GRADUATE STUDENT GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS BEGIN

USM’s inaugural graduate student government elections will be held from September 24 through October 1, 2010. Fifteen students from twelve graduate programs have agreed to run for office. The elected senators will have a busy first year. Their activities will include selecting officers, assigning members to other university governing bodies and committees, “fine-tuning” the constitution and bylaws, planning events to support the group’s mission, and forming sub-committees.

Any matriculated USM graduate student enrolled in the 2010 fall semester will be eligible to vote for candidates in their program. An e-mail will be sent to all qualified students on Friday, September 24th, and instructions will be provided for the voting process. The Graduate Student Government website will host information and platform statements for all candidates and offer further instructions for the online voting process.

The establishment of a graduate student government will give a voice to USM’s 2,000 graduate students. Its constitution states that “the role of the GSG shall be to represent graduate student interests to the USM administration, faculty, and community.” The GSG will enhance the quality of graduate student life by providing opportunities for professional development, community-building, and other means of strengthening the student experience in USM’s advanced degree programs.

FALL WORKSHOPS PLANNED

The first in a series of workshops for USM’s graduate students will be held on Wednesday, September 29th from 5:30 to 7:30 in room 109 of the Abromson Center. The workshop entitled, “Navigating Graduate School - Balancing Work, Life and the Classroom,” will be led by Joe Austin of USM’s Student Success Office. Mr. Austin will facilitate a discussion about coping with the competing demands in a graduate student’s life. A panel of alumni and second-year USM graduate students will share their experiences and assist Mr. Austin in answering audience questions. Light refreshments will be offered.

Two other workshops are scheduled for the 2010 fall term. “Enhancing Library Research Skills” will be offered on October 27th and “Writing Strategies for Graduate Students” is planned for November 17th. Details will be announced in the next newsletter and through e-mail notification. All events will be held at USM’s Abromson Community Education Center on the Portland campus.
January 1st 2010 - Preparing

Reality starts to set in as the bags are being loaded with supplies - 2,500 pounds in all including vitamins, cardiac medication, bandages, and toothpaste. I am a part of a group of thirty USM nursing and athletic training students and am about to travel to the Dominican Republic to help provide health care to fifteen rural villages.

January 12th 2010 - Serving

Patients line up at the door waiting to be seen at our clinic; this is the only health care they may have access to during the year. We take blood pressures, clean wounds, educate about diabetes, and listen to fetal heart sounds. Hugs are exchanged and thanks are given. The patients are grateful for what they receive and we are mournful that more can’t be done. We visit the homes of those who can’t make it to the clinics because of their age or illness. We pull up a chair next to their beds and sit with extended families close by eager to hear what is going to be said. With each clinic day and with each patient we see, our nursing skills are bolstered. What was difficult and nerve-racking on day one has become routine. We are still students but we feel like real nurses.

September 9th 2010 - Reflecting

I have returned from two trips to the Dominican Republic now and, as the graduate assistant for the partnership, I am involved in preparing a room full of new students to load up their own supplies and return to the same villages and patients I have come to know well. It is exciting to realize that these students will soon go through the same life and career-changing experiences that I have, help many of the same patients, and return to USM with strengthened skills and convictions.

Daniel Strauss is a second-year graduate student in USM’s Family Nurse Practitioner program.

Dominican Republic Nursing Partnership

One of USM’s nursing community partnerships supports two trips each year with the dual purpose of educating USM nursing students and providing quality and consistent health care to over 2,000 individuals within the Dominican Republic’s most underserved populations. The program is now allied with the nonprofit Partners for Rural Heath in the Dominican Republic (www.prhdr.org), which coordinates volunteers from Maine and the Dominican Republic, who serve as interpreters, nurses, doctors, nurse practitioners, dentists, and support staff. More information about this summer travel program can be found at: www.usm.maine.edu/summer/travel
On May 22, three weeks prior to the 2010 World Cup, USM graduate and undergraduate students along with two Leadership Studies professors, embarked on a two-week trip to South Africa. The group was excited to see the country that they had been reading and writing about while enrolled in the Leadership Study Abroad course during the 2010 spring term. The group was soon far away from Maine—geographically and culturally.

South Africa is a beautiful country with much to offer its visitors. Traveling to the top of Table Mountain in a cable car was amazing. The group was especially excited when we visited the “bottom of the world” – we were standing at the tip of the African continent in two different oceans! The group saw plenty of beautiful landscapes such as God’s Window, Caves at Sterkfontein, and Harebeesboort Dam. Kruger Park offered sightings of numerous animals: elephants, giraffes, zebra, lesboks, impalas, baboons, lions, rhinoceros and many more.

One memorable experience was a tour of the “shanty towns”. Our group was welcomed by members of the town who were gracious and kind. The group met children and adults living in unimaginable conditions. The entrepreneurial spirit was evident throughout the town. There were fruit stands, souvenir stands and others—each entrepreneur with hope in their eyes. Our group also engaged in conversations with South African professors and businesspersons and learned more about the South African university system, government, and culture.

Another tour was to Robben Island, Mandela’s “home” for many years. The group was humbled as they were guided through this facility by a former prisoner of Robben Island. The group had read much about Mandela and his imprisonment and the tour of the small cell brought these readings to life. Our visit took place sixteen years after Nelson Mandela’s inauguration speech on May 10, 1994. Mandela’s vision was that, “all South Africans, both black and white, will be able to walk tall without any fear in their hearts, assured of their inalienable right to human dignity,” is a work in progress. We spoke with white South Africans who have experienced job losses to black South Africans. We met with black South Africans still struggling to obtain jobs historically given to white South Africans. Sixteen years later, the country has much work left to do.

The Leadership Studies Abroad trip to South Africa was only a two-week experience but will be remembered for a lifetime.

Diane Leavitt completed her masters degree in Leadership Studies in August of 2010. She is a full-time teacher at Windham High School and an adjunct professor at USM/LAC and St. Joseph’s College.
USM’S MFA IN CREATIVE WRITING RATED IN TOP TEN LOW-RESIDENCY PROGRAMS

The University of Southern Maine's Stonecoast M.F.A. Program in Creative Writing, directed by poet Annie Finch, was ranked within the top ten low-residency programs in the United States and elsewhere by Poets & Writers magazine in their September/October 2010 issue.

Stonecoast offers a two-year program with emphases in creative nonfiction, fiction, poetry, or popular fiction, as well as possibilities for elective work. Students complete thirty credits over twenty-four months and attend two ten-day residency sessions each year. During the July and January sessions, students study at the picturesque Stone House on Casco Bay in Freeport.

2010 FALL SEMESTER
IMPORTANT DATES FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS

Graduate Student Government Elections
October Vacation Begins
Classes Resume
Veteran’s Day (no classes)
Thanksgiving Vacation Begins
Classes Resume
Last Day of Classes
Final Exams

September 24-October 1
After all classes, Sunday, October 10
8 a.m. Wednesday, October 13
Thursday, November 11
After all classes, Tuesday, November 23
8 a.m. Monday, November 29
Friday, December 10
Monday, December 13 - Friday, December 17

The University of Southern Maine enrolls over 2,000 graduate students in 27 degree programs. For more information, visit: www.usm.maine.edu/grad

ABOUT US

Newsletter produced by
The Office of Graduate Studies
University of Southern Maine
P.O. Box 9300
Portland, ME 04104-9300

45 Exeter Street
Portland Campus

Janet Casey, Editor

CONTACTS

Dean of Graduate Studies
Dr. Dahlia Lynn
207-780-4544

Coordinator of Graduate Student Programs and Services
Janet Casey
207-780-4877

Director of Graduate Admissions and Assistant Dean of Graduate Studies
Mary Sloan

Assistant Director of Graduate Admissions
Lisa Sweet
207-780-4165