year (and funds) to begin working on large-scale paintings. Specifically, she hopes to continue, and enlarge her Exercise in Futility series, which focuses on the portrayal of women and their relationship to sport, recreation, and activity. —V.R.
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her application, Ellen marked her race as white and her ancestry as French and English, just as her mother had done.

If the college did not make the connection between Anita Hemmings and Ellen Love at the time of Ellen’s admittance, the school certainly became aware of Ellen’s racial identity while she was on campus, noted Vassar professor Bickerstaff. “The 25-year-old festering sores of Hemmings’ white roommate erupted at a class reunion when the roommate heard rumors that Hemmings’ daughter, Ellen, was enrolled at Vassar.” Bickerstaff wrote in a 1999 article for the Miscellany News. “She confided in the president that her particular interest in the question came from her ‘own painful experience with a roommate who was supposed to be a white girl, but who proved to be a Negress.’”

Tamar Tate ‘95, co-chair of the African American Alumni Association, who did research on the Hemmings family while at Vassar, has read the correspondence between Hemmings’ roommate and college President Henry Noble McCracken. She related, “The president wrote her back and said, ‘We are aware, and we’ve made sure she’s in a room by herself. We don’t even know if Ellen is aware that she’s black.’”

Ellen Love, in fact, graduated as a white woman in 1927. “I think in some ways Vassar was thought of as a proper institution, but it was also progressive in what it was doing for women in this country,” Tate speculated on why the college would have protected Ellen. “I have to think that somehow they understood that at the turn of the century this country was still dealing with issues of race, but it had gotten to the level that it just wasn’t worth it [to deny Ellen admittance]. There were so many institutions comparable to Vassar that were admitting black people at the time.”

Indeed, by the time Vassar changed its policy to admit students of color, many of its peer schools — including Radcliffe and Smith Colleges — had already done so several decades earlier. Bickerstaff believes Hemmings and her daughter decided to take a chance with Vassar because of the unique reputation of the school. “Vassar was seen as a premiere liberal arts institution. It really was considered the first [women’s school] to have the kind of intellectual curriculum that would have been competitive with its male counterparts,” she said. “That made the school attractive to women like Anita who were very bright and very educationally inclined.”

According to Dr. June Jackson Christmas ’45—47, herself one of Vassar’s first African-American graduates, the move to formally admit black students was brought about by a young Presbyterian minister from Harlem, Rev. James Robinson. Invited to speak at a religious conference sponsored by the Y.W.C.A. and Vassar College in the late 1930s, he offered to find a black student of Vassar caliber and present her to the college for acceptance.

“In his congregation at the Church of the Master he found Beatrix (Betty) McCleary ‘44, a top-notch student at her high school in New York,” wrote Christmas in a 1988 Vassar Quarterly article. “She applied, was accepted, and in the fall of 1940 entered Vassar as the first openly acknowledged Negro student in Vassar’s history.”

When Christmas heard of Vassar’s change in policy as she was preparing to apply to college later that same year, she was skeptical — although she was aware that the college had already admitted at least one African-American student, albeit unknowingly.

“She had grown up in the Boston area hearing a story, which I had always believed was apocryphal, that there had once been a colored girl at Vassar and, having earned the honor of being valedictorian, was revealed to be a Negro and denied both that honor and the chance to graduate,” Christmas wrote in the VQ article. “Anita Hemmings was probably the heroine of this story, minus the valedictory but with a happier ending.

In 1997, Bickerstaff’s students petitioned college President Frances D. Ferguson to recognize Hemmings at that year’s centennial celebration.

“There really had not been any mention of the Hemmings affair prior to June Jackson Christmas’ article,” Bickerstaff recalled. “I thought it was an important gesture on President Ferguson’s part to officially integrate it into Vassar’s history at the centennial celebration. It brought [Hemmings’] graduation and presence to a level of honor that it should have had a hundred years ago.”

After graduating from Vassar in 2000, Olivia Mancini ’00 was a reporter for the Poughkeepsie Journal. She now works as a staff writer for the Advisory Board Company in Washington, DC.

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the 50 states on most indicators. It is our hope that this comparative approach will contribute to the policy-making processes within the 50 states and provide a gauge by which to measure progress gained and lost.

So, how are we doing as a nation — what’s the score? What we know is that in measuring our social health, much work yet needs to be done. We need to catch up to other nations, and to the economic sector of society. We need to pay greater attention to the needs of our citizenry. We need to assess the social state of America with diligence, accuracy, and depth. We need to expand the national dialogue to include a portrait of America that represents not only the nation’s economic health, but also its social well-being. If we can do so well in baseball, surely we can do equally well for our nation’s social health.

Marque-Luisa Miringoff, Ph.D., professor of sociology at Vassar College, has served as chair of the sociology department and the director of the urban studies program. With Marc Miringoff and Sandra Opdyke, she is co-author of The Social Health of the Nation: How America Is Really Doing (Oxford University Press, 1999), The Social Report (Fordham Institute for Innovation in Social Policy), and the forthcoming Social Health of the States (Fordham Institute for Innovation in Social Policy). She is also the author of The Social Costs of Genetic Welfare (Rutgers University Press, 1997) and numerous articles on health and social indicators.
**Provençal Village Home** Rent our charming 18th-century bastide in the peaceful Provençal village of Sablé. Lovingly restored in 2001. Amenities include four bedrooms, four-and-one-half bathrooms, cook's kitchen, washer/dryer, large terrace, and vegetable garden. 3,550 square feet. Avignon - 35 minutes, Orange - 20 minutes, Vaison-la-Romaine - 12 minutes. Occupancy up to six persons, ten years old and above. $1,500-$2,400 per week. Contact Cecil and Adrienne Roos Jones '69 at 610.231.0491 or www.vassarandestree.com.

**French Provinces** Rent a lovely rustic farmhouse in southwestern France. Midway between Dordogne and Lot Rivers. Quiet picturesque farming village near Figeac and St. Céré; 45 minutes to Sarlat, capital of the Dordogne Valley; 70 km to Cahors and its vineyards. Available September-November, May-July. Well located for those interested in pre-history, medieval history, gastronomy, hiking, and canoeing. For information, contact Professor Geoffrey Jehle at 845.437.5720 or visit the Web page at http://vassar.edu/faculty/gjehle/france.htm.

**Indian Wells Country Club Condo** Beautiful two-bedroom-suit condo located in the prestigious Indian Wells Country Club (30 miles south of Palm Springs). Enjoy the pool and built-in grill surrounded by lovely flowers and trees. Spectacular view of the mountains with access to world-class golf courses and wonderful shopping. Available for weekly rentals throughout the winter and spring. Please contact Betty Rae Foyles Easley '78 at BR.1122@aol.com or 907.243.7876.

**Breathtaking Catskill Mountain Home** Retreat to just-completed three-bedroom rustic cedar and glass mountain getaway on 2.3 acres, situated on its own 20-acre meadow with 270-degree spectacular mountain views. Three-wrap-around-covered porch, central fireplace and wood stove, gorgeous kitchen, privacy, hiking trails on property, skiing - 14 minutes, golf - 15 minutes, tennis - 10 minutes, NYC - 2 hours, Poughkeepsie - 80 minutes. Rent on nightly, weekly, or monthly basis for the ultimate nearby getaway. Contact Andy Schiller, 77 at 908.832.0771 or email andrewschiller@cnc.net.

**Southern Mansion for Sale** Beautiful 80-year-old home, with cruciform floor plan, oak interior, 12-foot ceilings, 6,800 square feet with pool and carriage house. Beautifully constructed, well preserved, and very quiet. A perfect retreat, studio, or work space. Priced to sell at only $329,000. Located in a college town in southern Louisiana. Call Kirsten Gantzel '93 at 318.253.6482, or email KTGTurnerArt@aol.com.

**New Hampshire Land for Sale — Golden Pond Area** Stunning mountain views from two 30-acre wooded parcels, one mile from Squam Lake beach and boat ramp in Center Sandwich. We call the property Skyridge and have reserved one parcel for ourselves. Two hours from Boston, where we live. The White Mountain National Forest meets the Lakes Region, Skyridge offers privacy and guaranteed views. Visit www.skyridge-nh.com or contact Susan Van Cleef Joanides '58 at 617.492.1322 or skyridge@mediatone.net.

**Vassar China Plates and 1943 Graduation Robe for Sale** Set of 12 Vassar College china plates in perfect condition; each one features a different Vassar building. These plates were produced in 1929 in Wedgewood and are for sale by Elizabeth Meeker Martin '43. A 1943 graduation robe with stole is also available. Please contact Fred Martin at fmartin@paulbryan.net.

**1991 Yearbook Wanted** I am looking for a 1991 yearbook. If you have an extra one or are looking to lighten your bookshelves, contact me at carla@montoya@home.com. Carla J. Montoya '94

**Oriental Rugs Wanted** The AAVC and the college are seeking, as tax-deductible gifts, large Oriental rugs in good condition, for use in the President's House and lounges in student residential halls. Palace-size rug needed for Alumnae House living room — needs predominantly marine blue (as opposed to French blue), cream, orange, yellow, and Chinese red. Please call the AAVC at 845.437.5445 or email aavcweb@vassar.edu.

**Nantucket Summer Rental** August 3 to September 7. Bright, well-appointed home. Three bedrooms, one-and-one-half baths, modern kitchen with dishwasher, washer/dryer. All amenities. Large deck. Large yard. Tennis court, swimming pools available to tenants. Naushop area. Easily accessible to beaches and town. $1,900 a week. Ferry reservations available with house rental. Contact Joan Denton '46 at 201.499.2455 or email auntsca@yahoo.com.

**New York City** Quiet, fully furnished one-bedroom co-op available for rent at $2,650 per month plus utilities. Large kitchen and living room, high ceilings, and wood floors. Great building and location on West Village/Soho border. One-to-four-month stay. Call A.M. Wolfe '76 at 517.279.7444.

**Summer Rental: Hancock Point, Maine** Great vacation getaway! Large Victorian on 10 acres overlooking Frenchman's Bay. Completely modernized, including dishwasher and jacuzzi. Close to Bar Harbor and Acadia National Park. Porches on three sides to enjoy the view and the beaches. Tennis courts nearby. For more information call 703.532.6489 after 7 p.m. or during the day call 808.834.4382 and ask for Godfrey. Susan Crowe Mumford '81

Vassar faculty, students, alumnae/i, and staff are invited to submit items to announcements. There is no charge for this bulletin board service; publication is as space permits. Submissions should be typed and 75 words or less; they may be edited for length and style. Deadlines for announcements are Dec. 20 for spring issue, March 20 for summer, June 20 for fall, and Sept. 20 for winter. Fax: 845.437.7425. email: vq@aavc.vassar.edu.
Career Networking Events

Last year, AAVC asked a sampling of alumnae/i to complete a survey about Vassar and AAVC. One finding was an overwhelming desire for more career networking events. Networking is a real part of locating a job or career, and career networking events can open up opportunities for potential employees and employers. AAVC, the Office of Career Development, and Vassar clubs in several cities are responding to this request by offering the following career-oriented events for spring 2002.

January 25, New York
The Office of Career Development and the Vassar Club of New York are working together to host an interviewing opportunity in New York City for Vassar seniors. These students will have the opportunity to meet and interview with employers in the area. A reception hosted by the Vassar Club of New York will be held the evening before the event, giving students the opportunity to meet and network with alumnae/i.

February 5, Boston
There is an art to working a room. The Vassar Club of Boston and AAVC will host a networking session for area alumnae/i featuring tips and hints about making the most of small talk. Meet fellow Vassar grads in the Boston area and take home a stack of business cards.

March 10-11, Washington, DC
The Vassar Club of Washington, DC, will host a group of Vassar seniors who are looking at Washington as their next home. Alumnae/i will coach students on living and working in the D.C. area. There also will be a networking event for all Washington, DC, alumnae/i to connect with each other.

April 13, Chicago
The Vassar Club of Chicago and the Seven College Consortium will host a full-day Career Forum. The Office of Career Development is working closely with career services at the other colleges in the consortium to make the forum beneficial for all recent grads.

If you would like more information about any of these events or information on how to plan a new event, contact Stephen Ashton, assistant director of alumnae/i relations, at stashton@vassar.edu or 845.437.5446.

Vassar Athletics on the Road

Do you like sports? Did you play sports at Vassar? Do you have a daughter or son who now plays for Vassar? Would you like to support Vassar’s athletic teams? If you answered yes to any of these questions, the following opportunity might interest you. AAVC and the Department of Athletics have joined forces to coordinate alumnae/i receptions for Vassar teams playing in the U.S. and abroad. The receptions give graduates a chance to show their continued support of Vassar’s athletic programs and provide a chance for current students to meet and share stories with the alumnae/i.

However, whether or not there is a reception planned, it is always possible to pull out your old Vassar logo wear and cheer on the “home” team. Alumnae/i are encouraged to form a cheering section at any of Vassar’s away games. With a diverse schedule of destinations, a Vassar team may soon be playing near you. The teams also have more extended trips scheduled around Vassar breaks. This spring, for example, the men’s volleyball team will travel to Boston, while the men’s and women’s rugby teams will play in Sydney, Australia, and several teams will compete in Florida. Take these opportunities to support Vassar athletics and make our teams feel more at home no matter where they are playing.

For more information on athletic schedules, visit http://athletics.vassar.edu/.
AAVC Award for Distinguished Achievement

Judge Pauline Newman ’47
United States Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit

The Award for Distinguished Achievement is presented annually to an alumna or alumnus who has achieved the highest level of her or his field of endeavor. While demonstrating exceptional qualities of talent, application, creativity, and skill within a certain career, whether it be in the professions, the arts, or public affairs, this individual must at the same time exemplify the ideals of a liberal arts education and have used her or his position of visibility, power, or leadership to better the human community and to serve the wider goals of society.

Quite a big part to play; but Judge Pauline “Polly” Newman 47 is just the woman to fill this role. AAVC is proud to present Newman with the first annual Award for Distinguished Achievement. Newman’s achievements started early as a double major in chemistry and philosophy at Vassar. From Vassar, Newman continued her education in pure science at Columbia and later earned her Ph.D. in physical organic chemistry from Yale. Newman started her career as a research chemist and then moved into patent work. While writing patent specifications as a scientist for FMC Corporation’s Chemical Group by day, Newman moonlighted as a law student at New York University.

By the late 70s, Newman had become well known as a leader of the corporate patent bar. It was in this role that she was approached by the secretary of commerce for the Carter Administration to participate in a domestic policy review on industrial innovation. “One of the things we thought would help to enhance the growth of technology-based industry in the United States was to have a centralized court that would handle, among other things, patent cases,” said Newman.

In 1982 the U.S. Court of Claims and the U.S. Court of Customs and Patent Appeals merged to form the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit. Newman was appointed to the first vacancy in the new court. Twelve judges hear over 1,500 cases annually and rule on about 3,000 motions.

It was these two very different careers that stood out and influenced the Selection Committee. “By excelling in two different areas [science and law], we feel that Pauline can relate to the students of today by sending a very special message that you can combine seemingly opposite careers,” explained Yolanda Sabio ’73, chair of AAVC’s awards committee. “We were very happy when she accepted the award.”

—Samantha Soper ’91

Alumnae House Manager Wanted

Vassar College Alumnae House is seeking a General Manager for the 45-room B&B inn. This position manages the overall activities of the inn and coordinates with the leased restaurant to ensure budgeted revenues/profits while providing the highest quality of service to the customer at all times. The successful candidate will be able to communicate and work with alumnae/i board, students, staff, and guests of the college community. Some evening and weekend hours required, as needed, for oversight of functions.

Candidates must possess five-plus years experience in hospitality management and have proven marketing/sales experience, including development of marketing plans. Must be familiar with budgets, financial reporting, cost analysis, and strategic planning. Must be able to balance multiple activities. Degree in hospitality management or related field preferred.

Interested candidates should send a letter of interest with salary requirements and résumé electronically to careers@vassar.edu or by mail to Human Resources Department, Vassar College, Box 712, 124 Raymond Avenue, Poughkeepsie, NY 12604.

VRDT 20th Anniversary Gala Performance

The Vassar Repertory DanceTheatre (VRDT) will present its 20th Anniversary Gala Performance on March 2nd and March 3rd, 2002, at the Bardavon Opera House in Poughkeepsie, NY. Since 1982, VRDT has provided dance students with an opportunity to perform significant dance works of the classic ballet, jazz, and modern repertoire, as well as original works by faculty and student choreographers. Reservations may be made by phone through the Bardavon box office at 845.473.2072 or Ticketmaster at 845.454.3388. Additional information is available by calling the Vassar Dance offices at 845.437.7470 or by visiting VRDT Website at http://vassun.vassar.edu/~pamosley/vrdt2.htm.
Alumnae News: Then and Now

BY CYNTHIA G. OATES

Four times a year, I compile news from my college classmates for the Mount Holyoke Alumnae Quarterly. It’s generally a fun job as classmates send letters, pictures of their children, and birth announcements. Career changes, cross-country moves, and family news predominate. Women also write when they have seen other classmates at weddings, on the streets of New York, or at alumnae gatherings.

When my husband’s grandmother, Frances Ward Olmsted (Vassar ’25), died a few years ago, she left behind several boxes of Vassar College memorabilia. And, although there were a few pictures and letters from Frances’ class of 1925, most of the boxes contained information about her mother, Vassie James, Vassar class of 1897. According to family lore, Vassie was named after the college because of her mother’s fondness for her years there. (Fannie Shouse James graduated from Vassar in 1874.)

Searching through the contents of the boxes, I was delighted to discover two large scrapbooks containing notes, letters, and newspaper clippings from Vassie’s years at the college. Between the brittle pages of one of the books, I found a 1917 Vassar College Alumnae Bulletin. A glance at the words written by women in the class of 1897 reveals a startling similarity to the words of women writing to me today.

Like my classmates, these Vassar alumnae sent news of their families, their work, their travels, and their visits with classmates. Much like my contemporaries, many women of the class of 1897 felt they had “no news that would interest the girls.” One woman wryly put it, “Of information I have none, since I’ve neither married, nor am I engaged, don’t care a cent about voting, and have not even had an operation or been to Europe.”

Some women in the class of 1897 felt inadequate if they could only claim to be mothers. “My life is not exciting,” wrote one, “Do nothing of consequence beyond taking care of Louise…I wish I had more news but I have found a comfortable rut and am peacefully jogging along it.”

Those who were not married, yet had careers, also felt that they had “nothing new and interesting to tell. The same old busy round of teaching and home duties sounds so very tame.” Like other college-educated women at the turn of the century, many Vassar graduates made their careers educating others and struggled with issues that seem timely today. As teachers they wanted equal pay; as women they wanted the right to vote. Like today’s women, they were active reformers, involved in church and community.

To be sure, there are some differences between the women of today and those at the turn of the last century. A common theme in today’s alumnae group is the struggle to find balance between home, family, and work. Classmates with young children write of the difficult decisions to leave fast-track careers, opting for slower paced, family-friendly jobs. Single moms write of their own struggle to balance their lives. Some women seem to have achieved “Superwoman status,” successfully combining work, family, and community without missing a step.

As with the Vassar women of 1917, many of my classmates are reluctant to write to our quarterly. Then and now; these women seem burdened by high expectations placed on them by themselves and by their schools. Women who graduated from college at the turn of the 19th century were a privileged group, and many took seriously their roles as early Progressive reformers. A hundred years later, my classmates — mothers, wives, and professionals — apologetically claim they have no real news. “No cure for cancer here,” one stay-at-home mother of three wrote recently. But like our educated predecessors, we do have news: We have found our own “comfortable rut” as we, too, peacefully jog along the paths of our worthwhile lives.

Vassie James was the president of Vassar’s class of 1897.

Cynthia G. Oates (Holyoke ’79) is a part-time instructor of history at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte.
"Making a difference, as individuals or as a group of individuals, never goes out of style."

Sylvia Cranmer McLaughlin '39
at the 40th anniversary celebration of Save the Bay, June 9, 2001

When Sylvia Cranmer McLaughlin '39 learned that politicians and developers had plans to fill in and develop what could have been as much as 70 percent of San Francisco Bay, she and two friends decided to found a grassroots environmental group known as Save the Bay. Four decades later, the contours of San Francisco Bay have changed only minimally, and Save the Bay – and Sylvia McLaughlin – are still in the thick of the ongoing battle to ensure the Bay will continue to be there for future generations.

Sylvia McLaughlin's story is as inspiring as it is quintessentially Vassar – and though she graduated from the College more than sixty years ago, today's Vassar students live and learn in the same special place. The College depends on contributions to its Annual Fund to pay for scholarships, faculty salaries, maintaining the campus, and much, much more. Your gift to Vassar through the 2001-2002 Annual Fund will help the College continue to educate the Sylvia McLaughlins of the 21st century – and continue to shape our world.

Vassar. Still shaping our world.

The 2001-2002 Annual Fund year is already under way. Your gift by June 30, 2002, is very much appreciated. You can make your gift by check, credit card, or securities – and now you can give online, by going to https://admin.vassar.edu/giftform.html and using your credit card at our secure site. Please don't hesitate to call us at 800.433.8196, or email us at annualfund@vassar.edu.
AAVC will be relevant to the alumnae/i and to Vassar College by sustaining a sense of community, maintaining traditions, sharing resources, fostering connections, and encouraging a lifelong desire to know. — AAVC Vision Statement

AAVC is committed to upholding the message and spirit of this Vision Statement. The Vassar community has always been one of close ties and connections. Never has this been more apparent than during the events of the last few months.

On September 12th, AAVC sent a message to all known email addresses on file to encourage the Vassar community to report their safety. Not only did over 2,100 people check in within the first 48 hours, but when our Web server was struggling to handle nearly 20 times its normal traffic, several alumnae/i and college employees offered both creative technical solutions as well as their own time and energy to keep the check-in service going — keeping people connected in a time when all means of communication were overloaded.

Out of all of this, many alumnae/i have reconnected with each other. We hope that the launch on October 1st of the new AAVC Website, events calendar, Vassar online, and the password-protected online services and directory will keep the Vassar community connected.

AAVC’s new information services staff members: Nancy Wanzer, Systems Administrator Scott Murray ’01, Web Administrator aavcweb@vassar.edu

Find Friends • Update Information • Keep in Touch