Another good year

Thanks to loyal supporters like you—volunteers, mentors, and donors—we continued to flourish during the 2011–2012 academic year. Given the turbulent larger context in which we operate, that we continue to grow stronger is no small achievement:

- We served seventy-two Collegiate Fellows, our largest number to date.
- We provided a mentor to all thirty-five students who requested one.
- Amy Hamel, our student adviser, and Cheryl Perazzo, our financial aid adviser, teamed with volunteers, led by Laura Caldwell, Bill Parro, and Susan Seaburg, to help our students thrive.
- Our students hosted pre-college foster kid campus visits, even raising the funds needed to support Music day, an incredibly lovely annual event.
- With help from the UCSC Foundation, we made strides toward sustainability.

Mentors as witnesses

Smith students continue to stay in school and graduate at a much better rate than their more fortunate peers. Of the success factors, none is more important than our unique ten-year-old mentoring program. The brainchild of Professor emeritus GARY MILES, it provides students with a caring adult committed to their success. Says Miles, “Such relationships demand a special trust and hopefulness from the beginning. This can take courage for our students, whose experiences with older adults have often been difficult and disappointing.”

Working closely with Amy Hamel and Professor John Jordan, Miles coordinates an elegantly simple program that assures that few students who participate fail. Reports Miles, “The companionship and approval of mentors comes with the authority of people who have made it over many of the hurdles still facing their students and who know not only what it is like to be there but what it is like to be able to look back on this time from a later perspective.”

About to earn an MIT PhD, Scott Page, Miles’ first Smith mentee, agrees: “Gary and his wife Peggy have been great mentors, role models, and friends. I had a preconception of a mentor being like an academic adviser who you meet once a term in a formal setting. My interactions with Gary were the opposite. We met often for dinner with his family, surfing, attending concerts, and swimming in the sea. Within this base of friendship, it was natural and desirable to seek their advice when big life decisions came up.”
Profiles in friendship

JOY ANDERSON, a double major in Sociology and Politics, will be a senior in September. Her life dream is to become a leader and advocate for legislative change on behalf of foster youth, minorities, the poor, and others who lack adequate representation.

She wanted a mentor because she was nervous about being anonymous when she started college. She hoped a mentor would provide support and guidance. Says Joy, “The best thing about my mentor is the great advice she gives. She is loving, caring, open-minded, wise, and thoughtful. We meet and talk about life, sometimes with food, sometimes with coffee. I like that she is honest with her advice.” Adds Janice Tetlow, her mentor, “Joy has become an important part of my family. She mentors me, too—I learn from her all the time. Her perseverance, inner strength, and her big, forgiving heart are all an inspiration for me to witness.”

AMBER ROMANO, a 2012 graduate and SRS leader, was an Intensive Psychology major. Currently working as a case manager at a Santa Cruz clinic, she aspires to become a professor and clinician. She also hopes to create a non-profit clinic for low-income people.

Says Amber, “Having a mentor meant having someone close by who I could rely on. My relationship with my mentor, Susan Seaburg, has been great. We go out to eat, she has been a listening ear, a helping hand to be sure I get to the right place, and edited some of my school projects. I was honored to hear her sing a solo in her choir. I care greatly for her and feel we have become good friends.” Adds Susan, “Amber is not my daughter, not my ‘friend’, not my colleague—yet in some ways, she is all of these. She gives me the opportunity to share some of the lessons I have learned in life, and we give each other the gift of a cross-generational friendship that does not judge.”

2012 graduate NICOLE CARUTHERS majored in Theater Arts and Feminist Studies. Her life dream: “To live happily doing work that uplifts others through art.”

At first all she wanted from a mentor was a place to store her belongings over breaks. As she got to know Elaine Rivas, she wanted more: “I wanted a familiar face in the crowd when I went on stage, someone who could watch me grow and push me when I got stuck. I wanted someone who would celebrate my birthday and share holidays with me, or help me get through rough times. Elaine has become a witness to my life and has become part of the network that I call my family.”

Slated to graduate in 2014, Psychology major HEATHER SWEENEY dreams of working with children and adolescents, a consistent, trustworthy, friendly therapist. In a mentor she sought “a reliable friend, supporter, challenger, listener, and encourager, someone who would genuinely value me and help me find ways to best achieve my goals. The thing I wanted most of all was someone to be at my graduation so when I walk across the stage I know at least one face in the crowd.” She found it in Gary Miles, “Gary has kindly welcomed me into his home, fed me, helped me with my schoolwork. He has been a listening ear, provided me with wise
words, helped me through good and bad. Most of all, he believes in me. Gary and his wife Peggy have been such positive figures in my life. I am blessed to know them and know that this relationship will last a lifetime.”

**A new era dawns**

With outgoing board president JOHN JORDAN’s steadying influence at the helm, the last three years have been fairly calm for Smith Renaissance. With our new leadership team ready to take charge, we expect to stay the course, letting go of initiatives that have served their purpose, doing more of what works well.

We could not ask for a more perfect leader than incoming president CHERYL PERAZZO, a large-souled presence since we started in 1999. As their financial aid adviser, our students love her. That the walls of her office have been covered with Smith student pictures speaks volumes. Retiring after twenty-seven years at UCSC, we are blessed that she has agreed to be our leader: nobody understands better the heart and soul of what we strive to be.

SUSAN SEABURG, our new vice president (see picture opposite) comes from a successful career at Hewlett Packard. New to UCSC, she is a mentor, helps lead our programs team, provides leadership training for our students, and leads career-focused workshops. She has been a major help as our board seeks to take itself to the next level of competence. Says Susan, “Of all the volunteer organizations I have worked on, I feel that SRS gives me the best opportunity to have a direct, positive impact on developing students into strong, responsible, caring adults.”

ISA CAFFE, our new secretary, assures the student voice a place at the table for mission-critical discussions. She’s smart and enthusiastic. A Cowell student, where she is a frequent guest at provost Faye Crosby’s home, Isa wants to take the lead finding better ways to engage students in what she calls “the heart of the matter” which, to Isa, means finding fresh ways to put into play the spirit of Page Smith.

CORINNE MILLER, our new treasurer, is another gem. The Director of STARS (Services for Transfer and Re-Entry Students), our administrative home base, she is retiring after thirty years at UCSC. Says John Jordan, “A tireless advocate for non-traditional students, Corinne has served for many years on our board, where her intimate knowledge of campus policies and procedures has helped insure good working relations between SRS and the rest of the University. Her personal warmth, generosity, and commitment to service are well known to students and colleagues alike.”
UCSC Foundation blesses us

We were twice-blessed this year by the UCSC FOUNDATION. Thanks to long-time Smith champion, MIKE GRAYDON, a member of the Foundation board, they awarded us a significant grant, enabling us to undertake a successful matching campaign and to hire 2005 SRS Film and Digital Media graduate DAN HANCOX to produce a new video (see https://vimeo.com/38693093). Says Dan, “You know that feeling when something terrible happens to you but your friend is more outraged about it than you? Smith is that feeling for me. My approach to life has been profoundly influenced by this, because the more positivity I can give this world, the more it seems to give back.”

In February the Foundation awarded the Fiat Lux Award, the University’s highest honor, to Smith founder BILL DICKINSON. Said Bill, in his acceptance speech, “I am grateful for the community of friends—volunteers, inside and outside the University, mentors, and donors—whose big-hearted devotion makes the Smith Renaissance Society possible. This award goes to all of us. I am grateful to our students, past and present, our reason for being, our hope for the future.”

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 Kathy Rouhier at (831) 459-1792 or online at giving.ucsc.edu

Pursuit of truth in the company of friends:

“Witnesses to our lives are the bedrock upon which we build our identities and our self-esteem. We all need and deserve such witnesses. It is a privilege to be able to perform this service for students who have done so very much on their own to deserve it.”

GARY MILES

Congratulations 2012 graduates!