Answering the Question:
“What can you do with a degree in Women and Gender Studies?”

Julie Beaulieu ’00 recently defended her dissertation, “Familiar Feelings: Experiencing Eighteenth-Century Sexuality” and is a lecturer in the Gender, Sexuality, and Women’s Studies (GSWS) program at the University of Pittsburgh. She began working in the GSWS program after receiving a competitive teaching fellowship. More recently, as a member of the GSWS major proposal committee, she has participated in the effort to transition GSWS from a certificate program to a major. Julie has developed a new core course for the program, “Sex and Sexualities,” on the history of sexuality, which has been approved to fulfill the “historical change” general education requirement. She will continue teaching in GSWS this fall; along with “Sex and Sexualities,” she’ll be teaching a writing-intensive section of feminist theory and an upper-level course in queer theory.

Danielle Bernier ’10 currently lives in Boulder, Colorado and works as a Senior Energy Advisor for a national solar company. Shortly after relocating to Boulder, Danielle participated in a training with OUT Boulder, a local non-profit that sponsors Boulder Pride and hosts a variety of events and trainings for GLBT community. As a part of the Speaking Out program, she sits on a panel of volunteers that visits local schools and universities to talk with students about her personal experience of coming out. The goal of the program is to engage young people in discussion and encourage an open dialogue with regards to sexuality and orientation. Danielle is excited to be a part of the OUT Boulder volunteer group and she is also thrilled to be working for an environmental company – contributing to both local and global efforts to make the world a better place! When she is not working or volunteering, she enjoys the mountains, the delicious cuisine, and the phenomenal music scene that Boulder offers.

Gina Capra ’05 is currently working and going to grad school at Simmons College. She is in the Master of Science in Management program with a non-profit focus. Additionally she is a campus leadership fellow through Futures Without Violence, which allows her to do dating violence and sexual assault education and awareness work on her campus.

Leisl Johnson ’95 is enrolled in a doctoral program in Leadership Studies at Franklin Pierce University in New Hampshire, and is currently in the dissertation phase of their degree. The program is interdisciplinary, so they have focused their dissertation on how transgender individuals are leaders in society—through the daily need to educate the public about trans identity, representing a minority population, and advocating for basic human rights in a society that does not understand or accept them. Leisl hopes to complete their study by the end of this summer.
Lauren Webster LaFrance '02 continues to run the Women and Gender Studies Program here at the University of Southern Maine as the Assistant to the Director. Her other USM hats include being an active board member of the USM chapter of the Professional Staff union (UMPSA), an Ambassador on the USM Wellness Committee and a participant in the 2013-14 USM Leadership Institute. In her spare time this winter, she and her husband Ed renovated and remodeled the kitchen of their 1908 home. Look for mention of her on MaineToday.com in an upcoming column on Southern Maine interior design.

Jenna Mehnert '93 remains very proud of her Women's Studies degree and believes it was the best course of study to prepare her for a career in policy development and advocacy. After 16 years working outside of Maine, she is delighted to be home. While working for the mayors of DC and NYC and the governor of PA taught her a great deal about system change, she is most looking forward to building better systems here in Maine. She’s honored to be the Executive Director of National Alliance on mental Illness (NAMI) Maine, a member of the Orono School Board and adjunct faculty for the University of Maine's women, gender and sexuality department. She can never say enough how much she loved her time at USM!

WGSAA Update

The WGSAA has held two well-attended feminist happy hour takeovers this spring. The first held at LFK on February 21st and the second on March 28th at Sonny's. Connections were revived, networking was achieved and a general good time was had by all. To connect with the Alum association contact Lauren Webster LaFrance at lwebster@usm.maine.edu

About the WGSAA

Founded in 2009, the USM’s Women and Gender Studies Alumnae/i Association (WGSAA) was created to provide a continuous learning community for graduates of the program. The association works to reunite graduates, faculty, and friends (both locally and afar) through a range of social and educational activities and events, as well as through our Facebook Group page (USM's Women and Gender Studies Alumnae Association) and e-mail listserv (wgsalum-L@usm.maine.edu) The association is also intended to shed light on the wonderful work alumni are doing post-graduation and to help build stronger networks within the University and greater community. The Association works to represent our degree program, playing an integral part in supporting WGS and encouraging current and incoming students. Find us at: https://www.facebook.com/groups/274494746441/