PLUS: African Scholars Program’s lasting impact

Five Colleges names new executive director

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When she was hired by Five Colleges, Incorporated, the consortium was just 15 years old; most of its current students, and some of its faculty, hadn’t even been born. In the 29 years since, particularly the last 19 with Lorna at the helm, Five Colleges has experienced a tremendous evolution, as she helped initiate dozens of academic programs, committees and annual events. Notable among them are the Women’s Studies Research Center, the Risk Management Office, the WORD! multicultural theater event and the new postdoctoral program. Lorna recently sat down with Donal O’Shea — her longtime friend and Mount Holyoke’s dean of faculty — and with Ink editor Kevin Kennedy to discuss her Five College experiences and her thoughts on the future of the consortium.
Incredible Vision

Peterson: When did you come to Mount Holyoke?

O’Shea: I came in 1980, and I think you were at Five Colleges then.

Peterson: That was my first year. You came in at the last minute for a proposal we were going to put in to the [National Science Foundation]. And the arithmetic was wrong!


Peterson: I said, “Aren’t you a mathematician? It has to add up!” (Laughs)

O’Shea: No, I remember. It seems a long time ago. You actually never forgot the details of a deal. Lorna can keep track of who owes what percent, at what time, at what year, of what grant proposal.

Peterson: I can still remember the deals.

Kennedy: Lorna, could you talk a little about your background leading up to Five Colleges?

Peterson: I came to the town of Amherst in 1968. I was eight months’ pregnant with Zach. I came because Dale [my husband] got a job here. I was writing my dissertation. He got a job and I had a baby, which was a very typical story.

O’Shea: When did you go back to work after having the kids?

Peterson: My first job was working here, at Mount Holyoke. I was the local staff person for the Berkshire Conference on the History of Women. I had an office up at the Williston Library.

O’Shea: I didn’t know that.

Peterson: It was a yearlong job to organize the Berkshire Conference on the History of Women. It was their fiftieth anniversary. This was 1977. And then I went to the School of Ed [at UMass] for a few years. And then I started work at Five Colleges in 1980, as staff assistant to the Long-range Planning Committee. That’s how I began, and then I became director of development.

O’Shea: I didn’t know you had started in the Development Office, which explains why we like each other — because we both like writing grants.

Peterson: Throughout the seventies and into the eighties, while I was at Five Colleges, I had various adjunct teaching appointments. I taught my famous course about women in Russian literature. I called it Princesses, Prostitutes and Proletarians. It made it into an article, I think in Newsweek. I think that’s the one I taught here at Mount Holyoke. And I had an adjunct appointment for several years at the university. They used to have a very active program of courses in the dormitories. I taught a number of times there.

O’Shea: It’s funny; when I came to Mount Holyoke, I always associated with Five Colleges.

Peterson: Well, yes, Applied Math was a Five College program.

O’Shea: Five Colleges was my first experience at Mount Holyoke. I came here because I was at a conference and I

Reflections on Working with Lorna Peterson

We contacted a few of the hundreds of people Five College Executive Director Lorna Peterson has worked with at Five Colleges over the years, and asked them to drop us a short note about their experiences with her. Here are some of their responses.

“There is a quote by Gioconda Belli that makes me think of Lorna: ‘The future is shaped in the present. What is important is not the fulfillment of all one’s dreams, but the stubborn determination to continue dreaming.’ Lorna is a very special woman with unique ambitions for the consortium and a unique set of skills (including stubborn determination) that helped move us along the path. There is no one else I enjoy brainstorming with more, trying to imagine the next step, the next project, the next collaboration. Life was rarely calm and quiet at the office—we were all trying to dream harder.”

— Jean Stabell, former Five College treasurer

“Lorna has long been the traditional birth attendant for Five College programs. I had the pleasure of watching her capable hands at work when the Five College Program in Culture, Health and Science (CHS) was born in 1996. As founding director of that program, I often relied upon Lorna’s wisdom, administrative savvy, deep commitment and implacable will, not to mention her magic powers. That the CHS program is thriving more than a decade later is testament to her abilities. I have missed her ever since I left, and I’m sure all my colleagues in the Five Colleges will soon feel the same.”

— Jim Trostle, Professor of Anthropology, Trinity College, Hartford
met a mathematician from Smith — I didn’t know where Smith was at the time — and another guy from Hampshire who said, “Hey, the Valley’s great. Mount Holyoke’s got a job. You should interview.” I loved the department, but it was the other schools that were always on the radar. Actually, in those times the Five College math departments interviewed each other’s candidates, so I knew the other mathematicians before I knew somebody in the Mount Holyoke English department.

You know, I had a huge row with my adviser when I decided to come here because I was looking for research places. I was at Queen’s University in Canada. This is just such a vital environment. I can’t tell you just on the faculty side how many things Five Colleges made possible. I think I was a Five College citizen before I was a Mount Holyoke one in many ways.

Kennedy: Lorna, having been part of the first planning effort in 1980, did you see . . .

Peterson: Actually, in 1969 there was a long-range planning report that was really, really the beginning of close Five College cooperation. But even before that, it sort of begins in the late fifties, with the Planning Committee, before there was Five Colleges, Incorporated, and one of the things the Planning Committee recommended was that there be a fifth college.

O’Shea: That part of the history I don’t know. There was some incredible vision then.

Peterson: Incredible. What happened is the four presidents used to meet on and off throughout the year. They were the ones who said everything in higher ed is growing. We’re talking mid- to late fifties. UMass was growing from a state school to a major university and wanted some of the expertise on the college campuses because they just didn’t have enough at that time. That’s how you wound up with the [multicampus] Astronomy Department. So the Five Colleges Astronomy Department predates Five Colleges. As does [radio station] WFCR and Mass Review [literary journal]. Mass Review is going to celebrate its fiftieth anniversary.

O’Shea: So when did the Five Colleges itself start?

Peterson: In 1965, they incorporated as Four Colleges, Inc. in July. Then in August or September, they reincorporated as Five Colleges, Inc. from four to five because Hampshire was in fact founded. They hadn’t broken ground yet, but they had incorporated Hampshire. To dare to do that, say “we’ll collaborate, we’ll share, we’ll do things together, and in our midst, we will have founded another institution.”

SPIRIT OF COLLABORATION

Kennedy: Lorna, could you talk about how that early spirit of cooperation carried through into your tenure here?

Peterson: We should talk about how the Five College deans make this consortium work academically. There’s a sense that we’re in this together. There’ve been many times when a dean will say this is not a priority for my school but if it’s important to you, and the others agree, I’ll go along. But it’s also the honesty that I’ve seen, when a dean will say, “I really can’t support that.” They accept the fact that it’s a difficult thing — whether it’s politically or financially — it’s a difficult thing for one of them to be able to support. And then they’ll often say, “Okay, it can be three colleges or four colleges, it doesn’t have to be Five Colleges.”

“It is hard to speak of cooperation in higher education without invoking Lorna. Her leadership has created a dynamic, innovative, synergistic partnership among five distinctive institutions that is the envy of university systems and consortia across the country and abroad.”

— Carol Christ, President of Smith College

“In dedicating herself to all that was at the heart of cooperation and collaboration, Lorna mastered the syntax, morphology and semantics of a complex operation, inspiring a landscape of opportunity, creativity and community. In a real sense, she had to be pentalingual to do this. And, she was.”

— Carol Aleman, Five College Executive Assistant

“In an education world where, as Lorna Peterson coined with her nowfamous or infamous T-shirt ‘cooperation is an unnatural act,’ Five Colleges has become a model for where education and the world itself need to go. Five Colleges holds this exceptional and distinguished place in U.S. education because Lorna’s consistent goal was to create a culture of cooperation—not just achieve efficiencies or run special programs—among and between five fractious institutions. Create the former; the latter would follow. Focus on efficiency and special programs, and suspicion and resistance would replace cooperation and the possibilities for a larger vision for education. Fostering cooperation took imagination and creativity. It is never easy.

“If there is ever a remake of Mission: Impossible, it should be based on the exploits of the executive director of Five Colleges. It is hard to imagine what could be more impossible than the task of working for five college and university
O'Shea: Actually, having been there for a while, it is the single best professional development tool. Normally deans are very isolated.

Peterson: That’s what’s really interesting. You can hear that all the way from the presidents themselves, the deans, the PBOs [principal business officers], over to the mail delivery people, being able to talk to someone else who has the same job, and we can talk about how we do it and best practices; it’s a very inexpensive way to have professional development.

O'Shea: The other thing that’s stunning about the deans is that we meet quite a lot and for quite a long period of time, but it’s worth it. In this job, there is no time for anything. You look at every spare second of your day and then you want to see these things that are blocks of two and a half to three hours every month, and you want to get rid of it, but they’re more valuable in the end.

Peterson: There’s a constant tension between me and the deans about how frequently we can have meetings. I think I’ve given up one meeting a semester.

presidents—unless it was working for five different faculties. Combine the presidents, faculty and throw in the deans, deputies and PBOs [principal business officers], and the merits of having Mr. Phelps replaced by Ms. Peterson becomes clear. And it is fun to think of Lorna Peterson as a TV star and cultural icon wearing her T-shirt.

“More seriously, Lorna Peterson has set the ultimate standard for what is meant by servant leadership. Her dedication to identifying and serving imaginatively, fairly and energetically the common interests of five diverse institutions has been extraordinary. Just the time it took to be a visible and valued member of all five campus communities seemed overwhelming from my perspective as president of the smallest of those colleges.

“Much of her success was made possible by her wonderful sense of humor. She could laugh at, while at the same time deeply valuing, the eccentricities of the many and varied ‘bosses’ she had over the years— even when we individually or as a group never quite saw them ourselves. Most important, and of greatest value to me throughout my sixteen years as president of Hampshire and during my three-year terms as chair of the Five College directors, was her courage and willingness to speak directly and frankly. She never hesitated to challenge that which she thought undermined the collective interests of Five Colleges or support that which promoted those interests. At the same time, she never hesitated to point out the trouble any one president might run in to if he or she supported that collective interest.

“I cannot imagine being a college president without Five Colleges and without Lorna Peterson. Fortunately, I never had
O’Shea: She always sneaks it back on. She’s always got it back on.

Kennedy: In addition to the professional development that you’re talking about, would there be one or two specific projects that the deans have accomplished in your times...

O’Shea: There are all kinds of grants, joint faculty appointments . . .

Peterson: The postdoc program, especially at this time. This is a new program that’s really going to be important because young people getting their PhDs are not going to have as many opportunities for jobs given what’s going on economically. It really has sufficient funding to bring in eight to ten newly minted PhDs with three-year appointments. That will mean it enriches us because we have new faculty coming in, and it gives them an opportunity to be employed in the kind of situation they were training for.

O’Shea: Then things we couldn’t have taken up separately, like film studies, where production costs would once upon a time have broken the bank, we managed to share the technology. And then we share somebody who’s good at it. The languages, we’ve got an interesting record back and forth. We tend to look at what hasn’t worked, but it’s worked much better than at other places.

Peterson: How many places can you go to and study Malaysian, Croatian — it’s amazing. And actually go to those countries because the training that you’ve received has allowed you to graduate and be able to go and actually be able to communicate.

O’Shea: Or you get things like geology, which no one place could afford. There’s a lab that’s run centrally at the university where all the colleges put up money.

Peterson: Imagine that. And the geologists really cooperate. They’re among the unsung heroes because they also take our students who are geology majors all over the world to look at these geological formations.

O’Shea: Some geologists that I could kill. No, no, they really are good. (Laughs) And sharing what happened within the three institutions, sharing Paul Ominsky [director of campus security at Mount Holyoke, Smith and Hampshire]. But it happened because it was possible because there was this thing called Five College cooperation.

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To face such a reality. Higher education would be far stronger in this country if more college and university presidents had their own Five Colleges and Lorna Petersons.”

—Gregory S. Prince, Jr., President Emeritus, Hampshire College

“When I joined the newly created Colleges of the Fenway in 1996 as coordinator, Lorna was one of the first people I looked to for guidance and direction in my new field of consortial collaboration. I paid my first visit to Five Colleges, Inc. within a month of starting in the position. Over the years Lorna has been a wonderful mentor and has become a good friend. Whether it’s offering advice on developing a new joint academic program, working with college presidents or sending cartoons on herding cats, she is always a resource with sage advice. And then there has been the added advantage of having someone with a shared enthusiasm for watching Red Sox games, especially in October when we are at the Association of Consortium Leadership conference, no matter where we are in the country.”

—Claire Ramsbottom, Executive Director, Colleges of the Fenway

“Lorna’s indefatigable good spirits, her unconditional faith in the ‘power of Five,’ her seeming ability to be present on two or three campuses at once as well as her savvy and tact have made her one terrific Five College coordinator! Thank you, Lorna!”

—John Connelly, Dean, Smith College, 1992–2001; Acting President, 2001–02

“My wife, Joyce, and I, having known Lorna for longer than...
Kennedy: Have there been other times over the past twenty plus years when the campuses of the Five Colleges have faced difficult financial times? And if so, did people come together, as we’re hoping will happen now, and respond?

Peterson: I would say that when that 1980 Long-range Planning Committee started meeting, there was a pressure. It was not only an economic pressure but there was also the pressure of the faculty being young and tenured and there wasn’t enough money to do hirings.

O’Shea: And 1983 was one of the worst recessions we ever had.

Peterson: There was a sense of how do we pull together more so we can at least address some of the issues. Then in one of the previous downturns, the university was more affected than were the colleges. It was in the nineties that the university was pressured and it looked like they would have to retrench; they were concerned about how many courses they could be offering — the college presidents wrote a letter to their faculty saying that if university students need to take your courses because there are not enough courses being offered, please welcome them. That was an astounding thing. That said, “We’re in it together.”

O’Shea: The presidents have begun to recognize that current times call for a comparable vision.

Peterson: Now because of the exigencies of the economic situation they’re understanding that. They’re saying it’s not only critical to do something, but it’s also an opportunity to do more.

O’Shea: There aren’t many places that do it as well.

Peterson: What’s interesting is I’m hearing from other consortium leaders, because everybody’s stressed out, that there’s a threat from their member institutions to withdraw their membership fee. We don’t have a membership fee. We just share the costs of what we do together. In tough times you have to prove that you’re really not only enriching your offerings, and doing so at a lower cost, but that they’re offerings that are more core. If you look at what each institution might have to do in order to satisfy basic needs on its own, it’s a clear cost savings.

O’Shea: It’s huge.

she’s been with Five Colleges, Inc., I can tell you first how we rejoiced when Lorna found her way to Five Colleges Inc. and leapt with elation when she became its executive director. I think of our multcampus valley as a United Nations, with Lorna ensuring the widest energetic participation and collaborations amongst us. Not through smooth talk that skirts surfaces but through feisty directness, love of focused mulling, probing and organized detail. After all, Lorna hails from Brooklyn (as I do)! An acute listener and weighter of response, she deftly and fearlessly distinguishes between times to murmur and times to lift her chin, eyes a-tinkle, and speak her mind. Her commitment to stand up for those in our community who’d too easily find themselves marginalized (whether within our academic universe or beyond) has been unwavering. My decades of experience of Lorna’s impact on our Five College Multi-Cultural Theatre Committee is but one source of how greatly I esteem her. And I am hardly alone. Speak Lorna’s name to her colleagues, her neighbors, the families of her children’s friends and others too numerous to mention, and you will see faces instantly light up with that terrific combo of respect, gratitude and vigorous (everything associated with Lorna is vigorous!) affection.”

— Len Berkman, Anne Hesseltine Hoyt Professor of Theatre, Smith College

“Lorna Peterson has for many years been one of the essential driving forces behind the consortia movement in higher education in the United States and abroad.”

— Lawrence G. Dotolo, President of the Association for Consortium Leadership (ACL)
Peterson: What we’ve done administratively — we could certainly do a lot more — but what we’ve done administratively has saved money.

### FROM COOPERATION TO CONSOLIDATION

Kennedy: Is the current recession scarier than past ones?

Peterson: Much scarier. The loss of endowment, not only for the colleges and the university’s state funding, but even Five Colleges, Inc. has been affected. We have a very small endowment, but it encourages cooperation. It’s the carrot that makes things happen, very often, and helps alleviate the immediate pressure on the colleges. But we’ve gone down almost 30 percent.

O’Shea: This is the worst.

Peterson: I’m more worried about FY11 than FY10.

Kennedy: Because of the way endowments work? Or because of the economy?

O’Shea: Three things: How colleges do lags a bit behind how the economy does. Another is the way we spend endowments [based on a three-year average of earnings]. And finally, things could be awhile coming back.

Peterson: But it’ll get better. It’ll get worse and then it’ll get better. But it’s going to be worse before it gets better, I think.

O’Shea: But the good times, in some ways looking back, I would say the last five years have been — Lorna, you could dispute this — have been in some ways the hardest on Five Colleges, because good times have made some of the cooperation harder in things we should be doing. The new age of Five Colleges may be coming because there’s going to be such a shake-out in higher ed and we have got some amazing opportunities.

Peterson: Absolutely. The joint faculty appointments are a good example. We need to move forward despite what happens next. I think the deans and presidents might agree we now have to start thinking more of [Five College] majors like film studies, but within the core curriculum.

O’Shea: Every school we have in the individual colleges we should be looking at why we’re the best in the country because of Five Colleges. The Five College Dance Department is one of the best dance departments in the country. Yet we have so many individual departments on our different colleges that aren’t the best in the country. They’re not shabby, but they’re not as good as they are at Grinnell, say. And Grinnell ought not to be able to compete with us.

“When Lorna decided to get something done, it happened. Five College events are notoriously difficult to coordinate and on various occasions I also worked with Lorna to coordinate events involving colleges throughout New England, which were even more complicated. Whenever the scheduling started to look impossible, Lorna would check in and push us to keep going. There was just no saying no when she got on your case to get something done right. And in my experience, she always made it work!”

— Rhonda Cobham-Sander, Professor of English and Black Studies, Amherst College

“Lorna, I have appreciated the diplomacy, vision and dedication you have brought to so many wonderful enterprises in the Valley. For decades you have been a steady supporter of the Five College Dance Department’s many collaborative ventures. We dancers are particularly grateful for your love of all things dancerly! And Murray and I fondly remember a balmy afternoon whale watching together off the coast of California!”

— Peggy Schwartz, Professor of Dance, Director of the Dance Program and the Sankofa Dance Project, University of Massachusetts Amherst; Former Chair, Five College Dance Department

“Lorna is our ‘national treasure’ and a wonderful friend and example for us. I wish her the very best and feel sure that she will continue to help us and to enrich our lives.”

— Rosalie Prince Gates, Cooperating Raleigh Colleges

“I have been truly honored to work with Lorna. Her vision and leadership lead to the creation of the position of Five College Risk
Peterson: Computer science. When the university was growing computer science in the mid- to late eighties, they were ready. They were reaching out to the colleges and the colleges were pulling back. It was a mistake. Computer science at the university is now one of the best in the country.

O’Shea: It is.

Peterson: And it should have been a Five College major.

O’Shea: One thing we still haven’t quite figured out how to do well, because we’re residential colleges, is we’ve got to figure out ways to share those upper-level courses much better.

Peterson: Right, and there are two ways of doing it. If it’s upper level, there are smaller enrollments and you can move the students [to the campus where it’s taught]. The other way is blended courses: we should be having courses at the lower levels or middle levels to which students have to attend only once or twice a week and the rest of the time it’s online. And it’s being done. It’s being done by Elizabeth Mazzocco at the Center for Study of World Languages.

O’Shea: One of the interesting things is there’s so much organic stuff that happens at the faculty level that you don’t even know about it.

Peterson: I think what we need to be having is two kinds of Five College majors: one that’s built around the offerings of all five institutions; the other way is to say that each institution can determine the requirements for its own major, but in doing so, they have to count on the resources of all five. So, for example, you say that anyone who majors in Russian studies should know something about the Russian Orthodox Church, and we have one person who teaches it, and she is at Smith. She could teach on an exchange, or we could send the students [to her campus].

O’Shea: I’ve gotten impatient with the word department and interdisciplinary program. I think there are majors that are things students take, and then there are departments that I define as an appointing unit. There’s some relationship [between departments and majors], but not anything that’s one to one. And I think that the expectation ought to be of most majors that the student will take some of her or his courses somewhere else.

Peterson: Departments are a nineteenth-century creation. They don’t make sense. They’ve never made sense in Europe.

**MOVING FORWARD**

Kennedy: What do you both think are the top challenges for Five College collaboration as we’re moving forward?

Peterson: The immediate challenge is the economy. The other challenge is to say, “You can remain autonomous institutions, with your own cultures, and still offer students an extraordinary experience by really offering Five College programs academically.” Not only that, but there are things they can do to save money.

Now because of the economy being the way it is, they’re finally talking about doing more. They did this in the nineties very successfully, the PBOs. That’s how we got risk management, recycling, energy, all of that. And now, the PBOs, the HR directors, the physical plant directors, the IT directors, are all talking about what’s possible to do together that would offer not only equal services for the user, but even better services and also be more cost effective. I’m impressed with the way in which the economic downturn has influenced thinking.

“Lorna, as a mutual friend once observed, has ‘a very large engine.’ The lady who wears her Brooklyn stripes proudly has used that engine to many good ends. She has propelled Five Colleges to a leadership position among consortia in higher education with her boundless energy, dedication and capacity to care about and worry over the often untidy business of making cooperation work. Despite a daily schedule that would give most people a headache, she always found time for people, the many individuals who quietly climbed the stairs at 97 Spring Street to seek her advice, to find solace or support for a good idea. The engine has been powerfully empowering on all counts.”

—Carol Angus, former Five College Director of Publications and Communications

 undergraduates just over 15 years ago and the other shared administrative positions that have so benefited our members. Lorna was tough — you didn’t want to go into a meeting with her without having all your ducks in a row — and in that way she led all of us to a high level of performance that shone as the quality of Five Colleges, Inc. Lorna was also very warm — she would send flowers to thank one for helping on a committee or send notes of thanks or congratulations for work well done, which led to a highly functional organization of people who knew they were valued and appreciated. Some of my favorite memories shall always be of our Christmas parties where laughter and good cheer reigned, with Lorna at the head of the table in a Santa hat officiating over the proceedings with jokes and stories. Lorna has been the spirit of Five Colleges, and I will miss her.”

—Beth Carmichael, Five College Risk Manager
O’Shea: Living on a kind of residential campus, I have a slightly different take. Marketing has entered higher ed. Branding matters. What makes your institution matter is huge. If something’s good for Mount Holyoke, or Smith, or Amherst, they want that for themselves a bit. And because as the colleges have gotten wealthier, the way their administrative sides do things seems to matter. But we should be sharing every bit of our back office things . . . payroll systems, administrative computing systems. Even if you buy the branding thing. The branding thing will still be an obstacle to some types of programming. If somebody wants to go global, the right way to go global is Five Colleges. But if one place wants to be known as a global college, there’s a tension.

Peterson: If anything turned my hair white, it was the fact that our technology systems, our information systems, are so disparate. It’s ridiculous. I’ve been saying that forever. Now we have the IT directors themselves understanding that we need to do more together in order to save money. Talking about possibilities.

I think what’s happening now is that each group of people at the top and middle level are meeting and talking about what is possible. And we have a whole list of things going on and out of it will come surely another half dozen to a dozen new ways of working together. Not everything’s going to work, and there are good reasons and bad reasons why they won’t work. The bad reasons are usually people. The good reasons are that it usually makes sense but you can do it better.

O’Shea: But you know we all need each other so much. If you’re at Mount Holyoke and Smith, you need [the other three campuses] because you’re women’s colleges and you need the social environment. If you’re at Hampshire, you’re just dependent upon the other schools. The university needs, frankly, a lot of the students, the facilities, the endowments of the other schools. And students go to Amherst instead of Williams because of Five Colleges.

Peterson: Years and years ago, we did a survey of why students take the courses they take. The answer is they usually take courses if their faculty, if their advisers, tell them to. So the issue is the faculty advising them.

O’Shea: Unfortunately, what you get sometimes at the colleges and the university, it’s not that this is better, it’s that we want our own students. We’re so close to our students, we don’t want them going somewhere else.

Peterson: The other thing to get—and this is something the deans are going to have a talk about—is that resources for departments are based on enrollments. There’s going to have to be a way in which departments will not feel they are in some way being punished for cooperating because their statistics don’t look as good as they should.

O’Shea: Do you hear that from the university? Or do you hear that from all the places?

Peterson: From all the places. For instance, if you talk about team teaching, they want to know if they’ll be counted. They want to know if they have a major and the requirement means that the student has to go to another institution, will that be counted or will they lose the count? How we count students has to be looked at differently.

“INTERESTING, FRUSTRATING, UNBELIEVABLY EXCITING”

O’Shea: Can I just make one comment about Lorna’s job? We’re very wary, in some ways, about replacing Lorna. It’s almost impossible. On the one hand, it’s probably one of the most interesting jobs in higher ed. When you look forward, it’s the way the whole academy has got to go. On the other hand, it is one of the most frustrating jobs as well. In a sense, while you sort of report to five other people, you’re also coequal with them, and it’s very difficult. You’ve got that sort of Janus-like face to the thing, and it’s all sitting in here.

“‘When I confer with colleagues at other colleges, they continue to be amazed and, to a certain extent, jealous when I talk about Lorna’s support for our endeavors. Whenever I get a grant or project idea, she is happy to talk about it, flesh it out, play devil’s advocate or help me reach even farther, using her knowledge of what is going on at all the institutions to extend the breadth of the project. ‘Whenever I am asked about the success of our center, I always credit Lorna because it is her unwavering support that has empowered me and our program over the years. Without the administrator’s backing, no program can flourish. Since I came to Five Colleges, I have known that my agenda for languages is as important to Lorna as it is to me. ‘At my first meeting with Lorna, I think I felt at home because she shared so many characteristics with the strong administrators I had known and admired at the college that shaped me, Bryn Mawr—the energy, the creativity, the fearlessness, the unbending dedication to excellence, the belief that everything is possible. She is my strongest supporter and advocate. She has been the single most important shaper of my career here at Five Colleges.”

—Elizabeth H.D. Mazzocco, Five College Professor of Italian, and Director, Five College Center for the Study of World Languages
Kennedy: How would you say that Lorna has been able to maintain that balance?

O’Shea: Oh, I don’t know. I think she’s thoroughly insane. (Laughs)

Peterson: I sometimes think so too! (Laughs)

O’Shea: I think on the one hand it’s a really daunting job, and on the other it’s a really, really exciting job.

Peterson: It’s a joyful job.

O’Shea: It’s joyful and unbelievably exciting.

Peterson: There are two things I’ll never forget that Pat Murphy — the Five College coordinator who hired me — said to me. For one thing, you want to be in the position of having to pull your staff back, not push them forward, which I think is a wonderful thing to say. The other thing he said is that everything is possible. If we had to rely on precedence, we’d never do anything.

O’Shea: That’s really true.

Peterson: I say Five College cooperation gives dilettantism a good name. Which you could say about deans, as well. [Laugh]

O’Shea: A dean’s job is easier in some ways.

Kennedy: Lorna, when you look back over your time here, especially as executive director, what have enjoyed the most?

Peterson: It’s just sitting down — and I really mean this — sitting down with a group of faculty whom I’ve pulled together because the deans told me to, or because they themselves wanted to come together, and trying to get them to see how they can move forward, but one step at a time so you don’t start with a department. That’s been the kind of pleasures.

Kennedy: What about the surprises — things that came together in ways you didn’t expect?

Peterson: It would say one of the surprises is to have actually built that [Five College Fiber Optic] network. When we first heard about what the cost would be to build the network, what the difference was between building our own fiber-optic network and having to pay for what we needed, I thought to myself, “They’ll never buy it.” And then you get
one person who comes to a meeting who figures out how to do it. Donal, were you at that meeting at Smith when we were talking about it, and John Dubach came in and figured out how the university could participate? It was just astounding—we had an agreement and then we were able to get a commitment. It is the biggest thing Five Colleges did since the establishment of Hampshire.

O’Shea: It’s really true. And it’s probably the most complex in a way. The network, it’s so obvious, but on the other hand so unlikely when you looked at the different negotiations with the different towns that were required to get it going. And just the money . . .

Peterson: The amount of money and the amount of politics. That was kind of fun actually, going from one town to the other and seeing the difference.

O’Shea: But if you knew what you knew now, you probably wouldn’t have tried it.

Peterson: That’s true. That’s true with everything. The miracle of Five College cooperation is that those presidents thought this makes sense. Let’s do it. And they did it and did it well. The engagement of the presidents and their caring, their willingness to meet once a month given their schedules, have been wonderful.

Kennedy: Five years from now, where do you think Five Colleges ought to be?

Peterson: I think there should be more academic programs that are tied to each other more closely. So there would be majors, minors—I don’t care what you call them, but the academic programs would be more intertwined with each other. I think we need to find a way in which these information systems are either the same or can talk to each other more easily so that it’s not a problem for us to be communicating electronically. Sometimes I look back with nostalgia at paper. And also that there are all kinds of back-office things within administration and finance, and libraries and IT, that could be done together and to continue exploring them. I think we have a lot of cooperation now and various groups willing to explore those. But I think, if anything, we’ll be closer together and more intertwined than we are now. If we’re not, then somebody failed.

O’Shea: I would agree. Five years is too short in some ways. In fifty or one hundred years, I’d like to see us as a Cambridge, or an Oxford, but an American version that’s got into residential, very high-quality programs in certain things but has a really wonderful university down the road. And is one of the best in the world. That’ll take a little time. I would agree with Lorna that more cooperation—in five years I would hope we’d be in a spot where, as I mentioned earlier, every department can at least articulate why it’s way better because of Five Colleges and much better than any comparable institution.

Peterson: I believe what I said before. There’s nothing more exciting than meeting with a group of faculty, and hearing them talk about their own work, and their willingness to share it with others, and to imagine doing things together for the students, not only for themselves.
The Five Colleges have significantly supported scholarship in Africa— and contributed to the growing strength of African universities— thanks to the Five College African Scholars Program (ASP). Since 2003 the program, funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and Smith College and supported by the Five College African Studies Council, has hosted 37 young faculty from African universities during semester-long residencies at the five institutions. Since returning to their institutions in Africa, these “alumni” have published new scholarship and assumed leadership roles in their institutions. And while the grant-funded program ends this year, the relationships it forged among scholars here and in Africa promise continuing benefits for our five institutions as well as universities in Africa.

All this became clear to me this December, when, as
program coordinator, I helped organize the program’s first alumni reunion, which was held in Yaoundé, Cameroon, during the General Assembly of the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA). A delegation of faculty and staff from Five Colleges and 19 ASP alumni from around the continent traveled to Yaoundé to attend the general assembly and then participate in a daylong alumni workshop. Given the goal shared by ASP and CODESRIA — the advancement of African scholarship and its role in global scholarly discourse — this multidisciplinary, trilingual and resolutely pan-African conference was a perfect venue for our reunion.

The CODESRIA General Assembly brings together several hundred scholars in the social sciences and humanities from Africa and its diaspora every three years to present new scholarship, reflect on the past functioning and future agenda of the organization, and elect its executive committee. This year attendees also celebrated CODESRIA’s 35th anniversary. Our delegation from the Pioneer Valley included ASP Director Catharine Newbury and myself, former ASP director John Lemly, ethnomusicology professor Bode Omojola and Five College Academic Director Nate Therien. ASP alumni came from the nearby University of Yaoundé II and universities and research centers in Côte d’Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa and the United States. The Five College ASP meeting in Yaoundé was an opportunity for us to renew ties with and among alumni while connecting all of us to an even larger community of scholars on the continent.

Established in Senegal in 1973, CODESRIA describes itself as “born of the will of African social scientists, and those engaged in social research in Africa, to develop scientific capacities and tools that would further the cohesion, well-being and development of African societies.” Over its 35-year history — coinciding with the development of several independent African states — CODESRIA built an impressive research, training and publications program that nurtured a post-independence generation of African scholars. Today it continues to support young scholars through dissertation grants, methodology workshops and other scientific working groups. Throughout its history, CODESRIA has committed to making it possible for African scholars to pursue their own research agendas, rather than those defined by donors from outside the continent.

On a more modest scale, the Five College African Scholars Program also sought to bring African voices to the center of global discourse by providing scholars time away from teaching — and offering them access to scholarly resources at the Five Colleges — so they could bring their work to publication. At the same time, in seminars, talks and classroom presentations, fellows expanded the insight and knowledge of colleagues and students at the Five Colleges, including faculty whose research and teaching does not focus on Africa but who were developing Africa-related courses under a grant from the U.S. Department of Education.

The participation of ASP alumni and Five College faculty at the CODESRIA General Assembly was an opportunity to take this work much further, because the assembly itself was an impressive endeavor in the communal construction of knowledge. More than 140 papers were presented in English, French and Portuguese in all fields of the humanities and social sciences, some offering comparativist analyses linking political and social developments in Africa to the experience of Latin America, Europe, Asia, the Middle East and North America. As John Lemly put it, “CODESRIA is a big deal, in ways that I, and other US-based colleagues, don’t fully appreciate. It’s Africa-based and committed to a full multilingual/multi-country program on Africa, including northern Africa. I
hope we can sustain these connections.” ASP alumni and Five College faculty actively participated in the general assembly, as presenters or discussants, on a third of the panels spanning the social sciences and humanities.

The conference’s theme was “Governing the African Public Sphere.” The health of the public sphere—a space where people gather to discuss and address social issues and influence policy—is seen by conference organizers as crucial to developing and sustaining political community, democratization and economic development that is truly in the interest of African societies. Presenters offered a range of views on the nature and development of the public sphere, sometimes departing significantly from the perspectives of scholars in Europe and America, where the concept has been widely discussed. This, of course, is one reason the theme was chosen; the goal of CODESRIA is to bring African voices to the center of global discourses, and to transform those discourses.

As CODESRIA’s newly appointed executive secretary, Ebrima Sall, explains, the organization encourages scholars to transcend geographical and disciplinary borders to get a broader view of the issues they are studying and to help shape discussion in a range of fields. As part of this approach it has cosponsored south–south exchanges with the Latin American Council of Social Sciences and the Asian Political & International Studies Association. In Yaoundé, the main conference hall provided a space for this transnational forum, embodying the public sphere at its best. “People stated disagreements energetically and sometimes in terms I believe would make many American academics uncomfortable,” said Five Colleges’ Nate Therien. “But this all happened in good humor, leading to better and more democratic exchanges than I’ve often seen in the U.S.”

The range of presentations was a testament to CODESRIA’s approach. Topics included a critique of donor-driven theater in Tanzania, an examination of rumors and vampire stories as postcolonial public space in Cameroon, an inquiry into whether the public sphere concept as developed in Europe applies to mosques in Africa, which can be seen as both public and private, and an argument that the public sphere in Africa predates that of Europe, having been constructed locally by traditional chieftoms.

The communal construction of knowledge, of course, did not end with the conclusion of the formal conference, certainly not for our alumni. After the adjournment of the general assembly, we hosted a daylong workshop with the ASP fellows. Conversation quickly turned to concrete projects alumni wanted to undertake together, from sharing pedagogical approaches and syllabi to developing book proposals. A modern literature scholar encouraged fellow ASP alumni to look at what they had to share with each other, from academic resources to places to stay on sabbatical. Another scholar noted that the ASP alumni network should encourage exchanges between French- and English-speaking scholars on the continent, thus helping bridge the language divide.

Despite the end of ASP’s fellowship program, collaborations among its alumni will continue. Developing opportunities for scholarly collaboration and access to current literature was one of the areas in which ASP alumni hoped to build on their experience at the Five Colleges. To that end, they are developing a Five College African Scholars alumni association. They also plan to maintain their ties with members of the Five College African Studies Council and the
Five College editors of the African Studies Review, edited by Five College faculty, as resources for peer review of future alumni publication projects. In addition, alumni looked to CODESRIA's multinational working group projects as another venue for collective endeavors. And they shared ideas about other funding sources that might facilitate bilingual French and English scholarly research.

During my 10 days in Cameroon I was struck by how our five western Massachusetts institutions have developed a significant presence in Africa. Even with the end of the African Scholars Program, much can be done by the consortium to maintain and improve its impact. That's why we're back in western Massachusetts, teaching African studies courses, planning future encounters between our students and visiting African scholars and setting up online collaborative work spaces for the groups that grew out of our ASP reunion in Yaoundé.

Alexandra de Montrichard is program coordinator for the Five College African Scholars and African Studies Programs. She can be reached at ademontrichard@fivecolleges.edu. For more information on African studies, visit fivecolleges.edu/sites/african.
Five Colleges’ next executive director is a senior administrator and consortium leader who has spent three decades as a faculty member. Dr. Neal Abraham, executive vice president, vice president for academic affairs, dean of faculty and professor of physics and astronomy at DePauw University in Greencastle, Indiana, was chosen by the Five College Board of Directors after a national search.

“I am thrilled to be joining this community to work for, and with, five outstanding institutions,” said Abraham, who, among his extensive consortia work, served on the board of the Great Lakes Colleges Association. “The schools of the Five College consortium have long been models for those of us at other colleges and universities, and for me in particular, as we explore how to achieve closer and mutually supportive collaborations.” He is no stranger to member campuses; earlier in his physics career Abraham lectured at Amherst College and chaired departmental review committees at both Smith and Mount Holyoke colleges.

The selection of Abraham caps a yearlong national search process that began last April, when Lorna Peterson, Five Colleges’ leader since 1990, announced her retirement. The search committee, chaired by Amherst College President Tony Marx, comprised representatives from each campus and many consortium constituencies. Marx said he is delighted with the outcome. “Neal Abraham brings a wealth of experience as an educator and administrator to build on the consortium’s many strengths and help our institutions collaborate even more productively in coming years,” he said.

A graduate of Dickinson College, Abraham earned his PhD in physics from Bryn Mawr College, where he taught for 18 years as the Rachel C. Hale Professor in Science and Mathematics and professor of physics. As a physicist, Abraham is an international leader in the field of chaos and nonlinear dynamics, particularly in lasers and nonlinear optical systems. With support from such funding sources as Research Corporation, the National Science Foundation and the Scientific Affairs Programme of NATO, he has published more than 200 scientific articles, many co-authored with undergraduate research collaborators. Maintaining his links to physics in his new role, Abraham will hold an appointment as Five College Professor of Physics while he is executive director.

A proponent of internationalizing campuses, Abraham has held visiting faculty or research scholar appointments in universities in Italy, Spain, France, Belgium, Russia, China and Germany. Back home, he has been honored by several professional societies, including the Optical Society of America, the American Physical Society and the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

As a senior administrator at DePauw—ranked in the top 50 liberal arts colleges in the country by U.S. News and World Report—Abraham continues to publish and speak widely on science education, faculty development programs and access for women in higher education. He hired more than half of the university’s 228 faculty members, designed a comprehensive faculty development and recognition program, oversaw expansion of DePauw’s interdisciplinary programs, recruited a diverse faculty, nurtured collaborations with nearby Wabash College and shepherded $100 million in the renovation and construction of academic buildings.

He has also been a leader in consortial endeavors, since working early in his tenure at Bryn Mawr with colleagues at Haverford and Swarthmore colleges. He has served in leadership roles in the Great Lakes Colleges Association, the Midwest Information Technology Consortium, the Consortium for Faculty Diversity (comprising 46 liberal
arts colleges) and three liberal arts college consortia funded for faculty career enhancement projects. He also served in founding leadership roles for such national organizations as Project Kaleidoscope, the National Conferences on Undergraduate Research, the Council on Undergraduate Research and the National Research Council’s Committee on Undergraduate Science Education.

Long devoted to improving the local community, particularly public education, Abraham was honored for his civic work in Greencastle as the NAACP chapter’s Citizen of the Year in 2008.

These collaborative experiences have informed his vision of how consortia could shape higher education in the years to come. “Particularly in such challenging economic times as those we now face, which make it more difficult for each individual institution to offer the breadth and depth of programs to which each aspires, thoughtful collaboration offers efficiencies in operations and opportunities in academic, cultural and social programs,” he said. “There can be no greater confidence in facing these challenges than that which comes from cooperating with outstanding colleagues and partner institutions.”

Carol Christ, president of Smith College and of the Five College Board of Directors, agrees, and believes Abraham is the right pick to head that effort. “We are pleased that a leader of Neal Abraham’s vision and considerable experience will be leading our consortium at a time when collaboration holds unprecedented potential for the strategic development of higher education,” she said.

Abraham, who begins in his new role in August, will be moving to the Pioneer Valley with his wife, Donna Wiley, who is a senior executive vice president and managing director of Grenzebach Glier and Associates, and their four cats.

Recruiting faculty and promoting the region have just gotten easier, thanks to two major grants totaling just under $2 million.

In December, Five Colleges was awarded $1.75 million from the Mellon Foundation to support its Post-Doctoral Fellowship Program and its Faculty-Student Summer Research Program. Intended to attract newly minted PhDs in the humanities and social sciences—areas in which post-doctoral opportunities have been limited in academia—the fellowship program now has the funding to hire 10 fellows to teach at the four colleges for three-year terms. The grant will, among other things, allow the colleges to maintain instructional levels in fields at a time when colleges across the country are cutting back.

The Faculty-Student Summer Research Program will pair new faculty with more-senior colleagues to lead research by advanced undergraduate students. The experience is intended to expose new faculty, who may be coming from a large university background, to the student-centered liberal arts style of teaching. The new faculty will in turn bring expertise gained from cutting-edge research in their fields.

The award comes from the Mellon Foundation’s Liberal Arts Colleges Program.

“This grant could not come at a better time,” said Five College Executive Director Lorna Peterson, “given the economy and how few searches are going to go forward in the next five years. It will give the postdoctoral fellows the opportunity to pursue research and get exposure to teaching so that they are prepared for tenure-track positions once they open up.”

Another Five College program that has seen an important grant renewed is Museums10, a collaboration of seven campus museums and three independent affiliated museums. The Massachusetts Cultural Council awarded the group $60,000 from the John and Abigail Adams Program to promote cultural tourism in the region and lay the foundation for its third joint exhibition, “Table for 10: The Art, History and Science of Food.” In added support of that effort, the Greater Springfield Convention and Visitors Bureau gave Museums10 $10,000 in Massachusetts Office of Tourism and Travel funds.

With the prospect of most families having less money to spend on traveling and vacations for the foreseeable future, Museums10 is using the funding to promote itself to local visitors with “staycation” cultural opportunities. Museums10’s efforts promoting the region and partnering with area businesses have been recognized as having an important impact on the Pioneer Valley’s cultural economy.

— Elisabeth Sweeney AC ’11
Tabitha Mulyampiti, an associate of the Women’s Studies Research Center.

Tabitha Mulyampiti, a Ugandan mother of four, knows well how HIV has ravaged her country, and she has seen millions of dollars spent to slow the rate of infection, with discouraging results. Mulyampiti believes she knows what the root of the problem is, and, as an associate at the Five College Women’s Studies Research Center, she’s working to do something about it.

Mulyampiti is one of 17 associates currently at the center, located in two neighboring houses on the Mount Holyoke College campus. Scholars, activists and artists have been coming to these houses since 1991, looking for a place to think, investigate their ideas and write.

“It’s very attractive to our associates, the idea of being somewhere where research on women is valued,” says Laura Lovett, a faculty member at UMass and Mount Holyoke, and director of the center since last fall. And it is clear that research on women is valued, not just at the center, but in the region, she says. “There are more than 350 people in the Five College region with research and teaching interests in women and gender studies. It’s the largest concentration in the country.”

Mulyampiti, a professor of gender studies at Makerere University, arrived in South Hadley in February on her first trip to America. Working from her office at the center with the resources of the Five Colleges available to her, she is investigating the cultural roots of the HIV epidemic in Africa, particularly among the Baganda people of Uganda. She notes that women have little power in Ugandan society, be it economic, political or sexual. At the same time, sexual practices have become extremely risky.

“Condom use is considered by religious leaders as fueling immoral behavior,” Mulyampiti says. “Others view a woman asking for a man to use a condom as a sign of mistrust, and yet having multiple partners is condoned by men. No methods so far are addressing this effectively.”

Baganda culture hasn’t always been this lascivious, she says. “Women were the custodians of sexual behavior in precolonial times. They offered sexual instruction to young people. It was this network of women that controlled the sexual aggression of men.”

Mulyampiti’s work is exploring ways to learn from that tradition and restore more of a balance of power—all power—between the genders in Uganda. Increase power among women, she maintains, and you will see the HIV rate shrink.

It is precisely this blend of the intellectual with the political and cultural that the Women’s Studies Research Center exists to promote, according to Lovett. “We operate on an understanding that the academy and activism are connected.”

The center also works to connect associates to the Five College community, pairing each associate with a campus faculty member who is doing similar research, having associates give lectures in graduate and undergraduate courses, and organizing presentations by each associate at the center.

Offering a quiet place to work with connections to a vibrant intellectual community has drawn 280 associates to the center over the past 18 years. They come from across the world, the country, and the campuses—each year there are associates from the Five Colleges. Associates
arrive at every stage of an academic career—newly minted PhDs just finishing an adjunct appointment, experienced professors on sabbatical and emeriti continuing their work after retirement.

Applications are up in recent years, despite the fact that the grant funding stipends for international associates has ended and despite competition with similar programs at Stanford and Harvard, according to Elizabeth Lehman, the center’s associate director. This may be in part because word has gotten out about the supportive environment of the place.

“The center is like a home for me,” says Mulyampiti, echoing the sentiments of other associates. “Flowers are left in my office, my colleagues here invite me out and I have more winter coats than I know what to do with!”

Relationships don’t end with the one- and two-semester terms that associates serve, according to Lehman. “Connections continue after they leave,” she said. “In some cases they are personal, in some cases they are intellectual, in some cases they are both.”

The work associates do at the center also continues after they leave, contributing to dozens of books, chapters and articles as they advance women’s studies around the world.

And the work of the Women’s Studies Research Center continues as well, says Lehman. “I get to greet fifteen to eighteen scholars and artists and activists from all over the world and say to them, ‘Here is a room of your own to do a project of your own design. Here are the incredible resources of the Five College area.’ I revel in it.”

Laura Lovett, director of the center.

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**2008–2009 WOMEN’S STUDIES RESEARCH CENTER ASSOCIATES**

Jessica Delgado, University of California Berkeley (History), “Sacred Practice, Intimate Power: Laywomen and the Church in Colonial Mexico”

Darcy Donahue, Miami University (Spanish and Portuguese), “Adventures in Iberia: American Women Travelers in Spain, 1875–1900”

Lillian Dunning, University of California San Diego (English), “From Liminal to Limelitig: Women Writers of Color and the Contemporary British Novel”

Babette Faehmel, University of Massachusetts Amherst (History), “Beyond the Bell Jar: College Women, Sexuality and Identity, 1940–1965”

Fatemeh Haghighatjoo, University of Connecticut (Women’s Studies), “State Feminism in Iran”

Yafei Hou, Beijing Administrative College (Sociology), “The Desire and Behavior of Childbearing Urban Women in Beijing”

Milena Marchesi, University of Massachusetts Amherst (Anthropology), “Contested Subjects: The Politics of Integration, Reproduction and the Family in Contemporary Italy”

Tabitha Mulyampiti, Makerere University (Women and Gender Studies), “Towards the Effective Participation of Women in a Multi-Party Democracy”

Mojubaolu Okome, Brooklyn College (Political Science/Women’s Studies), “Gender, Power and Religion: Women’s Leadership in the Adaura Church in West Africa and the United States”

Beena Rani, Maharajas College (Philosophy), “Women’s Life after Divorce: A Comparative Study of Massachusetts and Indian Laws”


Nina Scott, University of Massachusetts Amherst (Spanish), “The Portraiture of Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz (1648/51–1695)”

Carolyn Shread, Mount Holyoke College (French), “Exploring Catherine Malabou’s Concept of Plasticity in Translation Studies”


Tonia St. Germain, Eastern Oregon University (Gender Studies), “Rape as a War Crime: Judges, Prosecutors and Activists Who Made Law”

Gulay Toksoz, Ankara University (Political Science), “Female Labor in a Global Context”

Nela Trifkovic, Victorian College of the Arts (Composition and Performance Studies), “Nine Lives of a Cat”
When the curtain went up on the second act, we wanted it to be as much of a surprise as possible," says Professor Vanessa James, the director of sets and costumes for the Five College Opera Project. And it was, as the opera had switched from the lavish 17th-century classic *Dido and Aeneas* (starring Uriah Rodriguez, of UMass, and Alicia Cho, of Smith) to the cabaret-style *Seven Deadly Sins* (with Rachel Spector, of UMass, Julia Moorman, of Amherst, and Marissa Sicley, of Mount Holyoke, playing the Anna sisters).

By all accounts the production was a huge success, selling out all five performances. “The chaos was a sight to behold, but the good humor and camaraderie between people of these seemingly different areas made the most hectic and stressful moments easy and even fun,” said Brie Bingham, a Mount Holyoke student and the stage manager (see sidebar).

“The students were amazing,” said director Roger Babb of the cast and crew of nearly100 students from all five campuses.

Even though Brie Bingham participated in drama in high school and had been in shows since elementary school, she says, “nothing prepared me for the work at Mount Holyoke.” Now a junior, Bingham became involved in the behind-the-scenes action of productions her first semester at Mount Holyoke College, most recently as stage manager for the Five College Opera Project’s two operas—*Dido and Aeneas* and *The Seven Deadly Sins*.

As stage manager, “I see more parts of a production than anyone else involved,” she says, “and that kind of complete awareness of a whole event, all the labors of so many people coming together, is an excitement I never get over.” Responsible for coordinating on-stage with backstage and human elements with technical elements, the stage manager’s job is to keep the whole production running smoothly. A daunting job with just one show a night, the Opera Project presented her with two completely different casts, sets and production needs.

Although the two casts from the sold-out shows never rehearsed as a single group and came from five campuses, Bingham reports that “they supported one another completely: attending the shows, cheering one another backstage, leaving notes,” she said. “At the end we agreed that a phenomenal final project had arisen with the combined effort of everyone.”
From Morocco to Trinidad and Tobago, mathematics to travel literature, the Five College Fellowship Program this year brings together young doctoral students from a diverse array of backgrounds and academic areas. Each fellow will complete his or her dissertation while in residency in a campus academic department, receiving a stipend, office and benefits. The program’s goal is to support scholars from under-represented groups and scholars with unique interests and histories whose engagement in the academy will enrich scholarship and teaching.

Nadia Guessous
at Amherst College
As someone who earned her bachelor’s degree at UMass and then worked at Hampshire for four years, Nadia Guessous’ fondness for the Five College community was part of her motivation in seeking a Five College Fellowship. Of Moroccan heritage, the Columbia University student has titled her dissertation “Aversion of Modernity: The ‘Problem’ of Tradition and Religion in Leftist Feminist Thought in Contemporary Morocco.”

Jeanette Lee
at Hampshire College
Jeanette Lee says that as a black woman from Trinidad and Tobago living in the United States, she has a unique perspective to bring to the examination of what she calls “the racial fragmentation that black subjects experience in cultural modernity,” and then “imagine different means [for them] to recuperate from their atomization.” The title of Lee’s dissertation is “Modernity’s Black Others: The Tragedy of the Late Twentieth Century.” She is a graduate student at Brown University.

Terrence Blackman
at Mount Holyoke College
Terrance Blackman comes to the fellowship program from his work as a professor at Medgar Evers College in Brooklyn. His dissertation is titled “On the Arithmetic and Geometry of Arithmetic Fuchsian Groups.”

Maria C. Ramos
at Smith College
Maria Ramos’ background as the daughter of a Puerto Rican and a Spanish immigrant has pushed her to become “particularly interested in placing the US and its culture in the context of larger global movements,” she says, concentrating on Spanish and Latin American literature. A doctoral candidate at the University of Maryland, Ramos has titled her dissertation “Spain in Twentieth-Century African American Travel Literature.”

The words cardboard and chair are not ones you would expect to see next to each other, particularly in an architectural design class. But designing a cardboard chair for human use was precisely the mission of contestants in the Five College Architecture Student Organization’s Cardboard Chair Competition. Twelve students working in groups of three were given 41 hours to design something as creative and bizarre as they could, provided it was functional. From a chaise lounge to a rocking chair with a footrest, the designs utilized structural and design ingenuity to create pieces that are most assuredly not your parents’ cardboard chairs. “The students put in an amazing effort,” said Thom Long, Hampshire-based Five College assistant professor of architecture and adviser to the students. “All their final chairs still function even after much sitting.”
Five colleges names three new 40th Anniversary Professors

Created to give veteran faculty teaching opportunities on campuses other than their own, the 40th Anniversary Professors Program began in 2005 as part of Five Colleges’ celebration of the four decades since its 1965 founding. For each of the three years of their appointment, faculty teach a class on another Five College campus and present one lecture on their research. Named this year are Joseph Ellis, the Ford Foundation Professor of History at Mount Holyoke; Indira Peterson, the David B. Truman Professor of Asian Studies at Mount Holyoke; and Ileana Streinu, professor of computer science and mathematics at Smith.

Indira Peterson: revisiting her Pioneer Valley roots

“When Five Colleges told me that they would like to appoint me to a 40th Anniversary professorship, I felt that taking up this offer would be a wonderful way to revisit the ‘Five College experience’ more than twenty-five years after my first coming to the Valley,” says Indira Peterson. Her entrée to the area was as a Five College appointee, hired to introduce the Sanskrit language and Indian literature to the campuses. That opportunity evolved into her current position, teaching Asian studies at Mount Holyoke.

Peterson’s research focuses on “classical Sanskrit and Indian texts and genres,” she says, “from the perspective not only of Indic philology and literary analysis, but also of dialogues among India’s languages and subcultures, anthropological field studies, oral tradition, gender, performance, cultural and social history and comparative literature.” Her first book was a collection, translation and contextualization of oral Tamil poems. Poems to Siva: The Hymns of the Tamil Saints (Princeton 1989) remains the authoritative translation and work in the field.

Ileana Streinu: creating a multicampus research group

Now that she is teaching graduate classes at UMass, Ileana Streinu says, “I have a multi-institution research group of graduate and undergraduate students and collaborators.” This collaboration with Five College students began several years ago, but it was formalized when she was named a 40th Anniversary Professor.

“By teaching graduate courses, I am gaining interaction with students at a more advanced level,” she says, “and that inspires new approaches to teaching that I can take back to my home institution.”

Streinu’s research has most recently focused on modeling “in a mechanistic fashion the behavior of large molecules such as proteins, and to study their flexibility and motion,” she says. “My first discovery, around 2000, is on what became known as the ‘Carpenter’s Ruler Problem’: an efficient way of unfolding planar robot arms along well-defined, non-colliding trajectories. My latest discovery, this time in three dimensions, sheds light on a long-standing open problem in robotics: What is the largest extent that a spatial robot arm can reach? These are fascinating problems, with many practical applications and whose solutions involved clever mathematics.”

Joseph Ellis: renowned professor of American history

A professor at Mount Holyoke since 1972, Joe Ellis is considered one of the foremost scholars of American history. The author of seven books, Ellis received the National Book Award for American Sphinx and the Pulitzer Prize for Founding Brothers: The Revolutionary Generation. Ellis’s commentaries have been featured on a number of television networks and he has appeared in several documentaries on early America, including “John and Abigail” for PBS’s The American Experience and a History Channel documentary on George Washington. In addition to public lectures throughout the United States, Ellis conducts seminars on “The Founders and Original Intent.”

Ellis begins his term as a 40th Anniversary Professor this fall, teaching a writing-intensive seminar at Hampshire entitled The Letters and Literature of the American Revolution.

“It will afford students the opportunity to improve their writing skills while learning about the American Revolution through primary documents (i.e., the letters of Abigail and John Adams, the Federalist Papers and memoirs of war veterans),” says Ellis.

— Elisabeth Sweeney AC ’11
A skilled horticulturalist and landscaper is obvious. Evidence of the Amherst College landscape technician’s efforts is apparent to anyone crossing the campus — or the Five College grounds — where his carefully tended flower beds, shrubbery and expanses of grass help convert a brisk hike to class into a pleasant stroll.

What isn’t as obvious is the leading role Bator has played in restoring and protecting some of the wilder places of Hampshire County. The president of the Easthampton-based Pascommuck Conservation Trust since 1998, Bator has campaigned, cleared brush, written songs and raised hundreds of thousands of dollars to protect and improve land.

Much of that work was to save a deserted piece of property surrounding Nashawannuck Pond in Easthampton. Bator — a bass player and photographer — wrote a song about the pond and created a slideshow to accompany it. He took his show on the road to a variety of organizations to gain support for the cleanup. Ultimately, the Pascommuck Conservation Trust converted it into a managed conservation area that the trust’s board of directors dubbed John Bator Park. While he’s not clear on how the name was determined, he has a theory: “I think they named it after me just so I’d be obliged to keep it up.”

With 38 years under his belt at Amherst, Bator, 67, has no plans to retire from either the college or the land trust. He suspects his current project — activism surrounding plans to expand the Northampton landfill — should take up his idle moments.

— Elizabeth Sweeney, AC ’11

Neal Salisbury: a leader in Native American studies

As the only faculty member at Smith interested in pursuing scholarship regarding Native Americans for most of my time there, I would have felt terribly isolated without colleagues at the other campuses,” says Neal Salisbury. He worked to prevent that isolation some 20 years ago when he participated in the creation of the Five College Native American Indian Studies Program.

A specialist in colonial and Revolutionary War–era North American and Native American history, his research and writing interests center on indigenous Americans of the New England region, particularly between 1500 and 1800. He brings that expertise to a Native American Indian Studies Program that involves disciplines ranging from women and gender studies, to anthropology, to African American studies.

Salisbury’s consortial involvement extends to the Five College Public School Partnership, where for more than 10 years he participated in the Native American Series, teaching issues surrounding the Native American experience in New England to K–12 teachers from the Pioneer Valley.


In March a symposium honoring Salisbury was held at Smith College. Native American History: Current and Future Directions brought together Native American scholars from around the country in recognition of Salisbury’s contributions to the field.

Neal Salisbury: A Leader in Native American Studies

Five College Profile: John Bator

Nashawannuck Pond, by John Bator.
A WAY TO BETTER MYSELF WHILE EXPLORING THE WORLD
By Sol Black, UMass ’11

When I turned 13, my mother and I went backpacking in Israel and Jordan for three weeks. The first night in Jordan we slept on the roof of a hostel for four dollars, in the heart of Amman. It was at this moment that I fell in love with traveling.

After high school I backpacked across Europe for a month and a half. This included visiting the Netherlands, Germany, the Czech Republic, Austria, Italy, Slovenia and Hungary. At the age of 18 I learned more about Europe than many of my friends’ parents had in a lifetime.

I joined the Marines and went to boot camp before 9/11 ever happened. I wanted to travel the world, play with explosives and do some serious growing up. For me, joining the Marines was originally a way to better myself while exploring the world, and in the long run it did just that and more by giving me an unequivocal perspective on how the rest of the world lives and how lucky we are here in the U.S. to enjoy all the luxuries that we are blessed with. During my time in the Marines I did two tours in Iraq and participated in humanitarian operations in Liberia. Besides that I visited Spain, Malta, Greece, the United Arab Emirates, Albania and Djibouti.

After getting out of the Marine Corps in 2005, I knew that I wanted to go into the field of international relations once I had graduated. There are several parts of the world that have always intrigued me, South Asia being the most fascinating. It’s a part of the world that people in America know very little about, or, more accurately, close to nothing about.

I hope to apply the language training and regional knowledge I have acquired to work with either the U.S. government or an NGO such as Human Rights Watch. If nothing materializes, I plan on attending graduate school and pursuing a master’s degree in advanced international relations at either Georgetown or George Washington University.

I have truly loved the Five College language program. Beyond just learning Pashto from a Fulbright scholar, I have become good friends with my teacher. He has taught me so much about the language and culture of the Pashtuns, so in turn I have taught him about American culture and all the little ins and outs that are not taught in formal classes. He had his first American Thanksgiving at my family’s home in Marblehead this year, and I hope someday to share a meal with his family in Pakistan.