As an outgrowth of her Teaching Scholar Fellowship, art professor Liz Miller devised an inventive way for her students to experience the artistic processes employed by conceptual artist Sol LeWitt. More than 60 students in Miller’s art classes worked together to create a wall-sized art project in the CSU art gallery.
Drawing on An Artist’s Legacy

As a way of experiencing the artistic processes employed by conceptual artist Sol LeWitt, more than 60 students in Professor Liz Miller’s art classes worked together to create a wall-sized art project in the CSU art gallery. The result, according to one student, was “quite intriguing and a little messy.”

Enriching the Campus Community

As pre-doctoral fellows, Helen Crump and Donald Mitchell bring fresh and diverse perspectives to their programs while preparing for their future professions in higher education.

Preparing Tomorrow’s Teachers

Two faculty members in the College of Education conduct research that will inform teacher preparation programs and improve educational outcomes for Minnesota’s increasingly diverse student population.

Marking Their Words

Drawing on his background in science and his graduate education in technical communication, David Chapman provides valuable editing services to faculty as the graduate assistant in the Center for Excellence in Scholarship and Research.

Diversifying the Doctorate

The only program in the state to receive the maximum amount of funding from the U.S. Department of Education, Minnesota State Mankato’s McNair Achievement Program will expand its offerings to low-income, first-generation, and under-represented students who aspire to the doctorate.

Frontiers

Spring 2008 Volume 2, Issue 2

GOT PHOTOS?

Faculty who have high-quality digital photographs of recent research or creative projects are encouraged to submit them to the College of Graduate Studies and Research for inclusion in upcoming issues of FRONTIERS or TOMORROW. Photographs should be at least 200 dpi and should be accompanied by a brief caption describing the project and the photo. E-mail photographs (in jpg or tif format) to anne.blackhurst@mnsu.edu.

A defect in the sternum of what is believed to be the skeletal remains of Charlie Pitts—an outlaw killed in the famous gunfight that led to the capture of Jesse James and the Younger brothers near Madelia, Minnesota—appears to be about the size of a bullet. Anthropology professor Kate Blue, law enforcement professor Jim Bailey, and graduate students Nate Meyer and Lecia Sims hope to find conclusive evidence that proves the bones either are, or are not, the remains of Pitts. Photo by John Cross, courtesy of The Mankato Free Press.
When art professor Liz Miller applied for a Teaching Scholar Fellowship, she knew that she needed to use the time and money to research the work of artist Sol LeWitt, who passed away in April of 2007, as an American conceptual artist who became prominent in the 1960s as a result of his prolific two- and three-dimensional wall art. “I knew initially that I should research LeWitt, but I didn’t really want to,” explains Miller. “I just knew that I should—kind of like eating your veggies.”

So that’s what she did. Miller spent the first few weeks of the eight-week period researching the context and era of LeWitt’s work, as well as his creation process. As a conceptual artist, LeWitt didn’t physically create his own work. Rather, he created sets of directions for his team of assistants to carry out. “He was less concerned with the outcome of the work and more concerned with the idea of it,” says Miller. “For LeWitt, the system was the art.”

After her initial research, Miller took a trip to New York to visit a gallery featuring 14 of LeWitt’s wall drawings. “It was a great experience to be able to bump elbows with fellow students and create one large body of work. It really evoked a sense of community within the classroom because we were all working toward one goal. The result was interesting and a little messy—but what can you expect when there are nearly 70 people working on one drawing?” —Sarah Grundhauser, art student.
drawings. “Spending time with his paintings changed my relationship with his work,” says Miller. “Because of their size, when you see the drawers in person, there is a feeling of immersion that you wouldn’t otherwise experience.” She quickly found that the drawings she once believed to be cold and impersonal actually communicated a poetic feeling through the use of lines, shapes, and color.

Miller spent the remainder of her time thinking about how to integrate what she had learned with her teaching. She decided to have her classes use LeWitt’s creation process to construct their own collaborative wall drawing. To begin the project, Miller divided each of her three classes into four groups and for a week and a half, over 60 students worked with one another to create a large-scale wall drawing in the CSU art gallery. Concepts came in the form of directions left by a previous group and it was the task of each class to interpret and execute these directions on the wall. “The project integrated conceptual and formal decision making,” explains Miller. “Students quickly realized that the greatest amount of control they had over the project was through the directions they left for the next group.”

The conceptual approach to the wall drawing also provided a lesson in the importance of good communication skills. Miller instructed the students to convey large gestures that anyone could follow, but in a specific manner. “You can tell 20 people to draw a straight line that is 6 feet long and you will end up with 20 different lines if you aren’t specific,” says Miller. Indeed, Ian Laird, a 5th-year student in the drawing program, found interpreting the directions left by the previous class to be the most challenging part of the process. “It was much clearer to them what the next logical step was than it was to the group receiving the directions,” he says.

To help ensure that her students experienced success with such a large endeavor, Miller limited the mediums they could use for the project. “The first day they were allowed to use only black and white to create the base of the wall art. Then color was introduced through the use of markers, color copier paper, and paint. Finally, on the last day, several students used spray paint to incorporate color.” Miller was really impressed with how inventive they were within their limitations, says Miller. Even with their creative use of mediums, unifying the project was difficult for the classes. The group nature of the project shifted how students often approach their work, removing individual ownership and distributing the burden of responsibility equally among all involved artists. It was no longer a matter of individual contributions but, instead, how each single element could help unify the project as a whole. Melodie Seagren, a 1st-year art student, tried to focus on how to create and follow directions that would benefit the entire piece, rather than her individual vision. “We all had our own ideas of how we wanted the wall drawing to look,” she explains. “I tried to remove myself from the project so that I wasn’t thinking of it as my piece of work.”

Despite their difficulties, the students managed to create a wall art that was full of shapes, lines, color, and energy. More importantly, they learned to work together to implement a conceptual approach to art. “I was impressed with the teamwork and cooperation,” says Miller. “I wanted them to really understand the conceptual process throughout the entire project. That was more important to me than the final product.”
Fagin, Vice President for Institutional Diversity, the program provides emerging scholars with the opportunity for professional development while serving as “one of the best tools we have for enriching our campus and moving toward increased diversity in our faculty ranks.”

Helen Crump, from the Department of Women’s Studies, and Donald Mitchell, Jr., from the Department of Educational Leadership, both feel extremely lucky to have been selected as pre-doctoral fellows for the 2007-2008 academic year. “When I was offered the fellowship, I knew it was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for me to teach, to be mentored, and to do research while pursuing my doctorate,” says Mitchell.

Because Mitchell hopes to become an administrator at a small liberal arts college and Crump’s ultimate goal is to teach in a women’s studies program, acting as faculty members in their respective programs while completing their degrees may prove invaluable. “Holding a faculty position while I finish my dissertation allows me to intimately experience yet another women’s studies program before I complete my education,” explains Crump. “It gives me a deeper feel and preparation for my future career.”

Testing out their future careers is certainly a benefit for the two fellows, but the university also gains from their presence. Mitchell is not only teaching graduate classes in the educational leadership program, but he also developed one of the courses—Historically Black Colleges and Universities: History, Culture and Leadership—based on his current research interests. Department Chair Jerry Robicheau believes that Mitchell’s course and research will help the community become more aware of the dynamics of black universities and colleges and how we can embed diversity into our campus culture. “You can study diversity all you want, but until you really embrace it, the campus culture will not change,” he explains.

Crump is also involved in research that enhances her program. Her dissertation is an extended literary analysis of black female writers’ texts and how they articulate a black female identity through their narratives. Specifically, she is studying the way that these writers engage diaspora—how dispersed people are connected through a shared heritage—in their works as a means of theorizing black women’s identity within an African Diaspora context.

As a fellow, she is able to communicate this knowledge to her students. Dr. Susan Freeman, who recommended Crump for the position, explains that although many of the professors teach the same introductory-level courses, they all have the opportunity to bring their research interests into the classroom. “Helen’s focus on women’s narratives introduces our students to a broad range of experiences and new ways of thinking about how gender intersects with race, class, and other identity categories,” says Freeman. “Her work captures the interdisciplinary approach of women’s studies.”

Crump and Mitchell bring fresh and diverse perspectives to their programs. Their heritage, past experiences, and research make them valuable resources for their students. Perhaps equally important, they have both felt at home and welcome in their departments and the campus community. “My department has been very supportive,” says Mitchell. “They have mentored and involved me since day one.” Crump agrees. “The support I received was phenomenal.”

The Pre-Doctoral Fellows program is a signal to emerging scholars around the country that Minnesota State Mankato is a place that embraces diversity and can embed diversity into our campus environment. If the experiences of Crump and Mitchell are any indication, the program is a winning situation for the fellows, their students, and the campus community.

ENRICHING THE CAMPUS COMMUNITY continued from page 7

Doctoral Degrees Conferred by Racial/Ethnic Group in 2005

- 57.5% African American
- 9.5% Hispanic
- 5.5% Asian/Pacific Islander
- 0.5% American Indian/Alaskan Native
- 27.0% International
- 5.0% Other

Foundation Student Research Awards

Student: Jay Busby
Faculty Mentor: Melodie Andrews
Project: Reconciling the Past: Mankato Hanging Monument and the Duluth Clayton Jackson McGilley Memorial

Student: Ben Casey
Faculty Mentor: Timothy Scovett
Project: Optimizing the Expression of Foreign Genes in Mycobacterium Smegmatis

Student: Aaron Danberry
Faculty Mentor: Trent Vollick

Student: Laura Grubbs
Faculty Mentor: Dawn Albertson
Project: Individual Experiences and Subjective Effects of Saliva Divinorum Among Recreational Users

Student: Daniel L. Haus
Faculty Mentor: Geoff Goellner
Project: Effect of Normal Polytetraaminopolyamine on Huntington’s Disease Protein Function

Student: Samuel Hickman
Faculty Mentor: Jonathan Page
Project: Cortical Evidence of Misperception

Student: Nicole Jonttinen
Faculty Mentor: Theresa Salerno
Project: The Effect of Reduced Maternal Aldosterone and Corticosterone levels on the Expression of 11B-HSD Enzymes in Normal and Hypertensive Rat Placentae

Student: Renee Lee
Faculty Mentor: Ockjean Kim
Project: Future Teachers’ Perceptions of Treatment for Challenging Behavior in Autism

Student: Harumi Okoshi
Faculty Mentor: Erik Waterkotte
Project: Impact of Combining Traditional Printmaking with Contemporary Digital Print

Student: Amina Salm
Faculty Mentor: Norma Krummweide
Project: Health Behaviors of Somali Families

Each year, with the guidance of their faculty mentors, undergraduate students compete for grant funding to support the research and creative projects they hope to present at the Undergraduate Research Conference (URC). Proposals are evaluated by a sub-committee of the URC Steering Committee, which awards grants in three categories. Foundation Grants, which are funded by a generous donation from the Minneapolis State Mankato Foundation Board, provide up to $1,000. University Grants provide up to $750, and Research Conference (URC) Grants provide up to $500. Foundation Student Research Award recipients and their faculty mentors are listed below.

Student: Garett Soukap, Sean Wimer, Chris Henney, Andrew Kindschi
Faculty Mentor: Bruce Jones
Project: NIEV Plug-In Hybrid

Student: Hanna Beth Stapleton
Faculty Mentor: Kwon Woo (Ken) Park
Project: Determinants of Traffic Fatalities in the U.S.

Student: Kevin Stuehler
Faculty Mentor: Marilyn Hart
Project: Protein-Protein Interactions of the β1 and β2 Forms of Actin Capping Protein

Student: Heather Stuerzen, Brenna Waack
Faculty Mentor: Susan Fredstrom
Project: Nutrition Education in Weight Control Programs for Children 6-12 Years Old

Student: Alissa Eimen
Faculty Mentor: Alissa Eimen
Project: Iranian Identity and Modern Art: The Saqqakhaneh Group

10TH ANNUAL UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH CONFERENCE RECOGNIZES OUTSTANDING STUDENT PROJECTS

Student: Harumi Okoshi
Faculty Mentor: Erik Waterkotte
Project: Impact of Combining Traditional Printmaking with Contemporary Digital Print
URC LARGE GRANTS

URC Large Grants provide a $600 stipend and either $500 or $250 in research supplies. Faculty may mentor only one large grant per academic year. 2008 URC Large Grant Recipients and their faculty mentors are listed below.

Student: James Fett
Faculty Mentor: Shannon Fisher
Project: A Comparison Among Three Sampling Methods to Calculate Biotic Integrity in the Greater Blue Earth River Basin

Student: Chad Gunderson
Faculty Mentor: Todd Shanafelt
Project: Pushing the Limits of Clay: Sculpting with Ceramic Glaze

Student: Neil Gessner, Daniel O’Connor, Daniel Krumwiede
Faculty Mentor: Forrest Willkerson
Project: Rates of Slope Erosion Near the New Sears Dormitory on the Campus of Minnesota State University, Mankato

Student: Rachael Quast, Patrick Wilson
Faculty Mentors: Susan Fredstrom and Mary Visser
Project: The Effect of Aerobic Conditioning vs. Resistance Training on Resting Metabolic Rate

Student: Nisajith Welikadage
Faculty Mentor: Bradley Cook
Project: The Effect of Carbon on Soil Microbial Communities in Symbiotic Relationships with Invasive Plant Species

MINNESOTA STATE MANKATO RESEARCH WEEK April 18-25, 2008

The College of Graduate Studies and Research is proud to sponsor the first annual Research Week. Building on the success of the Undergraduate Research Conference, Research Week will be held annually during the third week in April. In addition to this year’s events, future Research Weeks may also include a Graduate Research Conference.

Friday, April 18, 2008
McNair Achievement Program Recognition Event
12:30 p.m. – 2:00 p.m., CSU 285

Monday, April 21, 2008
Undergraduate Research Conference, Centennial Student Union
Tuesday, April 22, 2008
Undergraduate Research Conference, Centennial Student Union
URC Luncheon and Awards Ceremony, 1:00 – 2:00 p.m., Center Ballroom

Wednesday, April 23, 2008
Research and Sponsored Programs (RASP) Recognition Ceremony
11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m., CSU 284

Thursday, April 24, 2008
Distinguished Faculty Scholar Award Luncheon
11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m., CSU 253

Friday, April 25, 2008
Midwest Association of Graduate Schools Distinguished Thesis Nominee Luncheon
11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m., Johnson Alumni Room

As Minnesota’s cultural landscape continues to change, it is important that we recognize the challenges that diversity presents to our communities. Perhaps the most significant adaptation must take place within our education system. It is imperative that teachers and students alike recognize the hurdles that arise from the cultural and language barriers present in today’s classrooms.

Dr. Lillian Duran of the Department of Elementary and Early Childhood Education and Dr. Daria Paul Dona of the Department of Educational Studies: K-12 and Secondary Programs are working hard to provide successful approaches for bridging the culture gap between today’s teachers and students. Both professors are currently working on research that will help ensure success for Minnesota’s teachers, students, and school districts as we continue to face an ever-changing population.

Dr. Lillian Duran’s research stemmed from her work as an Early Childhood Special Education teacher for the Spanish-speaking population in southern Minnesota. “I was working with so many Spanish speaking children in this area and I wanted to know how to better serve them,” explains Duran. “There are currently no special services in place for bilingual preschool children and no one was asking whether this was the best approach for these kids.”

In response, Duran implemented a transitional bilingual program at the Faribault Head Start this past fall. A three-year endeavor, the program focuses on assessing the language and literacy learning outcomes of bilingual children. “I’m hoping that the program will help us to
better understand if we need native language support to improve school readiness,” says Duran.

Two classrooms made up entirely of Spanish speaking children have been established. The first year, only English will be spoken in one classroom and, in the other, only Spanish. The same cohort group will move on to their second year at Head Start and again the students in the English-speaking classroom will speak only English. However, the students in the Spanish-speaking classroom will move on to a classroom in which both English and Spanish are spoken. The third year will be used to track both groups’ progress during their year of kindergarten.

Although the pre-test data were collected this fall, time limitations have kept Duran from analyzing and presenting the results. However, her dissertation, which dealt with similar issues in a different Spanish-speaking population, found that students’ language performance was low in both Spanish and English and she’s curious to see if this trend exists in this population as well. Duran’s previous research also highlights the fact that teacher training is critically important, no matter the language. “It’s not just about the kids, it’s about the teacher as well,” says Duran.

Dr. Duran Paul Dona’s research focuses on this very idea. Paul Dona is currently a member of the Minnesota Teacher Educational Research Consortium (MNTERC), which is comprised of faculty from Minnesota State Mankato, the University of Minnesota, and the College of St. Catherine. The consortium is making a collaborative effort to research and evaluate the various elements of teacher preparation that train students to teach in diverse settings. “As we look at Minnesota schools, the demographic of our state is changing fairly rapidly in terms of the diversity of student bodies,” explains Paul Dona. “How well are our teachers prepared to effectively impact the learning of these students?”

The project, Preparing Minnesota Teachers for Diverse Contexts, involves reviewing national research, as well as collecting both qualitative and quantitative primary data. The consortium designed a survey that was given to spring 2006 graduates from the participating institutions who are currently working in the field. In addition, a selected sub-sample of teachers were given phone interviews and shadowed during a day of work.

With data from the first class collected, the consortium is currently focusing on analyzing the data, presenting their results at several educational conferences, and increasing the validity and reliability of the survey before it is given to graduates this spring. “We want to continue to move forward each year with our research,” says Paul Dona.

By focusing on the needs of teachers and students, Duran and Paul Dona are explicitly addressing how our educational system will respond to the changing demographics of our communities. The result should be two-fold: teachers who feel confident in their ability to guide their students through their education and students who feel a sense of inclusion and importance in our society. We have an ethical responsibility to ensure that these two goals are met, and Duran and Paul Dona are on the front lines making sure that we do.

MINNESOTA STATE MANKATO A “HIGH-USE” MEMBER OF ICPSR

In its first six months as a member of the Interuniversity Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR), Minnesota State Mankato distinguished itself as a “high-use” member, downloading more datasets than comparable institutions download in an entire year.

The ICPSR membership, which is jointly funded by Library Services, the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences, and RASP, provides access to large data sets for use by researchers in multiple disciplines.

As of December 2007, Minnesota State Mankato had downloaded 126 members-only datasets. At $500 per dataset for nonmembers, the total cost to faculty would have been $63,000.

According to ICPSR, the median number of datasets downloaded by member institutions in FY 2007 was 89—prompting ICPSR staff to note that the University had gone from a new member to a high-use member in less than six months.

Dollar Amount of Grant and Contract Applications by College/Division

July 1, 2007–February 15, 2008

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<th>College/Division</th>
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<td>Science, Engineering, and Technology</td>
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Through February 15, 2008, Minnesota State Mankato faculty and staff had submitted 121 grant and contract applications totaling more than $23 million. With more than four months remaining in FY 2008, the number of submitted grant and contract applications equaled the total number submitted in all of FY 2007.

EXTERNAL FUNDING ON PACE FOR RECORD-BREAKING YEAR

FY 2007 Funding by Source

- Federal
- Foundation
- Local
- MNSCU
- Other
- Private
- State

Of the $6.2 million in external funding awarded to Minnesota State Mankato faculty and staff in FY 2007, 36%—or $2.3 million—was federal funding from agencies such as the National Science Foundation, the Department of Education, and the National Institutes of Health.
The Center for Excellence in Scholarship and Research (CESR) was established in January 2007 to support faculty publication and scholarship. This January marked the program’s one-year anniversary, but for David Chapman, CESR’s current editing specialist, the celebration is bittersweet, as it also means his time as a graduate assistant for the program is nearing an end.

Chapman, a student in the technical communication graduate program, was hired last January to assist faculty with the production of their scholarly works. A significant factor in the program’s rapid success, he works hard to make faculty aware of the services available through CESR. “We have done a lot of leg-work to simply get our name out there,” explains Chapman. “We want faculty to be aware that CESR exists and to understand the services we offer.” The approach is working. Since the center’s inception, Chapman has edited over 1,100 pages of scholarly manuscripts for 21 faculty members from all seven academic colleges. “Most of the faculty who have used our services are now repeat customers,” says Chapman. “The program is a success—we just have to get more people to know how we can help them.”

Perhaps the most effective approach to increasing awareness of the program’s services has been the quality support Chapman has continually provided to Minnesota State Mankato’s faculty. Dr. Paul Mackie, assistant professor of social work, was the first faculty member to send Chapman a manuscript for review. “David is an accomplished editor, has a sophisticated knowledge of the APA writing style, and always offers suggestions that strengthen my written work,” says Mackie. “Simply put, I do not submit journal entries until he has reviewed them.” Dr. Stephen Larson, assistant professor of finance, has had the same experience. “David’s service to research at Minnesota State Mankato is quite valuable and I hope others continue to take advantage of it. One of the papers he edited won best paper at a conference last month, and another was just published.”

Originally from California, Chapman received his undergraduate degree in entomology and a minor in math from Ohio State. He then worked as an environmental consultant in Sacramento for three years before accepting a job working on asbestos carcinogenicity for the Environmental Protection Agency in Duluth. Chapman credits these experiences for his success at CESR. “I have a background in diverse fields,” he explains. “I’ve studied and have an interest in science, and I drew on this knowledge to help relate to the subject matter I am reading.”

In both jobs, Chapman communicated scientific information, but he had no formal training in either communication or writing. “I decided to go back to school because I felt that expertise in technical writing would give me a professional advantage,” says Chapman. Shortly after Chapman’s acceptance into the technical communication program, Dr. Roland Nord, the program director, recommended him for the job at CESR. “Through our correspondence, I recognized the potential David had,” says Nord. “His background in the sciences, work experience, and demonstrated expertise with language led me to believe that he could excel as an editor.”

Chapman feels grateful to the technical communication faculty for providing a first-rate program of study, and he feels lucky for the opportunity he was presented at CESR. He has found the position extremely fulfilling, not only because of the change in his career but also because of his ability to assist in the research process. “What I am here to do is help scholars communicate the knowledge that they have spent so much of their time and energy developing,” he explains. “Even to play a small role in this process feels like a real contribution to science in general.”

The McNair Achievement Program (MAP) gives students “the portable skills and experiences they need to be successful in the future.” The only program in the state to receive the maximum allowable funding—and a perfect score in the grant review process—MAP will serve 30 students beginning in fall 2008. According to interim director Linda La Vanta (pictured), the Minnesota State Mankato McNair Achievement Program (MAP) gives students “the portable skills and experiences they need to be successful in the future.” The only program in the state to receive the maximum allowable funding—and a perfect score in the grant review process—MAP will serve 30 students beginning in fall 2008.

Alfon Enger was just starting to think about graduate school when she first heard about the McNair Achievement Program. An undergraduate student in urban and regional studies at Minnesota State Mankato, Enger was unsure about her future goals and whether earning a graduate degree in urban planning was the right choice for her. Now enrolled in a master’s program in city and regional planning at Rutgers University, Enger credits the McNair program with helping her clarify her goals and providing the support she needed to reach them. “The program helped me understand that urban planning was the perfect field for me,” says Enger.

The McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program, which was established by the United States Congress in memory of astronaut Ronald E. McNair’s lifelong commitment to scholarship, helps low-income, first-generation, and under-represented students effectively prepare for graduate studies. Minnesota State Mankato’s program, founded in 2003, offers its scholars a faculty mentor, research opportunities, workshops and seminars, funds to travel, preparation for graduate entrance exams, and assistance with their applications to graduate school.

Universities that participate are required by Congress to reapply for grant funding every four years to maintain accountability in the program. The 2007–2008 academic year marked the last year of Minnesota State Mankato’s original grant but, due to the hard work and effort of the McNair staff, the grant has been renewed. “We received a perfect score on the application, funding for the entire five years, and the maximum grant of $231,000 annually,” explains McNair Interim Director Laura Bartolo. Both past and current scholars have attested to the importance of the McNair Program in helping them achieve their goals. “It has opened a lot of doors that weren’t open for me before,” says current scholar Yonis Gabow. According to interim director Linda La Vanta (pictured), the Minnesota State Mankato McNair Achievement Program (MAP) gives students “the portable skills and experiences they need to be successful in the future.” The only program in the state to receive the maximum allowable funding—and a perfect score in the grant review process—MAP will serve 30 students beginning in fall 2008.

DIVERSIFYING THE DOCTORATE

scholar Yonis Gabow. “The access to resources they provide is tremendous.” Enger agrees: “I never would have known which graduate school was the right fit if I hadn’t visited them,” she says. “And I never would have been able to afford the travel on my own.”

Former scholar, Joe Williams, who is currently pursuing his doctoral degree in Counselor Education and Supervision at the University of Iowa, communicated a similar sentiment. “I could not afford to attend workshops or buy books that would improve my research, writing, and presentation skills,” he explains. “The McNair program helped me gain these essential skills.”

Given success stories such as Williams’, who is the first Minnesota State Mankato McNair scholar to enroll in a doctoral program, there is no doubt that the program has worked in the past. And the increased funding means that the McNair staff will be able to provide more resources to additional students. In fact, the program will begin to implement significant changes beginning this spring. Instead of 22 students, the program will now be able to serve 30 students, and Bartolo, along with her assistant Marla Bock, has already begun to look for next year’s scholars.

In addition to serving more students, the program’s research component will also receive a substantial makeover. Previously a summer-based program, students will now complete their research projects during the school year. Former McNair scholar, Jessica Bonfigli, believes this will be a positive change. “Although students will have to balance their research against several factors—such as classes, work, and family—they will have more time to develop their project and complete the research process,” she says. “It may be a challenge for some, but it will also provide a look into what graduate school is really like.”

And this is exactly what Bartolo had in mind when she envisioned these changes. “I really feel like we are going in the right direction,” she says. “We are raising the bar for the program and for the students, but we are also giving them the portable skills and experiences they need to be successful in the future.”

Minnesota State University, Mankato

Center for Excellence in Scholarship and Research

The McNair Achievement Program “has opened a lot of doors that weren’t open for me before,” says current scholar Yonis Gabow. According to interim director Linda La Vanta (pictured), the Minnesota State Mankato McNair Achievement Program (MAP) gives students “the portable skills and experiences they need to be successful in the future.” The only program in the state to receive the maximum allowable funding—and a perfect score in the grant review process—MAP will serve 30 students beginning in fall 2008.
Origami paper cranes—considered a sign of peace or hopefulness—adorn the memorial obelisk in the cemetery at Manzanar, a Japanese-American internment camp. The image is part of Dr. Gina Wenger’s photographic documentary of present-day Manzanar.