At the Smith Renaissance graduation celebration. This year 15 students graduated. Eight are pictured above, along with Smith Renaissance Society founder, Bill Dickinson, and student adviser Amy Hamel.

**SRS: Community with a purpose**

The Smith Renaissance Society continues to thrive for at least three very good reasons: our students are determined to succeed despite coming from hard places, we are blessed with amazingly loyal, dedicated volunteers and donors like you, who provide invaluable personal and financial support, and we remain steady and unyielding in our pursuit of a worthwhile purpose. In a period when so much—including the University of California—seems to face huge, dispiriting challenges, the Smith Renaissance Society provides a good example of how perseverance, creativity, and collaborative effort can overcome obstacles, individual as well as institutional.

In our lofty moments, we say that we are pursuing truth in the company of friends. In more mundane moments, we say that we aim to generate the remarkable retention and graduation rates that show Smith Collegiate Fellows staying in school and graduating at much better rates than their peers. Just as important, most seem to move on to successful lives after graduation. Having now completed our eleventh year, we can add that we continue to sow creative seeds beyond the University.

**Where are they now?**

**Maribel Valencia-Castillo**

After graduating with a degree in Anthropology in 2000, Maribel Valencia-Castillo, one of our first students, took an advanced degree at Harvard Divinity School. Says Maribel, “The Smith scholarship, though very helpful and much appreciated, would never compare to the many acts of selfless generosity that touched and inspired me. Having someone take a leap of faith on my behalf, guiding me through the Harvard admission process, was very humbling. I hope to do that some day for others. Before leaving for Harvard, through the Smith network, I met and lived with Professor John Jordan and his wife Jane. They became friends for a lifetime. I learned that a simple act of kindness can change your world forever.”
After graduating in Psychology in 2004, Danny Ambrose went on to earn an M.S. in Higher Education/Student Affairs Administration from Indiana University in 2006. After working for a year as a Resident Director of UC Santa Barbara, he moved to New Jersey, where he took his current position as Residence Coordinator at New Jersey Institute of Technology. Now partnered, Danny aims to go on to earn a PhD in Counseling Psychology working specifically with gay foster youth.

Says Danny, “Joining the Smith Society marked the first time in my life I ever felt my identity as a foster youth was understood and appreciated. I instantly had over a dozen friends who could relate and empathize with my story. The Smith Society helped me celebrate this piece of my past and understand my role in helping others see higher education as a desirable and available option.”

Jesse Nelson After graduating in 2005 with a double major in Modern Literature and Film and Digital Media, Jesse Nelson shot and directed a personal documentary, interned at the Sundance Film Festival, then worked in post production for The Dr. Phil Show. Now married and a stepfather to two, Jesse will complete his graduate work at Weber State University in Utah this summer, after which he plans to teach high school.

Says Jesse, “The greatest thing I experienced in the Smith Society is the people I met. I was humbled by the shared experiences and felt comfort knowing that others have experienced similar things to what I had. I am glad that such a society exists because it is an opportunity for those facing obstacles in life to get an education and make their lives extraordinary.”

Gladys Macario Graduating in 2005 with a B.A. in Psychology, Gladys Macario has explored several avenues of social work, first as a counselor with at-risk pregnant or parenting teenage girls in a Los Angeles maternity home, later with homeless young adults at Covenant House, and currently as intake coordinator for a housing program in Virginia where she helps homeless families find permanent affordable housing.

In 2008 Gladys married her high school sweetheart, Ray Garibaldi, an Army engineer, who, along with her sister, has been deployed in Iraq. She is currently working on an M.S.W. at Virginia Dominion University, and upon completion of her degree and Ray’s military service, they plan to return to California where Gladys
hopes to return to work at Covenant House.

Says Gladys, “My involvement with the Smith Society was truly a blessing. It was a good experience for me because I was able to become part of a group that was inspiring younger kids from the foster care system to pursue higher education. Thanks to Smith I met my mentor (Anita Harten-Kroeber, Stevenson ’69) who was always a positive support for me. I could always count on her for lunch (smile) and good conversation. I did not have much support from anyone when I went off to college so knowing that I had someone to count on was a very good for me. I am forever grateful for Anita.”

Shaeleya Miller Graduating in 2007 in Sociology, Shaeleya Miller worked with homeless youths in San Francisco before embarking on her current pursuit of a PhD in Sociology at UC Santa Barbara, where her research focuses on the challenges faced by homeless gay foster youths. In June she helped lay the groundwork for our first Smith foray into Southern California (see Ventura Pilot). Shaeleya is currently teaching her first university-level course.

Says Shae, of her relationship with her Smith mentor, Janice Tetlow, “Janice was amazing. When I came to UCSC I was not initially interested in getting a mentor but I decided that I should at least give the idea a chance and accept a resource that was offered me. I didn’t think I had a lot of needs in terms of mentorship but found that having an adult friend with whom I could talk about my life, the challenges I was facing in school, and to call when times got tough made a huge difference. For most of my education at UCSC I was not in contact with my parents, so I didn’t have someone to call when I needed support. Even though it was an institutionalized mentorship, Janice and I were well-matched and I never felt like it was a forced or inauthentic relationship. Her friendship and support were invaluable to me and I am incredibly grateful to her.”

LaToy Barnes A 2008 graduate in Health Sciences, LaToya Barnes works for Seneca Center, a California nonprofit that provides systemic mental health and other services to foster kids and their families. A mental health classroom assistant at a Fremont middle school, she also teaches math and science. LaToya recently started work on an M.A. in Secondary Teaching at Phoenix University, with Biology and Special Education focuses.

Says LaToya, “The Smith Society was helpful to me because I met a lot of genuine people from a lot of different fields that I probably would not have met otherwise. They were a bundle of knowledge and helped me maintain my sanity! Adrienne (Harrell, her Smith mentor) was very helpful, always there for me when I needed her. She offered an ear for me to vent, provided me a place to stay after I graduated and before I made my big move, and was very supportive of my decisions while at UCSC. She had my back.”

Ventura Pilot

One of our newest contributors, Jill Borgeson, Cowell ’77, is a social worker in Ventura County who developed Kindle Family Services to help identify, locate and engage foster youths with members of their family. She sits on the board of TEACH (Training & Education for Achievement by Children), whose mission is to motivate and financially assist current and former
Ventura foster youth in obtaining the education or training that will prepare them to be contributing members of their community.

In June, together with Laura Welbourn, Oakes ’93, the foster youth liaison at the Ventura County Office of Education, Jill arranged a visit that led to a promising collaboration between TEACH and Smith Renaissance, inviting UCSC admissions field rep Cesar Flores to sit on their board and beginning plans to bring Ventura foster kids next spring to Santa Cruz to see the campus. Says Jill, “I’m excited about our partnership because it opens new doors for foster youths in Ventura County. The Smith Renaissance Society offers opportunities that many young people coming from foster care would never have thought conceivable—to venture outside their home communities and be welcomed into a new living and learning community where they are valued and supported and encouraged to achieve.”

F.Y.I Founders Off to Graduate School

In our last issue we reported on the creation of F.Y.I. (Foster Youth Initiative), a program that aims to plant higher education seeds for Santa Cruz County middle school foster kids. The initial brain child of June graduate Colette Hottinger, who partnered with fellow 2010 grad Sierra Reid Hoffman and Smith co-founder Mary Male. F.Y.I. was launched last spring and ended its first full year on a very promising note. A solid partnership has been forged with the local CASA (Court-Appointed Special Advocates) organization, the adult volunteers who bring foster kids to F.Y.I. events. A comprehensive handbook that will allow future F.Y.I. leaders to hit the deck running has also been drafted. They recruited their successors and put their work on the radar of the local dependency judge, the Hon. Denine Guy, who showed up to salute them at our Smith Renaissance graduation dinner.

We are proud to report that Colette will enter the M.S.W. program at UC Berkeley in the fall, where she plans to work with Professor Jill Duerr Berrick, Cowell ’83, Co-Director of the School of Social Work’s Center for Child and Youth Policy. Desiring to be close to her family, Sierra will start work on her M.S.W. at San Diego State University.

For more information on the Smith Renaissance Society, please contact: Services for Transfer and Re-Entry Students (STARS), (831) 459-4968, smithsociety@ucsc.edu, or visit our web site at www.smithsociety.ucsc.edu.

To make a gift in support of the Smith Society, please contact Kathleen Rose Hughes at 831 459-4552 or online at giving.ucsc.edu/give