This was a watershed year for graduate education at Minnesota State Mankato. The Department of Counseling and Student Personnel (CSP) and the School of Nursing celebrated the arrival of doctoral students in the fall—a first for both programs and for the campus itself. The advent of doctoral programs was accompanied by a sense of excitement and anticipation—especially for Leah Shanks, the first officially admitted doctoral student in the University’s 139-year history.

“It was exciting. Not only for myself, but for the CSP department as well,” says Shanks. “The faculty has worked tirelessly to get the program up and running and to make it a quality program. I was proud to be accepted.” Along with her enthusiasm for being admitted, Shanks recognizes the significance of being a member of the first cohort of CSP doctoral students. “I feel as if it’s partly my responsibility to inform people about the program,” she says. “It’s a historic time for the University, and I feel a strong desire to help make the program successful.”

Her advisor, Dr. Jennifer Pepperell, shares Shanks’ feelings. “When we admitted Leah, there was an awareness of how historic it really was,” she says. “When we gave her the acceptance letter, there was an understanding of what this meant for her, the faculty, and the University as a whole.”

Shanks is a graduate of Minnesota State Mankato’s CSP master’s program but, despite her familiarity with the CSP department and faculty, her participation in the doctoral program still proves challenging. Married with two children, she is learning to balance her family life, classes three days a week, teaching an undergraduate class, and her work as a graduate assistant for Dr. Pepperell. In addition, she is beginning to fully realize the difference between master’s and doctoral education. “The master’s program is hard,” says Shanks. “But the doctoral program is that much harder. It’s difficult to quantify the difference, but it seems to be a matter of more critically examining the theories and concepts we’re exposed to.”

Fortunately for her, Shanks displays the characteristics needed to succeed. “She is very driven and goal-oriented,” explains Dr. Pepperell. “She knows what she wants out of this program, and that will help her be successful.” The mentoring she receives in the doctoral program will also help Shanks achieve her goals. Both she and Dr. Pepperell are interested in gender issues, an area that Shanks plans to focus on for her dissertation. Right now she has a number of ideas, which Dr. Pepperell will help funnel into a manageable project.

“One of the things that makes teaching in a doctoral program so rewarding is that my relationship with Leah now, compared to when she was in the master’s program, is much more about mentoring than advising,” explains Dr. Pepperell. “This is part of the doctoral experience, and it is part of the reason why people do their doctoral work.”

For Shanks and the other members of the first class of doctoral students, earning a doctoral degree is an important step toward achieving their professional goals. For Minnesota State Mankato, welcoming this first class of doctoral students marks an important step on the journey to becoming a world-class institution.
Graduate student Joshua Jans observes a potential tornado cell in Texas. His presentation on training for first responders in national weather disasters resulted in an Outstanding Student Presentation Award at the 2007 American Meteorological Society Annual Meeting.

It seemed fitting that a severe ice storm interrupted the 87th American Meteorological Society (AMS) Annual Meeting held last January in San Antonio, Texas. After all, thousands of professionals, students, and weather enthusiasts were scheduled to enjoy four fun-filled days of weather-related research and presentations. Fortunately, Minnesota State Mankato graduate student Joshua Jans and his mentor, Dr. Cecil Keen, managed to make it to the conference despite Mother Nature’s attempts to thwart their plans. As a result, Jans took home a top award for his presentation and began the initial steps toward a weather curriculum that may someday have national impact.

Because of the widespread devastation caused by recent national disasters such as Hurricane Katrina, Jans and Dr. Keen researched the steps that are currently taken to prepare first responders for dealing with these situations. To their surprise, they discovered that there is no formal training in place to address this vital need. “These are the people that make the hard decisions and put their lives on the line,” says Jans. “They need to know everything that is going on in order to avoid negative consequences.”

In response to this obvious void in education, Jans developed a training curriculum that would prepare first responders for national disasters and increase communication between scientists and decision makers. The training would have three levels—Awareness, Operations, and Technicians—and each level would be a prerequisite for the next. “It’s not a matter of if a national disaster will happen, it’s a matter of when,” explains Jans. “We need to offer these people scientific knowledge in a way that is readable, usable, and applicable to everyone.”

To spread awareness of his work, Jans presented his research findings and training curriculum at the AMS Annual Meeting. But despite the importance of Jans’ topic, he was concerned that the sensitive subject matter might rub some people the wrong way. “The presentation was nerve-racking and exciting at the same time,” he says. “In the attempt to blend two worlds together there is always going to be some resistance to change, but it's necessary.”

Apparently he needn’t have worried—the AMS awarded Jans an Outstanding Student Presentation Award for his work. But the best thing about the conference for Jans was the chance to hear first-hand what others in the weather community thought of his ideas. “It’s good to present and then receive feedback from other people at the conference,” he says. “The support and advice of experts is always helpful. And it’s nice to know that they were once in your shoes.”

Two tornadoes dance around each other east of Nicollet, Minnesota. The photo was captured by Minnesota State Mankato storm chasers.

The Department of Theatre and Dance presented Bus Stop last November featuring a set design by Doug Bennett—a 2nd year MFA candidate in Theatre Technical Direction. The set design won a certificate of commendation from the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival. Featured in the cast was Andrew Umphrey (in the officer’s uniform), a 2nd-year MFA candidate in Acting. Umphrey was awarded the department’s first ever Nadine B. Andreas Teaching Assistantship for 2007–2008. The award was made possible by the Andreas family’s $7.5 million gift to support faculty and students in the College of Arts and Humanities.

An award-winning teacher and researcher, Dr. Cindra Kamphoff joined the Department of Human Performance in fall 2007 to coordinate the psychological aspects of sport master’s program. Prior to joining the faculty at Minnesota State Mankato, Dr. Kamphoff—pictured, near left, with her research team—received an award for teaching excellence at the University of North Carolina Greensboro. Her doctoral dissertation received top honors from the National Association for Sport and Physical Activity. Dr. Kamphoff recently received a Summer Research Dissemination Grant to support the publication of her research findings on the factors influencing women coaches’ decisions to leave college coaching.

TAKING THE NATION BY STORM

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS
Minnesota State Mankato’s MBA program was listed as one of the nation’s best in Princeton Review’s 2008 business school guidebook. The list of the nation’s best MBA programs was based on surveys of 19,000 students and school-reported data. Co-directed by Dr. Marilyn Fox (pictured left, with graduate student Andrea Larson), the MBA program was lauded by current students, who say they “love Mankato, Minnesota.” Students also reported that the most attractive parts of the program include the flexibility of the schedule, an Executive Lecture series that gives them the opportunity to learn from and interact with top executives, and the level of feedback from professors.

In my 12 years as a graduate faculty member at Minnesota State Mankato, I observed first hand the transformative power of graduate education. Virtually every student I advised was a testament to the ways in which graduate education literally changes lives—by broadening horizons, sharpening skills, fostering creativity, stimulating innovation, and inspiring confidence. It was a privilege to witness the many ways in which my students’ personal and professional lives were enriched as a result of their graduate experience.

As Dean of Graduate Studies and Research, I am now a witness to the hundreds of success stories that take place every year on our campus. In the laboratory, the studio, the theatre, and the classroom, our graduate students are learning the knowledge and skills that will lead to important career opportunities and lay the groundwork for making valuable contributions to their professions. Just two examples of our many student success stories are featured in this issue of DEVELOPMENTS: Joshua Ians, whose research recently earned a national award, and Leah Shanks, a graduate alumna and the first student officially admitted to a doctoral program at Minnesota State Mankato.

I think you will agree that Joshua and Leah’s stories are compelling. Equally compelling, from my perspective, is the story of all those Minnesota State Mankato faculty members—past and present—who have dedicated their lives to the success of our students. If you are a graduate alumnus of Minnesota State Mankato, you undoubtedly have powerful memories of the faculty mentors who shaped your graduate experience. Mentors like Dr. Ken Pengelly, who is also featured in this issue of DEVELOPMENTS, and who—as an emeritus faculty member—continues to shape graduate education through his generous donations to the Graduate College.

While these stories are inspiring, they are by no means rare. As a leading provider of graduate education in the state of Minnesota, we have a legacy of preparing outstanding leaders, artists, scientists, teachers, and health care professionals. We also have a legacy of preparing graduates who make important contributions to the state, the surrounding region, and the global community.

Please join me in celebrating the success of our graduate students, the legacy of our graduate programs, and the generosity of our donors. If, like Ken Pengelly, you wish to make a financial contribution that will directly support graduate studies and research, please consider giving to one of the opportunities listed on the backside of this page. Who knows? Your gift may transform a graduate student’s life.

Anne E. Blackhurst
Dean of Graduate Studies and Research
Please consider making a donation to the College of Graduate Studies and Research

When you give to the College of Graduate Studies and Research, you can be sure your donation will go directly to graduate students in the form of scholarships, fellowships, and support for student research and travel. Through your donation, you can help Minnesota State Mankato graduate students fulfill their aspirations and achieve great things.

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GIFT DESIGNATION:

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FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL:
Anne Blackhurst, Dean
College of Graduate Studies and Research
507-389-1242

University Development
507-389-1514 (V), 800-627-3529 or 711 (MRS/TTY)

A LIFETIME OF GIVING

Ken Pengelly has given his fair share to the Minnesota State Mankato community. He served as a faculty member in the College of Education from 1968 until 2001; he was Director of Library Media Education during the last three years before his retirement; and he founded the Summa Society, an academic honorary society for College of Education students who graduate summa cum laude. By all accounts, his service to the university has been exemplary, and he could be quietly enjoying his retirement, content to know that he devoted over thirty years to fostering higher education in our region. There's just one thing: his sense of commitment and service didn't end when he retired. He now dedicates a portion of his financial resources as an active donor to the College of Graduate Studies and Research.

For Pengelly, the choice to continue giving was an easy one, “We all want to honor our retiring colleagues, and we all recognize the importance of helping graduate students with the final stage of their education—research.”

By becoming a donor to the graduate college, Pengelly is achieving both of these goals simultaneously: he allocates his gifts for graduate research, and he dedicates them with the names of his former colleagues as a way to honor their contributions to the university.

Most recently, Pengelly gifted $1,000 in honor of Gael Mericle, emeritus director of the Learning Center. “Gael is a model educator and a gifted administrator,” says Pengelly. “The grand tally of students she and her staff helped throughout the years is amazing—it numbers in the thousands.”

Inspired by Mericle's commitment to higher learning and strong leadership, Pengelly allocated the gift in her name for graduate student research in the Department of Women's Studies. He has entrusted the graduate dean with determining the criteria for the award and how it will be distributed.

Although he feels personally committed to donating to the graduate college, Pengelly also hopes that his gifts spur others to consider donating. "It's about the importance of stewardship,” says Pengelly. When members of the community donate funds to help graduate students, those same graduate students will be more likely to consider giving back later in their own lives. In addition, dedicating funds in a colleague's name lets them and their family members know that their contributions are being celebrated.

Next on Pengelly's agenda is a $2,000 challenge grant to the College of Education, which will be used to support graduate research projects. During the annual fund drive, faculty and staff of the College of Education will be challenged to match his original amount, for a collective total of $4,000. With this contribution, Pengelly hopes to spur his colleagues in the College of Education, as well as faculty and staff in the six other colleges, to add to the graduate college's pool of mini-grants.

"I want to motivate people to give back to the university when they feel like they have the resources to do so,” says Pengelly. "And I want to help create a continuum of scholarship in our community.”

Note: Anyone interested in contributing to the Ken Pengelly Graduate Studies and Research Challenge Grant may direct questions or donations to Joann Jacqua in University Development (507-389-6832) or use the pledge form included in this issue of DEVELOPMENTS.
A graduate alumnus and pre-doctoral fellow, Donald Mitchell, Jr. serves on the faculty in the Department of Educational Leadership. Pre-doctoral fellowships provide emerging scholars with the opportunity for professional development while increasing the diversity of the Minnesota State Mankato faculty.