One of the questions we constantly ask ourselves at the Center for Women & Work is how can we sustain our work. How can we keep alive the passion for delving questions related to equity at work? What gives us energy for educating and sharing what we know about how gender affects working conditions? How can we continue to be optimistic that institutional change is possible?

In our busy lives, many of us forget to reserve time to engage in what sustains us—time to refuel, time to reflect, and time to connect with supportive others. Creative expression can help us do all of these things.

My little “secret” is jewelry. Working on new pieces awakens a part of me that can get lost in the hubbub of meetings, classes, research interviews, and data crunching. My creative outlet started as a joint project with my children but has morphed into an activity I value even when on my own. Given I have never thought of myself as an artist (& still don’t), I have been surprised about the delight I feel when I can create something beautiful—and the further joy I feel when others enjoy my creations.

At CWW, we are working to support women’s creativity in all realms. Our Fall Women’s Works event is our most public, as we feature the arts created by women connected to UMass Lowell. From fantastic water colors to inspiring photography to playful jewelry to beautiful knit wear to yummie sweets. Through this annual event, we have uncovered the secret creative lives of faculty, administrators, staff, students, and alumnae—and the result has been nothing short of inspirational (and fun!)

As a follow up, for this issue of our biennial newsletter, we asked UMass Lowell women to reflect on the role of creativity in their lives. We asked people to address the question: How do your creative endeavors enrich or propel your work? Their answers fill the pages of this edition of “Perspectives.” I am confident you will find their responses inspiring.

To further this discussion, CWW’s 2011 Gathering at the Well Forum will address the topic of “Women as Makers: Creativity at Work, at Home, and in the Community.” I am excited to let you know that our featured speaker will be Mary Catherine Bateson, internationally respected author of Composing a Life and Composing a Further Life. The full morning will address how women bring their creativity to bear as they shape their workplaces, their families, and their communities. Please join us on Thursday April 7th from 8:30 to 12:30 in Alumnae/i Hall on North Campus.

All the best for a creative new year,

Meg A. Bond
Director, Center for Women & Work
Advisory Board Member Honored by UMass Lowell

CWU Advisory Board member Judie Post has been selected as the 2011 Outstanding Alumna of the Community Social Psychology (CSP) Masters Program. Judie completed her undergraduate degree at UMass Lowell in psychology and sociology. After graduation, she worked her way up to Director of Elder Programs at Solomon Mental Health Center, and then worked for Hewlett Packard and General Electric before establishing her own company, Andover Personnel. Several years later and ready to move back into the human service sector, she enrolled in the CSP Program, where she did her master’s thesis on work-family balance. Judie credits her UMass Lowell education with helping her establish a solid foundation for the next phase of her life’s work at Elder Services of Merrimack Valley, where she applied her new skills in coalition building, program development, program evaluation, and grant writing. Currently, Judie is an independent consultant specializing in helping nonprofits develop effective marketing and fundraising campaigns. And, perhaps most importantly for CWW, Judie is an extremely effective Advisory Board member, chair of the CWW Development Committee, plus an annual contributor to our Women’s Works celebration of women and creativity.

IDEA Communities Initiative

(‘Interdisciplinary Exchange & Advancement’)IDEA Communities are interdisciplinary groups designed to enhance mentoring and to support innovative scholarship work at UMass Lowell. Each IDEA Community involves a small group of faculty and other affiliated researchers from a variety of departments and colleges who share interests around a common topic and who agree to make a commitment to support one another’s scholarship. We are pleased to announce the new 2011 IDEA Communities: Aging/Gerontology, facilitated by Susan Houdé, School of Health & Environment, and Ramaraj Gautam, Nursing; Mothering, facilitated by Deborah Finch, College of Management & Monica Galizzi, Economics; National Identity, facilitated by Sarah Moser, Cultural Studies; and Technology, Teaching, and Learning, facilitated by Andrew Harris, Criminal Justice; and Jonathan Silverman, English.

The initiative is facilitated by the Center for Women & Work, overseen by an interdisciplinary Steering Team, and funded by the Office of the Provost.

NVivo Fellows: Building Research Excellence at UMass Lowell

Eleven UMass Lowell faculty members and one librarian have been named NVivo 9 Fellows for the upcoming year. NVivo 9 is a software tool designed to support non-numerical or unstructured data analysis. It is used across diverse social science and humanities studies for organizing and analyzing textual, audio, and visual data. All Fellows have received intensive training and have agreed to share their knowledge and support others in using this tool.

The 2011 NVivo Fellows include:

Lisa Edwards, assistant professor, History Department
Andrew Harris, assistant professor, Criminal Justice and Criminology Department
MJ Kim, assistant professor, Graduate School of Education
Valerie King, clinical assistant professor, Nursing Department
Rosanna Kowalewski, head of public services division, UMass Lowell Libraries
Alyssa McCabe, professor, Psychology Department
Barbara Mawn, professor, Nursing Department
Deirdra Murphy, assistant professor, Physical Therapy Department
Miki Patterson, assistant professor, Nursing Department
Stephen (Alex) Ruthmann, assistant professor, Music Department
Stephen Tello, assistant professor, Management Department
David Turcotte, research professor, Economics Department

The NVivo Fellows Program is facilitated by the Qualitative Research Network and the Center for Women & Work. Some technical assistance has been funded by the College of Fine Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences. Any faculty, staff, or student can receive a copy of the software by contacting the CWW at cww@uml.edu or by calling 978-934-4380.
WOMEN, CREATIVITY, & WORK

Continued from page 1

While I may not be the writer I thought I wanted to be, I am compelled to make things in order to live well. Over 25 years of academic production and teaching, I have regularly turned to my knitting needles, to my sewing machine, or, more recently, to the exquisite pleasure of covering walls, objects, and sculptures with mosaics. During periods of greatest intellectual demand, productivity, or stress I will lie awake at night designing mosaics, fabric collage, or garments. I cannot rest properly until I have satisfied these deep longings to create with color and texture. It is as though the demands of my intellectual life require a proportionate amount of time for art-making: there is an essential balance between the cerebral work I do and the more intuitive, associative, creative work I do.

This balance is very much a part of my teaching. The same generative energy that compels me to make objects also feeds (and is fed by) my teaching. In class, I challenge students to move between intellectual applications and more associative “play,” pulling them into exploratory and yet rigorous conversations. Sometimes these conversations teeter on the edge of brilliance; sometimes they crash to the ground. But sometimes we achieves the magic symmetry of creative and intellectual inquiry that leads to extraordinary insight. On these occasions, I feel the same energized elation that I feel after a day of art-making. For me, teaching is where the gifts of intellect and intuition come together in a collaborative and creative endeavor.

Judith Davidson, Graduate School of Education (& CWW Associate)

My creative endeavors lie in the arena of fiber and mixed media. From childhood on, I have been interested in fiber in all its forms—weaving, basketry, sewing, knitting, crocheting. Several years ago, I discovered felt—one of the most ancient of human fiber forms—and in doing so found a home base for my creative activities. Felt draws on all my knowledge of fibers and their unique characteristics. The process of felting is akin to paper making and ceramics, and felt itself can be marked upon like cloth or paper. The possibilities seem endless to me.

Bringing this artistic interest in closer alignment with my ‘real job’—as a reading specialist, literacy researcher, and now qualitative research methodologist—has been a project of many decades. Only in the last few years have I been able to formalize the relationship between the hands-on maker and the thinker/writer through the development of ‘The Journal Project’, a study of an 18-month period of my personal journals that blends qualitative research software, arts activities, and autoethnography. This project is central to my work as a Faculty Associate at the Center for Women and Work.

Fiber work connects me to the deepest places in my soul. It allows me to make tangible the issues of meaning making that are at the heart of qualitative research. The characteristics of fiber—color, texture, twist, feltability—become tools for expression. Fiber allows me to honor the process of inquiry, playfulness, spirituality, and the value of making. With the culmination of “The Journal Project”, I am creating an art exhibit that presents felt in the context of discussions of qualitative research methodology, allowing these two powerful sources in my life to join forces.

Tara Spellissy Bedard, Teacher, UMass Lowell Alum

Photography is my passion. I have been taking pictures for as long as I can remember, but I’ve looked at my pictures much differently since my children were born. Every picture I take, I think of as freezing a moment in time. These snapshots of our past tell a story. I’m lucky enough to capture them and to be able to hold onto them forever. To me, that is such a valuable possession to have. Being able to capture life’s most important moments and milestones reminds me of just how precious time is and how quickly it passes by.

My photography fits perfectly into my work life because, as a teacher, I watch my students grow over the course of a year. I see how much they change in such a short amount of time. I capture our memories that we make both in and out of the classroom. These photos allow them to take something with them when they go. It’s something to look back on and treasure. It’s a piece of time in their lives that they can return to when they stumble upon that old photograph. Hopefully it makes them smile.

Capturing these moments in our lives and being able to share them with friends and family has been so truly rewarding. We are preserving these special moments in time. As a mom and a teacher, I spend my entire day with little ones. There’s nothing better than seeing the world through the eyes of a child.

Photography has given me so many opportunities to meet some amazing people that share my passion. It has allowed me to get to see the world through their lens and it has opened my eyes wider each and every time. (www.tarabedardphotos.com)

Continued on pages 4-7
Our 2010 Fall fundraiser event, Women’s Works: A Celebration of the Creativity of Women, was a great success. Over 25 exhibitors displayed and sold their creations, which ranged from exquisite beaded necklaces to delicious chocolate covered pretzels. Music performances throughout the day added to the warm and festive mood. Each year we continue to grow, not only in the number and variety of vendors, but also in attendance. Save the date for CWW’s 2011 Women’s Works Celebration on Thursday, December 1st! Stay tuned for more details…

Joyce Headley and Darcie Boyer, mother-daughter duo, belt out their tunes.

Lindsay Casavant demos one of her animated wash cloths.

Ellen Anstey was instrumental in organizing the silent auction.

Deina Abdelkader and Nina Coppens carefully consider a jewelry purchase.
Anna Isaak-Ross, Planning Committee Member and Art Department Studio Manager displays her photographs.

Winni Miller, Bridget Marshall, & Marlowe Miller, display the fine arts of the English faculty.

Rachel Schaffer, Katie Mazure, & Alyssa Bryan, Members of the Women’s Softball Team, volunteered their energy to staff the welcome table.

Lila Lorrey, represents the Office of Public Affairs with style.

Rachel Robb & Jaye McLaren, CWW Student Interns, provide spirited support for the event.

Judie Post, CWW Advisory Board Member, relaxes between jewelry sales.

Ginny Maki from the Research Administration is joined by her mother-in-law, Lori Maki.
Lindsay Jean Casavant, Program Manager, Center for Women & Work  
Art has been a passion of mine since I was very young. I’ve created artwork of my own in different forms throughout my life. My creativity fuels many aspects of my life. At work, I feel my art background gives me a strong foundation. As an artist, you have to think outside the box or see some new way of doing things (see a new color combination or come up with new ways of using things from the recycling bin) which requires flexibility in thought and vision. Similarly, in my work and home life I feel constantly faced with challenges of time, resources, and supports. There is always the need to come up with new solutions and throw out old patterns to make it work! So many situations require the ability to adapt and think creatively, and as an artist, I feel like that’s what I was born to do. As I raise my two (small) precious and inspiring children, I place a great deal of importance on fostering their creativity in hopes of helping them navigate this world in the best way possible.

Sarah Kuhn, Department of Psychology (& CWW Associate)  
When I was a child, I was a “maker.” I hammered together scraps of wood to make boats. I built elaborate castles on the playroom floor, and networks of blocks crisscrossed my bedroom. My mother taught me to sew, and I made many of my own clothes as a teenager. But then I got to college and got busy. I took a fiber arts class the summer I started graduate school, but then I got even busier: there is an unfinished quilt from 1978 in my closet, which I have remembered through the years of graduate school, marriage, children, and life on the tenure track.

Gradually, my experiences as a teacher, and my frustrations with the conventional classroom, brought me to my senses, and that meant of course to the arts and to making as well. I’ve started sewing again, and last year, while I was on sabbatical at the Olin College of Engineering, I led an extracurricular activity I called “Sewing for Engineers.” It was extremely popular with students. By working with them, I learned how many intersections there are between engineering practice and sewing. In fact, I’ve become interested in understanding the fancy couturier techniques of the top Paris designers: what more difficult engineering task could there be than designing and using flexible materials for the variable female body? My students discovered analogues in materials science, pattern making (which happens in engineering as well as sewing), design science, and other domains.

As I have come to think of my classroom as a sensory deprivation chamber, I’ve also come to see sewing, knitting, crochet, and other fiber arts, now stigmatized as “work for retired women,” as an antidote. Coming to our senses is important learning work, and if sports belong on college campuses, so do the fiber arts. And the mathematics of weaving, crochet, and quilting convinces me that this is a rich domain not just for the soul but for the intellect.

Jaye McLaren, CWW Graduate Assistant, recently sat down with Charlotte Mandell and Nina Coppens to discuss our question about creativity. Here is what Jaye learned:

Nina Coppens, Dean of Fine Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences  
It’s obvious to anyone who walks into Dean Nina Coppens’s office that art is an extremely important part of her life. Photographs, tapestries, and watercolors from her travels, as well as her own personal pieces, adorn the walls projecting color and life into the space. Her passion is evident as she talks about her experiences with her favorite medium at the moment, watercolor. For Dr. Coppens, art is a type of meditation, a way to keep stress at bay and tap into her creative self. She has many other hobbies, but, for her, nothing compares to getting lost in the creative process. Painting for hours on end is not uncommon as she creates a watercolor; she puts herself into a different state where she uses all the senses to tap into her creative energy. The point of art, for her, is not to worry about what the finished product is going to be or depict, but to just let go and see what comes from how the color moves and blends. This allows for a worry-free environment that revitalizes all areas of her life.

Art doesn’t necessarily impact her professional role as Dean of Fine Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences at UMass Lowell, but it does impact the way she handles issues and problems that come up in the workplace. Not only does creating art balance her life and energize her mind, but she is able to transport herself into a more creative space for problem solving. And when others see the artwork in her office or her creations for sale at the UM Lowell Women’s Works craft fair, it allows them to make a connection with her on a different level. The only challenge for her is finding the time for incorporating art into her busy life! For Dean Nina Coppens, art is not about the outcome but about the process and how it positively impacts all aspects of her life.

Elaine Major, Director of Institutional Compliance  
My creative activities fulfill me in ways that are a little hard to describe. The practice of creating definitely has a very positive effect on my well-being and attitude towards life in general! I find the creative process itself a dichotomy: it is very stimulating, yet creates a bit of anxiety. I am always excited to show my work and try new things, while a little nervous about putting part of myself out there for the world to see and critique. Creating watercolors in and of itself gives me the incentive to keep practicing and trying new things, because I think it is a lifelong quest to master the art. It also makes me stop and take in the world around me on a daily basis so I can learn better ways to interpret nature and transfer my visions in a way that others might find interesting or
insightful. Paying attention to the beautiful things I see every day helps me to focus on what is really important in life and brings me a sense of peace, too. I thoroughly enjoy interacting with the many talented women artists involved in the Women’s Works community and look forward to sharing ideas and stretching my creative abilities. Thanks for letting me be a part of something so fulfilling!

Herlinda Saitz, Department of Cultural Studies

I have been engaged with the Reading Symphony Community Orchestra for 40 years as flute and piccolo player and as member of its Board of Directors. I have been instrumental to the creation of its successful Children’s Concerts.

The world of music is a creative art parallel to my professional world of literature, and the study of music enriches my work in literature just as my work in literature enriches my work in music. Both literature and music deal with the universality of art and its value for the human condition.

A few examples: While teaching literature and about the Don Juan European myth, made famous by two Spanish dramatists, Tirso de Molina, XVII C, and José Zorilla, XIX, I encourage the students to watch the opera “Don Giovanni” by Mozart in the Zeffirelli production, see the film “Don Juan de Marco”, and listen to the symphonic poem “Don Juan” by Richard Strauss. All of these deal with the struggle for liberation in the human spirit. The “Man of la Mancha”, a musical version of Don Quijote, brings a contemporary example of the need for the interdependence of common sense and illusion. In a language class, the contemporary beat of the song “El pianista del gueto de Varsovia” (Sounds Eclectic 2005), engages students effortlessly in listening comprehension and learning the grammatical formula to express “what if”, while at the same time offering awareness of how the power of music—playing Chopin in the Warsaw ghetto—made life bearable. They learn about the Holocaust from a singer, whose grandfather was the pianist in the ghetto, and are asked to imagine what would happen if the singer were the grandfather and the grandfather were the singer; is the world different today?

Charlotte Mandell, Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education

Vice Provost Charlotte Mandell has been interested in all types of art since a very young age, but knitting has always held a special place. Taught by her mother and grandmother, knitting allows Dr. Mandell to relax and de-stress from her responsibilities as Vice Provost. It creates a meditative state where her professional mindset is put on hold, even just for a little while, as her creativity is embraced. While being involved in knitting is strictly a hobby, it has led her to an online community where she can connect with other knitters and artists to talk about crafts, politics, literature, and travel. She is most involved in the travel forums as a way to get other artist’s perspectives on the best places to take a trip. Dr. Mandell’s creativity and passion for knitting has given her the opportunity to connect with an international community that supports and encourages her love of art and her continuing growth as an artist.

Judie Post, CWW Advisory Board

Making jewelry has always been both a creative outlet and a grounding experience for me. While I love to put new ideas into the pieces I create, it is always amazing to have someone else like that piece enough to pay for it! It then becomes more than a creative outlet, it is a way to test my ability to know what others like and understand that while it is important to love what you do, it is just as important to know that what you are doing has meaning for others.

To read more reflections on women and creativity, log onto www.uml.edu/womenwork.
The Center for Women & Work’s 13th Annual Gathering at the Well Forum
Women as Makers: Creativity at Work, at Home, and in the Community

When: Thursday, April 7, 2011, 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
Where: Alumni/ae Hall, UMass Lowell North Campus

Our new membership status with the NCRW
The UMass Lowell Center for Women & Work has been invited to become a Member Center of the National Council for Research on Women. Learn more about our great network at www.ncrw.org