

## HUD selects UWM Milwaukee Idea for case study

UWM is one of just four schools nationwide to be chosen by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for a case study on university-community partnerships and institutional change. Selection for the study underscores UWM's emerging role as a standard-bearer for initiatives in community engagement like the Milwaukee Idea.

According to HUD program analyst Jane Karadbil, the agency has a long-term commitment to encouraging community involvement by colleges and universities. "We're interested in showing some schools can do this and serve as models for others," she said. "We picked schools we knew were leaders."

Previous grants awarded to UWM through HUD's Community Outreach Partnership Center program helped build expertise in developing community-university partnerships and provided a strong foundation for The Milwaukee Idea. Karadbil says it was compelling to see The Milwaukee Idea unfold. "It was fascinating to me to document something as it was evolving. It was a live model. UWM was the basis for all this [the case studies] because we could actually watch it happen."

The study itself is being conducted by Jon Wergin, Ph.D., an independent consultant who is an expert on organizational change in higher education and a faculty member at Virginia Commonwealth University. Over the next several months Wergin will meet with community leaders, students, faculty, staff and administrators to gauge the extent to which UWM's commitment to

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*Christina Zierer, a UWM senior, helped out with homework at the Grand Avenue Community Learning Center. Her service learning experience was part of a course in educational psychology.*

## From the classroom to the community: Service learning at UWM

*By Dean Pribbenow, Director, UWM Institute for Service Learning*

Use of service learning is burgeoning in classrooms across the country as universities seek to connect more closely with their communities and enhance student learning with real-world experiences. UWM is no exception. Last spring, an estimated 235 students took a class in which they were asked to participate in a service learning project. Over 30 local community organizations provided opportunities for experiential learning where students logged about 4,000 hours of work.

Consider, for example, these service learning highlights from the spring, 2000 semester:

- **Intercultural Communication** students tutored, mentored, and provided other services at such organizations as the Hillel Foundation, Reach Out and Read and the Boys and Girls Clubs to learn more about theories of intercultural communication.
- **Health Care Delivery** students worked with their instructor to develop and implement a survey at the MLK Heritage Health Center that assessed how information about pre-natal care was communicated to pregnant women.

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community engagement has led to educational and administrative change.

Wergin says he was struck by the excitement and interest The Milwaukee Idea is generating. "I was originally attracted by the sheer ambition of The Milwaukee Idea," he said. "It's very hard to get a complex university, especially one as diverse as UWM behind a central idea – it just doesn't happen very often. Change typically comes very slowly in higher education. . . . what I really think is intriguing about this study is finding out if the chancellor has given voice to a sort of communal aspiration that people didn't realize they had until she enunciated it."

Wergin will likely discover the answer to that question and many more as he documents UWM's efforts to reinvigorate its urban mission and embrace the principles of engagement. He believes UWM is facing an important transformation:

"The urban university model will be one of the most powerful for higher education in the next 10-20 years," he said. "This is because of an increasing awareness that the real value of higher education is not to be isolated and different and separate from the rest of the world. An urban university gets out there, it experiments, it opens up avenues for discourse. The whole engagement agenda is one that urban universities need to meet head-on."



John Wergin is a consultant conducting study on community-university partnerships at UWM.

- **Marketing Research** students formed teams and conducted interviews with youth and parents to study the Milwaukee community's experience with violence in the media and violent toys.
- **Latino Literature** students connected with local agencies like the United Community Center to conduct oral history projects for Hispanic senior citizens.

These service learning activities go beyond volunteerism. As students apply theory in a community setting, they are meeting needs identified by the community and informing their understanding of course material. Through reflection on their service—often in the form of journaling, class discussion, or portfolios—students enhance their learning and increase their personal development, leadership skills and sense of civic responsibility.

This approach to teaching and learning has profound effects on students, the community, and faculty. For example, one student studying intercultural communication wrote in her journal, "as the weeks go by I am learning more... One can only see the diversity of a city when they dare to take a step away from his or her comfort zone and try something different." Another student simply reports, "The service learning project seems to have filled a void in my life."

Community agencies also gain from working with service learners. "Our English as a Second Language adults benefit from assistance in the classroom because they are able to have more one-on-one attention," said Kelly Collingwood, Volunteer Coordinator for the Spanish Center.

Sashi DeHaan of the YMCA mentoring program says UWM's service learners are "excellent role models for their students and for other mentors." Positive experiences like these occur when the organization assumes the lead in defining the need and opportunity for service learning.

Faculty also learn from their students and the agencies when they opt for a service learning component in their courses. One professor says her students had such a great learning experience that it's caused her to re-think how she teaches all of her courses. Others say service learning has brought them closer to their students and increased their knowledge of community assets and needs.

"Service learning gives students the opportunity to understand the ethics of reciprocity and social responsibility," said Lisa Bradford, an assistant professor in communication. "It also gives them a sense of worth – they can feel someplace is better because they were there. I think that's one of the reasons a number of students continue in service learning placements after class is over."

Implementing service learning requires a significant investment of time on the part of faculty, the community partners, and students. To help with this process, UWM's Institute for Service Learning (ISL), provides resources ranging from individual consultation to placing students in the community to an ever-expanding library. With this support, the number and quality of service learning courses will continue to expand, and so too will the boundaries of the classroom.

For more information about service learning, contact Dean Pribbenow, ISL Director, at 229-3702 or by e-mail at [pribbeno@uwm.edu](mailto:pribbeno@uwm.edu). You can also visit the ISL website at [www.uwm.edu/Dept/ISL](http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/ISL).

## Cultures and Communities: Learning for the new Century

By Adam Rose, Student Assistant, Milwaukee Idea Office

Integrating Milwaukee's diverse culture into the general education curriculum at UWM is a challenging goal of The Milwaukee Idea's Cultures and Communities (CC) initiative.

The 21st century requires a different kind of education to keep pace with changing times, says Gregory Jay, director of Cultures and Communities. "We envision an alternative to the current general education requirements that will help students succeed in a multi-cultural world." To achieve that aim, the curriculum will emphasize cross-cultural literacy, interdisciplinary study and community engagement.

Said Sandra Jones, Assistant Director of the initiative, "The response to and excitement for this program is overwhelming. The campus and the community want to see something different in approaches to education." The Cultures and Communities curriculum will indeed be different than the current general education requirement, but not inferior or superior. The curriculum won't be in place until the fall of '01, but Jay and Jones have already prepared English courses that will place an emphasis on the history of America and what it was like for people of various backgrounds to immigrate to the United States.

Cultures and Communities plans to start with two or three foundation courses for freshman and sophomores around which the program will be built. The 100-150 students expected to participate will be an experimental group. Upper level courses will be determined, in part, by their feedback.

For those students who ask, "What's in it for me?" Cultures and Communities has some good answers. First, students can expect, especially in lower level courses, to have smaller classes and thus, a more engaging learning experience than in a large lecture. Second, the CC program is designed to link the courses, so there is a sequence and purpose behind the classes.

The plan is not only to diversify the UWM curriculum, it is also to enrich the general education experience beyond the classroom, according to Jay. Mini-grants offered by Cultures and Communities spearhead community engagement, since they're open to those on and off campus. The mini-grants provide support for short-term events and activities that promote community university partnerships and offer students real-world experiences.

Both the university and the community benefit from the mini-grant programs: when the university gains knowledge from the community, the community gains better citizens in UWM students, Jones says. "We want to connect with grass roots organi-



Gregory Jay, Director of Cultures and Communities and Sandra Jones, Asst. Director with friend of the initiative Victoria Redmond.

zations and activities so we can help those who don't have a lot of resources and increase their involvement in the university and community." Cultures and Communities is also building partnerships with major community institutions including the Milwaukee Public Museum and the Milwaukee Art Museum and the Social Development Commission.

Be they with large or small organizations, these partnerships have been a long time coming, Jay notes. "A place for the community to contact the university was needed. We needed to connect with the community and approach them."

Both Jay and Jones believe that CC will draw people to UWM. "The campus is so alive with school spirit, students are proud to be from UWM," Jones said. She believes that spirit is contagious and sees it in those involved with the Cultures and Communities initiative.

"When you choose a school you do so because they're the best at what they do or because they're the only one doing it," Jay said. "Only a handful of universities have this kind of curriculum, but none have the community involvement that we have."

"Students will come to UWM when they realize that they can get something here they can't get anywhere else. We want people to say, 'hey, that's a UWM student,' and recognize them as sophisticated in world diversity and have real world experience."

For more about Cultures and Communities contact Sandra Jones, 229-2298; [sejones@uwm.edu](mailto:sejones@uwm.edu) or Greg Jay, 229-5960; [gjay@uwm.edu](mailto:gjay@uwm.edu).

*For more on Cultures and Communities, see page 4*



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## Education students inaugurate first Cultures and Communities course

by *Laura L. Hunt*

The first official course that has sprung from the Cultures and Communities initiative of The Milwaukee Idea got under way this fall, combining the efforts of both the College of Letters and Science and the School of Education.

The course, “Introduction to Multi-cultural America Through Literature,” is being offered through the English Department and inaugurated by education students.

Taught by English professor Greg Jay and lecturer Sandra Jones who together oversee the CC initiative, the course is open only to education majors and features two additional instructors - “master teachers” from Milwaukee Public Schools who will add the teacher-training elements.

The course is designed to enhance cross-cultural literacy, says Jay. “We’ll study texts that represent a variety of American experiences,” he says. “The class will take a comparative approach. We’ll take an issue, like religion, family, or sexuality, and then see how that issue is treated in the various readings. The idea is to connect the differences, rather than build the walls higher.”

This joint effort also takes advantage of funding UWM and Milwaukee Public Schools has received from the U.S. Department of Education Title II Partnership Grant for Improving Teacher Quality. The master teachers will assist students in developing lesson plans for teaching the stories. They will explore, for example, how children from various cultural backgrounds would see each text.

Next semester, Marcia Parsons, professor of dance in the School of the Arts, will offer another CC course aimed specifically at teachers in training. Her course relates dance and movement to learning. Enrolled students will be working at one elementary, middle, and high school site in the community as part of the course requirements.

“Brain research has confirmed what we in the School of the Arts have always known: You can’t think if you don’t move,” says Parsons. “To help teachers get used to movement in the classroom, they need a bag of tricks so they don’t feel that they will lose control.”



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