

Director's legacy

Ransom facilitated progress for Vanderbilt women

by Susan Ford Wiltshire

Twenty-five years ago, the presence of working women at Vanderbilt University was barely noticed, in spite of the overwhelming number of staff women who — then as now — kept the campus running. Then a small group called Professional Women at Vanderbilt pressed upon the chancellor the need for a Commission on the Status of Women. The 1976 report of the commission, chaired in its final year by Professor Antonina F. Gove and staff member Jan Belcher, put forth in no uncertain terms its number one priority: "That the University establish a Women's Office or Women's Center." In 1978 the Center was established and Nancy Alderman Ransom was appointed director.

Vanderbilt has not been the same since.

While Nancy was investing her remarkable gifts for organizing the programs of the Women's Center, others elsewhere on the campus were bringing the Women's Studies Program into existence. Nancy A. Walker, former director of the program, put it precisely:

"The Women's Studies program could not have fared as well as it has without the existence and support of an exceptionally active and well-run women's center on campus. The Cunningham Center, with its extensive programming, its library, and its energetic staff, has both cooperated with the goals of the academic program and,

by providing the campus with a wide array of services, has left the program free to pursue its academic enterprise."

Many of us noted with delight the symbiotic energy and intelligence, not to mention the political canniness, that the two Nancys brought to their respective tasks during those years.

Balancing act

Earlier in Nancy Ransom's years at the Women's Center, events of great controversy about Women's Studies and the status of faculty women were occurring. It was not easy for Nancy to exercise both her roles and beliefs at the same time — a lawsuit against the university was in progress and she was answerable directly to the Chancellor — but she did it with courage and aplomb. And we kept on having fun in the process.

In 1985, Nancy attended the concluding conference of the UN Decade for Women in Nairobi, Kenya. Perhaps while she was there she saw rep-



Nancy Ransom

with souvenirs of her visit to Kenya for the 1985 UN conference on women

resentatives of two species which, in combination, might serve as a metaphor for Nancy's mix of gifts: the thick skin and determination of a rhinoceros with the agility and speed of a graceful gazelle.

Nancy has a finely-honed capacity to perceive times of need among her many friends and to respond in the most appropriate way. Shortly after I finally finished my first book and, becalmed in the silence that followed, was wondering what on earth, if anything, I would do next, I received a hand-written letter from Nancy. She reminded me that ballet dancers in pirouette appear to be mov-

continued on page 3

*Please join us for an Open House
honoring
Nancy A. Ransom
on her retirement as director of
the Margaret Cunningham Women's Center
Tuesday, April 15 • 4:30 to 6:30 p.m.
316 West Side Row
Everyone is welcome*

APRIL PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Learning more about childbirth

The Women's Center reprises a popular program on childbirth April 8 for interested individuals and for couples awaiting or planning the birth of a baby. Penelope Wright, OB/GYN care coordinator at Vanderbilt Medical Center, will lead the Tuesday evening session, "Challenging Some Myths About Childbirth."

The program includes videotaped vignettes of actual births, a discussion of the fears associated with childbirth, and a comparison of birth as depicted in popular culture with real labor and childbirth.

Wright holds a master of nursing science degree and is certified as a childbirth educator, an OB/GYN nurse practitioner, and a lactation consultant. She works with OB/GYN residents at VUMC to coordinate pre- and post-natal patient care.

The program runs from 5 to 6:30 p.m. Reservations are required and the group is limited to 20. For information, call the Women's Center at 322-6518.

Dancer showcases international styles

As part of International Awareness Week, the Women's Center is sponsoring a performance of Oriental dance by Travis, a dancer from Santa Fe, New Mexico. The free event will be held Thursday, April 3 at 7:30 p.m. in Sarratt Cinema. Travis learned ethnic dances from central Asia and the Middle East by training and performing with folklore dance ensembles in those areas. Her program will also include original pieces of her own choreography.



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Women's VU is published monthly September through June at the Margaret Cuninggim Women's Center, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tennessee. Campus address: 316 West Side Row. Mailing address: Box 1513, Station B, Nashville, TN 37235. Phone: (615) 322-4843. Fax: (615) 343-0940. E-mail address: womenctr@ctrvox.Vanderbilt.edu.

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For more information on the Women's Center, check out our site on Vanderbilt's web page: <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/>

Women's Studies course offerings

The following courses will be offered by the Women's Studies program in the fall semester, 1997:

COURSE NO.		FACULTY
WS 115W-02	Freshman Seminar: Fashioning the Female Self	K. Schwarz
WS 115-02	Freshman Seminar: Women & Work in the U.S.	K. Campbell
WS 115-03	Freshman Seminar: Women Writers in France	A. Baehler
WS 150-01-02-03-04	Images of Women	TBA
WS 204-01	Women, Men and Language	V. Brennan
WS 230-01	Women & Religion	G. Welch
WS 231-01	Women in Buddhist Tradition	P. Arai
WS 232-01	Feminism and the Bible	A.-J. Levine
WS 252-01	Human Sexuality	L. Smith
WS 286-01	Women's Experience in America — Colonial Times to the Civil War	TBA
WS 289-01	Independent Study	
WS 295-02	Special Topics: Contemporary Peninsular Short Stories by Women	E. Segovia

Director's legacy,

continued from page 1

ing hardly at all, but that this stationary spin provides a break between the movements that went before and those that are sure to follow.

The list of Nancy's leadership roles in the larger community of Nashville and beyond is exhausting even to read. She served as president of CABLE, a Nashville women's network; president of the Planned Parenthood Association of Nashville; and president of Women in Business. She engaged in the activities also of the Women's Political Caucus, the YWCA, the National Urban League, the Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce, and was a founding member of the steering committee of WIN (Women in the Nineties), an organization committed to increasing the number of women in elected offices in Tennessee.

During her years of full-time work and extensive volunteer commitments, Nancy — already a trained sociologist — managed to complete her doctorate at Peabody College with a dissertation entitled "A Comparative History of Faculty Women at George Peabody College for Teachers and Vanderbilt University, 1875 to 1970."

Together with her husband Harry H. Ransom, a political scientist and noted expert on the CIA, Nancy raised three outstanding children: Jenny, a social worker in Kansas; Will, a pianist and head of the piano program at Emory University; and Kate, a violinist who is director of the music division of the Harid Conservatory in Florida.

Nancy and Harry found the right partner in each other. When asked recently what first attracted him to Nancy, Harry Ransom replied: "Her vivacity and intelligence. And the fact that she was a little impudent. I like that."

So do we all. ■

Wiltshire, a professor of classics, was the first woman to chair the department of classical studies. She coordinated Vanderbilt's first course in women's studies in 1973.

Farewell to Women's Center recalls father's words of wisdom

When I was about ten years old I went to a party. I was having such a wonderful time that when my father arrived to take me home I didn't want to leave. I protested vehemently but to no avail. On the ride home my father tried to comfort me with a wisdom that I appreciate more today than I did at the time. He said, "Nancy, always leave the party when you're having a good time."

If I may use the party as a metaphor for the development of the Women's Center at Vanderbilt, then I can say that the party is still going strong and I am having a great time. So it is time for me to leave.



Nancy Ransom (left) at a recent Women's Center gathering with the current and former directors of Women's Studies at Vanderbilt, Ronnie Steinberg (center) and Nancy Walker.

The Women's Center will continue to be an important part of Vanderbilt. New leadership will bring new visions, new directions, and new approaches to furthering gender equity at Vanderbilt. Opportunities to cooperate with an expanding Women's Studies Program under Ronnie Steinberg's able leadership will open new avenues for the Women's Center and its new director. All these changes benefit not only women, but the entire University.

There is no way to thank everyone who makes it possible for me to compare my job to a party. Support for the Center and for me personally has come from every corner of the campus — students, staff, faculty, administrators; from alumnae and alumni; from the community; and from my friends and family. The Chancellor's confidence in the Women's Center has been visible in his support and trust. The staff and Advisory Board, whose energy and wisdom often bring credit to me, are my most faithful champions.

If the Women's Center has succeeded during my term as director, it is because of the shared vision, commitment, and collective effort. How fortunate I am to have had meaningful, satisfying work and all this support. I thank you one and all.

—Nancy A. Ransom

Sponsorship available for student leaders conference

Women from Vanderbilt have an opportunity to join students from across the country at a summer conference designed to enhance leadership skills and share information.

"Women Leading: Today and Tomorrow" is the topic of this year's conference to be held June 5-7 at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. The meeting is held annually for women who hold or aspire to leadership roles on campus and in the larger community.

The Women's Center and Campus Student Services will sponsor three students from Vanderbilt to attend the conference. Sponsorship will cover the \$295 cost of registration, which includes lodging and meals.

The deadline to apply for sponsorship is April 20. Those interested

in applying should contact Nancy Ransom, director of the Women's Center, at 322-4843, or Mindy Dalgarn, associate dean of Student Services, at 322-3963.



Conference sessions deal with career, leadership, political and lifestyle topics. Other optional activities include a meeting with women leaders on Capitol Hill and an evening trolley tour of Washington.

Lodging is provided in a Georgetown residence Hall for Thursday and Friday nights.

The conference is sponsored by the National Association of Women in Higher Education.

Students from Vanderbilt who have attended previous sessions have enjoyed the chance to network with other students and to compare wide-ranging views on women's issues.

Taking our daughters to work

Five years ago, the Ms. Foundation for Women launched a campaign to boost the self-confidence and career aspirations of girls.

The highlight of the effort was "Take Our Daughters To Work Day," and the idea caught on so quickly and successfully it has pro-

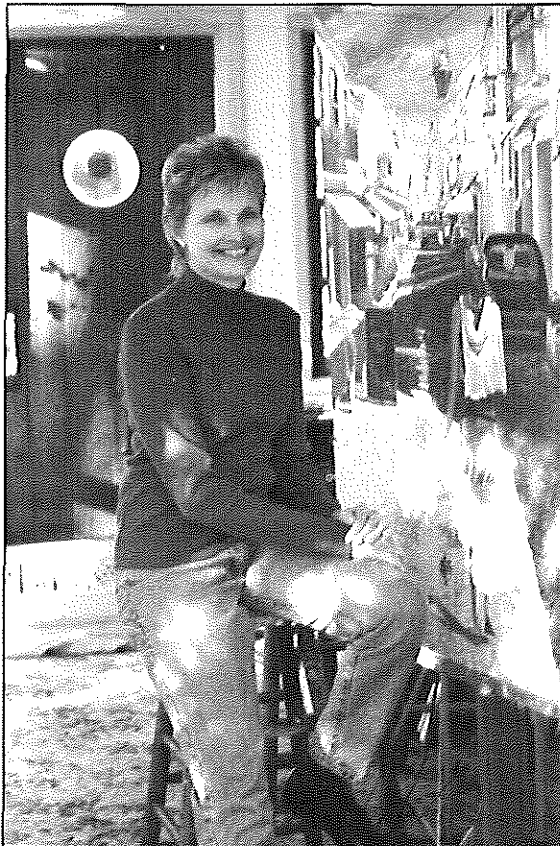
April 24

is Take Our Daughters to Work Day

duced its own backlash — what about the boys?

In response, the foundation argues that girls need and deserve a day that deals only with the unique issues girls face at adolescence, when many experience a sudden, pronounced drop in self-esteem.

Join the nationwide effort by bringing your daughters to work on April 24.



Painter uses 'Contemporary Realism' to capture beauty of outdoor scenes

Artist Susan Rusch Shaver portrays scenes from several locations where she has lived and traveled in paintings on exhibit this month at the Women's Center.

The images range from street life in Paris to porches on Martha's Vineyard, all done in the style of "Contemporary Realism" for which the exhibit is named.

Working in oil on canvas, the Hendersonville painter also trains her artist's eye on outdoor scenes closer to home, including some Tennessee locations in her work.

In an artist's statement, Shaver describes her work as "an experience of the spirit" in which she attempts to capture the "ever changing array of beauty" she sees around her. She has led several workshops on outdoor oil painting and has had recent solo shows at the Parthenon Gallery, Cheekwood and the World Customs Organization in Brussels, Belgium.

Shaver's exhibit opens April 8 and remains on display through May. She will be honored at a reception at the Women's Center Wednesday, April 9, from 5 to 6 p.m.

Susan Rusch Shaver with one of her paintings of a Parisian street scene.

A P R I L

Calendar of Events

Margaret
Cunningim
Women's Center



Please save and post. Individual flyers for these programs may not be sent.

APRIL 1 / TUESDAY

Creative Life Planning Group meets weekly to focus on ways to improve problem-solving skills and make life changes, noon to 1 p.m. New members welcome. For information call Judy Helfer at 322-6518.

APRIL 2 / WEDNESDAY

Students for Women's Concerns Meeting. 7 p.m. For information call Tanya Tschesnok at 1-3187. *Also meets April 9 and 16.*

APRIL 3 / THURSDAY

Eating Disorders Discussion Group meets weekly at the Women's Center, 5-6 p.m. For information call Gabrielle at 1-6197 or Hayley at 1-1062. *Also meets April 10 and 17.*

Courtesan/Corazon: Courting the Heart. Travis, a creative and ethnic Oriental dancer from Santa Fe, NM, performs dances from central Asia and the Middle East. Co-sponsored by the International Awareness Committee. 7:30 p.m., Sarratt Cinema. FREE.

APRIL 4 / FRIDAY

ECP, HRT, NIH and Ginseng: Health Care for Women of the '90s. Michele Salisbury, assistant professor of the practice of nursing, speaks at a breakfast for faculty and staff. 7:30 to 9 a.m., University Club. \$3. Co-sponsored by the Women's Faculty Organization. To register call Judy Helfer at 322-6518 or e-mail helferjt@ctrvax.Vanderbilt.edu.

Parents' Weekend Open House at the Women's Center. 2 to 4 p.m.

APRIL 7 / MONDAY

Dissertation Writers Group, 4 to 6 p.m.

APRIL 8 / TUESDAY

Creative Life Planning Group discusses the grief process. Noon to 1 p.m. *Also meets April 15.*

Women's Center Advisory Board, Martha Young, chair, 4:10 p.m., Branscomb Private Dining Room.

Challenging Some Myths About Childbirth, led by Penelope P. Wright, RNC, MSN-OB/GYN Care Coordinator. 5 to 6:30 p.m.

APRIL 9 / WEDNESDAY

Artist's Reception for Sharon Rusch Shaver, 5 to 6 p.m. *(see article, page 4)*

APRIL 14 / MONDAY

Book Group discusses *The Latin Deli: Prose and Poetry* by Judith Ortiz-Confer. Facilitator, Lois Brown. 5:15 to 6:15 p.m. New members welcome.

APRIL 15 / TUESDAY

Open House in honor of Nancy A. Ransom, founding director of the Women's Center, who is retiring in June. 4:30 to 6:30 p.m.; remarks at 5:30 p.m. Co-sponsored by the Students for Women's Concerns Committee.

APRIL 16 / WEDNESDAY

Less Stress in Five Minutes. Five brief exercises to combat tension — just in time for finals. Facilitated by Nancy A. Ransom. 12:10 to 1 p.m. By reservation only. Limited to 10. E-mail to womenctr@ctrvax or phone 322-4843. *Repeated on Thursday, April 17.*

APRIL 22 / TUESDAY

Creative Life Planning Group. Sam Myers Sims facilitates a discussion of *Strong Women Stay Young* by Miriam E. Nelson. Noon to 1 p.m. *Also meets April 29.*

Freelance Writers Group meets monthly for advice and feedback from other writers. 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. For information contact Beth Grantham, facilitator, at 352-9214.

Unless otherwise stated, all programs are held at the Cunningham Center, Franklin Building, 316 West Side Row. For more information, please call 322-4843.

In the library...

Women and the law: still searching for equal justice

Barbara Clarke,
Women's Center
librarian



Journalist Lorraine Dusky's latest book is *Still Unequal: The Shameful Truth About Women and Justice in America* (Crown, 1996), a comprehensive and disturbing volume on sex bias in America's legal system. One might assume that women have virtually achieved equality in law, since women today are much more visible in law schools and courtrooms. The writer shows that there is still a great deal of sex bias in law schools, in the court system and in the laws themselves. Minority women are particularly subject to discrimination, prejudice and harassment.

Dusky has divided her work into three main sections. The first deals with the problems faced by women students and faculty in the nation's law schools. The second section focuses on women in the legal profession and the third on sex discrimination in the laws. The writer does not hesitate to name many offending law schools, faculty members, judges, law firms, lawyers and others.

About 70 students from 28 law schools around the country were interviewed for the book. Among the schools were the Harvard Law School, Yale Law School, the University of Arizona College of Law, Stanford Law School and the University of Chicago Law School. A chapter is devoted to the problems facing women law students at Harvard. Law students still

tend to come from upper-class families and about 43 percent of the students are female. Many of these women are surprised to find that the gender bias they encounter is much worse than what they experienced as undergraduates. It appears that white male students and faculty at law schools feel particularly threatened that women and minorities are encroaching on the power that has traditionally been theirs.

The writer describes many cases of harassment and of blatant and subtle prejudice and bias encountered by female law students and faculty members. The latter, like female faculty in other disciplines, are concentrated in the lower levels of academe and are less likely than male faculty to receive tenure.

While there are more female lawyers and judges than ever before, these women report an alarming amount of sexism, sex bias and sexual harassment from their male peers, supervisors and employers. Male judges and others who are fired as a result of complaints from women are often replaced by those with similar attitudes; many of these men do not believe they are biased. They are all products of a sexist society and of a sexist legal education. Female lawyers are less likely to be hired by prestigious law firms; they are paid less and rarely advance to the top levels of major companies.

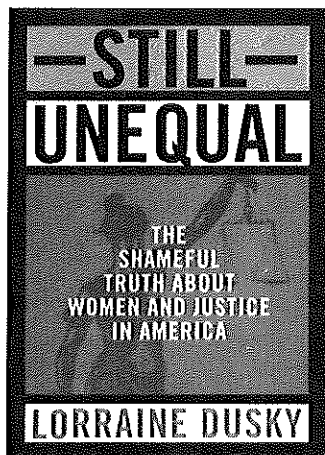
Most of today's laws are based on precedent and on laws that were formulated by elite white men in eras when women and minorities were little more than chattel. While many laws have been rewritten in recent times to remove much of the bias, Dusky shows the extent to which

many statutes still favor males. She discusses particularly the laws concerning divorce, child custody, rape and battered women.

The author believes that the entire legal system of this country needs a major overhaul to eliminate the prejudice, harassment and injustices faced by many women in law school, by those who practice law and those seeking fair treatment in the nation's courts. She realizes that inequities will exist for many more years and hopes that "this book, by virtue of illuminating the overwhelming evidence of the still unequal justice in this country, is another step in the right direction. But, ultimately, the people who run our courts have to cleanse themselves."

Women's Legal Guide (Fulcrum, 1996) is edited by attorney Barbara R. Hauser with Julie A. Tigges. This is a volume of practical advice for women of all ages and from all backgrounds; each chapter deals with a different topic. The contributors, all of whom are female attorneys, discuss such subjects as health, starting a business, adoption, sports, children's rights, sex discrimination, retirement planning, disabilities, family violence, bankruptcy, premarital agreements, refugee women and the legal rights of lesbians.

The library has the third edition of *The Rights of Women: The Basic ACLU Guide to Women's Rights* (Southern Illinois University Press, 1993) by Susan Deller Ross, Isabelle Katz Pinzler and others. The writers aim to explain clearly and "in detail how women can use the laws currently on the books in the continuing struggle to gain real equality." This handbook is arranged in a question-and-answer format and chapters focus on constitutional rights, education, insurance, family law, employment, reproductive freedom, the criminal justice system, the military and other topics. ■



Women and depression

Gender differences influence feelings of hopelessness, despair

by Amy Burkett

Depression is an illness that affects twice as many women as it does men, worldwide.

Gender differences in depression develop after the onset of puberty, and become especially pronounced after the age of 16. Women in the United States have a 20-26% chance of experiencing an episode of clinical depression at some time in their lives, most often from the ages of 18 to 44.

The type of depression to which I am referring is not a passing mood, but a specific set of symptoms that persists over a long period of time. Most depressions are self-remitting, but if diagnosed and properly treated, depression can be prevented from being an ongoing destructive force in the life of one who suffers from it.

Just what causes depression? Is it a result of one's social environment? Genetics? Biological factors, like hormones? Other physiologic processes, such as cancer or AIDS? It seems that depression can be triggered by any one or a combination of these things, but the actual persistent state of depression is believed to be the result of a disturbance in the level of function of certain neurotransmitters, or chemical messengers, in the part of the brain that controls a person's emotions, producing changes in behavior, feeling, and thought. Consequently, certain situations and events in a person's life can somehow bring about a depressed mood that in a healthy individual would lift over time. Depression is also believed to have a genetic component, and those who have a family history of clinical depression are more likely to suffer from it.

There are many possible factors at work in the higher incidence of depression among women. Some theories pose that a woman's social environment may directly impact her self-esteem and ability to feel confident and capable. A woman is more likely to be a single parent, head of a household, and live below the poverty line (75% of people living below the poverty line in the U.S. are women and their children). Women have dual roles more commonly than men, serv-

ing their families as both homemakers and breadwinners. Women are more likely than men to be victims of violence in the form of sexual abuse and battering. In our society, women are often placed in positions of dependence, less likely to assume roles of authority than their male counterparts, increasing their incidence of low self-esteem.

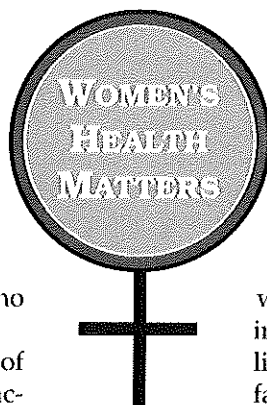
Another theory suggests that cognitive processes associated with women place them at a higher risk for depression. People suffering from depression often exhibit distorted thought processes and thought content. They feel a lack of control over negative issues in their lives, and as a result, have a sense of hopelessness. These types of cognitive distortions are more commonly associated with women than with men and may be reinforced by interpersonal and social factors. A woman is more likely to be involved in the problems of friends and family, trying to be "everything to everyone," placing unrealistic expectations upon herself and leading to frustration and a sense of failure.

Most people with depression can be helped if properly diagnosed and treated. Education, supportive counseling, and antidepressant medications may all play important roles in recovery. Medications can be used to relieve the symptoms of a depressed mood, including feelings of hopelessness, guilt, insomnia, loss of appetite and fatigue.

Education and counseling help a person recognize the situations that bring about a depressed mood. This can empower a woman and enable her to view depression objectively, as an illness that can be treated. It also may help her to know she is not alone — that depression affects many women, in situations similar to her own.

If you think you might be experiencing depression or are at risk for developing depression and would like to seek help, the Psychological and Counseling Center on campus is available for Vanderbilt students, faculty and staff. Contact them by calling 936-0371. ■

Burkett will graduate in August from the Vanderbilt School of Nursing women's health nurse practitioner program.



DEALING WITH DEPRESSION

The National Institute of Mental Health proposes the following guidelines for women who are at risk of depression or are recovering from depressive episodes:

- *Do not set difficult goals or take on a great deal of responsibility.*
- *Break large tasks into small ones; set priorities for yourself.*
- *Do not expect too much from yourself (it may lead to increased feelings of failure).*
- *Try to be with other people.*
- *Participate in activities that may make you feel better.*
- *Postpone major life decisions until you feel better.*
- *Do not expect to "snap out of it."*
- *Do not accept your negative thinking. It is part of depression and will disappear as your depression responds to treatment.*

Announcements

Conferences

Women's Studies in the 21st Century: Re-examining Race, Class and Gender is the topic of the annual conference of the Southeastern Women's Studies Association (SEWSA) to be held April 18-20 at the University of Georgia in Athens. Speakers will address changing concepts of race, class and gender and the implications of these changes for feminist scholarship. Cost is \$55 for students; \$135 for non-SEWSA members. For information, call 800-884-1381.

Celebrate the Spirit, the annual summit of the Women's Sports Foundation, will be May 15-18 in Chicago. Experts in the field will examine critical issues and current information in women's sports and fitness. The conference is aimed at athletes, coaches,

administrators, academic professionals, journalists and others with an interest in women's sports. Registration prior to April 18 is \$105 per day for non-members of the foundation; \$50 per day for students. For information, call 516-542-4700.

Learning from Women is the topic of a two-day course in New York City on the psychological development of girls and women and its clinical applications. The program on May 2-3 is sponsored by the Harvard Medical School Department of Continuing Education and is intended for clinicians, educators, and others interested in the growth and development of girls and women. Cost is \$300 for physicians and \$250 for other professionals. Details are available online at <http://www.med.harvard.edu/conted/>

Two sessions on Relational/Cultural Theory and Applications will be offered at the **Jean Baker Miller Summer Training Institute** of the Stone Center on the Wellesley College campus. Each session features five half-day presentations by institute faculty. The first session is June 13-17; the second advanced session is June 20-24. Cost is \$450 per session. For information, contact Helen Matthew at 617-283-2506 or e-mail to: hmatthew@wellesley.edu.

Fellowships

Deadline is May 1 to apply for the 1998-99 **Fulbright Distinguished Chairs** program. Chairs for the academic year are available at universities in Canada, Ireland and several European countries in fields ranging from American history to engineering and environmental technology. The awards carry enhanced benefits and are viewed as among the most prestigious appointments in the Fulbright program. Candidates must be U.S. citizens and have a prominent record of scholarly accomplishment. For information, contact Cynthia White, Division of Sponsored Research, 343-6075.

The **Werthan-Blum Fellowship** offers a graduating Vanderbilt student an intensive course of study at the Pardes Institute of Jewish Studies in Jerusalem. The fellowship covers full tuition and a portion of living expenses for the *Rimmon* program, which runs from September 1997 to June 1998. Pardes is open to individuals from all countries other than Israel, and to those with a range of religious beliefs, including both the unaffiliated and committed members of Jewish movements. For more information, contact Heidi Wiesenfelder, director of the Vanderbilt Jewish Community, at 343-1953.

Muliebrity Prize awarded at Kudos

The winner of the Muliebrity Prize will be named April 9 at the Kudos Ceremony. The award is given annually by the Margaret Cuningim Women's Center to honor an undergraduate who has been a leader in promoting women's interests and gender equity.



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Women's VU

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