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Smith Renaissance Society News
Grass Roots Volunteer Alumni Movement a Huge Success

Scott Page just completed the fourth year of his PhD at MIT. Matilda Stubbs and Shaeleya Miller are starting work on PhDs, Stubbs at Northwestern, Miller at UC, Santa Barbara. Kenny Buckler is a successful software engineer. Setting aside the engineering career for which he studied, Deutron



Deutron Kebebew, Kresge '03
first Smith Society student leader

Kebebew works with Santa Cruz foster kids, currently as project director for a six-year research project on the long-term effects of absent fathers. After earning a Master's in public health, Lisa Rickert is doing public policy research in Santa Cruz. A popular Santa Clara teacher, Llyw Dorell aims to believe in kids on whom everyone else is ready to give up. During their undergraduate years at UC Santa Cruz, all seven belonged to the Page and Eloise Smith Scholastic Society, which recently merged with the UCSC Renaissance Scholars Program.

Tremendous Growth. Starting at the 1999 Pioneer Class reunion, the grass-roots, alumni-initiated Smith Society provides financial, academic, and emotional support to veterans of the foster care or juvenile justice systems, orphans without family support, or others who have been forced to go at life on their own. It was the first effort of its kind on any UC campus. Inspired by the founding provost of Cowell College and his wife, the Society grew from three students to sixty-five in the 2007-2008 academic year.

Says Smith founder Bill Dickinson (Cowell'68), *"With the help of a wonderful small army of big-hearted donors and volunteers, we are providing today's students with what those of us in Page Smith's Cowell had, a caring community of friends committed to their academic and personal success, summed up in the Cowell motto, which we take as our own: 'The pursuit of truth in the company of friends.'*



Smith Society founder Bill Dickinson, Cowell '68

Renaissance Scholars Program Coordinates the Institutional Efforts. The Smith Society recently merged with UCSC's four-year-old Renaissance Scholars Program, which provides institutional help navigating University challenges that can be difficult for a student to manage alone. Housed in Services for Transfer and Re-entry Students (STARS), and staffed by a half-time academic advisor, it offers students an array of academic, emotional, and logistical supports (e.g. early enrollment in courses and year-round housing) that complement the focused personal attention individual mentors provide. Working with UCSC's Educational Partnership Center, this program also features the first University-based systematic outreach to college-hopeful California high school and community college students who are or were in foster care.

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Corinne Miller

Says STARS Director Corinne Miller, who coordinates the Society's institutional work, *"In collaboration with the Educational Partnership Center, we are able to provide support to foster youth from middle-school through college graduation. EPC counselors offer academic advising, tutoring, test preparation, as well as admission and financial aid application assistance to individual foster youth registered in their various programs in schools and community colleges. Once students enroll at UCSC, we in STARS coordinate with other offices and programs like EOP, Learning Support Services, Financial Aid, and Housing, to provide a myriad of academic and personal support offerings to Smith Renaissance Collegiate Fellows."*

Unique Mentoring Program. The Smith Renaissance mentoring program, led by History Professor *emeritus* Gary Miles and English Professor John Jordan, may be the only effort of its kind in the country. Current and retired professors, University staff, and local alumni, offer students what no institution can do by itself: friendship and no-strings commitment to their personal success that many have not experienced before. Relationships run the gamut, from relatively minimal to what promise to be meaningful lifelong friendships.

Miles encourages mentors to take the initiative, but stays clear that the decision about how close the relationship will become rests primarily with the Collegiate Fellows. While applicants are asked whether they primarily want academic support, help navigating the university system, or a personal coach and cheerleader, Miles reports that matches rarely are based on common academic interests.



Mentoring Coordinator Professor Gary Miles

Promising Model. Former Smith student leaders Stubb, Kebebew, Dorrell, and Buckler have continued to serve as Smith leaders after graduation, the first three on the board, Buckler on the Founders' Circle, the fundraising arm. UCSC's Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs Felicia McGinty sees a promising model.



Graduates share a light moment at a recent reception hosted by Chancellor Blumenthal and his wife Kelly Weisberg

Says McGinty, *"As each Smith Renaissance student graduates, we build a stronger network of Smith alumni, reaching out to young people before they reach college age, helping them make choices that will support a future that is much brighter than their past."*

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One Student's Story. When Victoria Wilder Eisenberg (Merrill '08) arrived at UCSC from Stockton, she had been homeless for months, having “emancipated” from the foster care system she had lived in since she was a little girl, where she endured the chaos of living in more than seventeen homes throughout her childhood and youth. Says Victoria, *“As you can imagine, trying to fit into the college experience was hard because I knew I wasn't like everyone else, especially those who had families. I became a part of the Smith Society and my years changed dramatically. I feel that I have been cared for, nurtured, and, like a little seed, have grown into a spring blossom”*

In addition to getting a degree, she married Ben Eisenberg, had two children, found time to be a Smith student leader and to take part in dramatic productions. This fall the Eiesenbergs head for Berkeley, where Victoria will explore what comes next as Ben settles into the demands of a first-year law student at Boalt Hall.



Victoria Wilder Eisenberg, Merrill '08 and Family

Newest Successes. Smith Renaissance Financial Aid advisor Cheryl Perazzo reports that nineteen eligible frosh have been admitted for the 2008-2009 Fall Quarter, a dramatic increase from previous years. This may partly reflect the fact that Perazzo, who has become a statewide champion for the higher educational aspiration of California foster kids, succeeded in having a line added to the UC admission application that allows foster youths to self-identify. Says Perazzo, *“The really dramatic differences are apparent when you compare recent data with that from five years ago. More Smith Renaissance students are being accepted at the university and our retention of current Smith Renaissance Scholars is very high. Our program has nearly doubled! This is so exciting. We are touching more students and those students will have the potential to reach out to more and more foster youth.”*

Perazzo is keenly aware of the financial aid needs of the primary group of Smith Renaissance students,



Cheryl Perazzo

“As the cost of attendance continues to rise dramatically, the federal loan limits do not. This means that students have 'unmet need' where the total of the financial aid awards falls short of the cost of attendance. Former foster youth do not have families to ask when they need to fill this funding gap. They have no safety net to catch them. The cost of attendance for the 1999-2000 academic year, when the Smith Scholarship began, was \$13,955 for a student to live on-campus in a double room in the residence halls. Five years ago, during the 2003-04 academic year, the cost of attendance was \$19,873. This coming year (2008-09) the cost will be \$26,238!”

Getting Ready. Incoming members of the Smith Renaissance Society have a chance to get a running the jump on the academic year as well as a chance to make new friends before diving into their course work. In July, incoming Collegiate Fellows will be invited to the Fall STARS Academic Skills Workshops on September 18 and 19, with early move-in on the 17th. On the evening of the 17th, our new students will be invited to a welcome dinner provided by the Smith Renaissance community of friends. Drop-in academic and personal advising will be available all summer at STARS (housed in the Academic Resource Center), or by phone and email (phone 831-459-4968 or email corky@ucsc.edu). Academic advising, and enrolling in classes, also will be available at the many campus orientations throughout June and July. Visit <http://admissions.ucsc.edu/orientation08/> for more information.

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Pioneer Spirit Continues.

The Society rests on two core ideas on which UCSC was founded: undergraduates thrive in small communities, and there is a way to provide this without adding cost to the taxpayers. Many donors were present when the campus opened in 1965. Board Chairman Dane Hardin, Cowell '67, was in the first graduating class. As a result of its work, of the hundred and forty-nine students served in nine years, all but a handful have graduated or on track to graduate.



Board Chairman Dane Hardin

“Community of Friends” -- Page and Eloise Smith’s Legacy



Anne Smith Easley speaks with Smith alumna Sonia Rao



Collegiate Fellows Oscar Murillo and Marshall Payne speak with Smith Renaissance supporter Barbara McFadden

Concludes Hardin, *"Page and Eloise Smith would be very proud to see that their loving legacy continues in this way. What started as a modest idea has, with the help of our loyal faculty, staff, volunteers and donors, become a noble community of true friends. The money is far from the main thing, but it is important. We offer each student a \$1,000 annual scholarship. Given our amazing growth rate in the number of students served, we have a big need to expand our donor base. We have a few large donors, but mostly we meet our needs with many fairly small donations. Our goal for the coming year is to add two hundred and fifty new donors who will commit to at least \$100 a year. If folks put that on a credit card and paid in monthly installments, it would be like skipping one or two monthly Starbucks visits."*