Sociology and corrections professors Vicki Hunter, foreground, and Kim Greer received a research grant from the College of Graduate Studies and Research to conduct a longitudinal study of women released from prison. They hope to learn how women’s perceptions of self impact their transition from prison to society.
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.

Above: Assistant professor of art history Alisa Eimen snapped this image of the Selimiye Camii (Congregational Mosque) during her travels to Edirne, Turkey. Eimen traveled to Turkey while researching the role of tradition and modernization in Turkish art and architecture. Turkey’s most famous architect, Sinan, was under the employ of the Ottoman dynasty in the 16th century when he was commissioned to design the mosque by Sultan Selim II. Completed in 1574, the mosque is considered the epitome of Ottoman mosque design and is still in use today.
HONORING POSSIBILITY AND POTENTIAL

Without knowing it, Dr. Chris Corley had been preparing to become the director of Minnesota State Mankato’s Honors Program for years. A former honors student at Bloomsburg University in Pennsylvania, Corley candidly acknowledges that his honors experience changed the course of his life.

FRONTIERS

SEARCHING FOR A DISORDER’S ROOTS IN THE FAMILY TREE

Clinical psychology graduate student Kendra Homan’s research with Mayo Clinic uncovered a correlation between psychiatric disorders in mothers and ADHD in children.

EXPANDING THE BORDERS OF LANGUAGE LEARNING

Three new Fulbright student scholars are focused on making the most of their time here. They share an ambition: to use what they learn to help individuals and communities in their home regions of the world.

ENGENDERING A NEW MODEL OF ADDICTION AND TREATMENT

Assistant professor of counseling and student personnel Jennifer Pepperell hopes her book will improve treatment services for women and girls with addictions. She is co-author of Women, Girls, and Addiction: Celebrating the Feminine in Counseling Treatment and Recovery.

UNLOCKING WOMEN PRISONERS’ REENTRY EXPERIENCES

Minnesota State Mankato sociology and corrections professors Vicki Hunter and Kim Greer hope their 4-year study reveals whether self-perception is related to women prisoners’ ability to successfully transition from prison.

DEPARTMENTS

4 HONORS
6 GSR
10 CESR
12 MAP
13 URC
14 RASP
16 A THOUSAND WORDS
Dr. Chris Corley has been busy networking with key stakeholders within the University, in high schools, and at open house events to spread the word about the redesigned Honors Program at Minnesota State Mankato.
On a Sunday evening late in August, eleven Minnesota State Mankato students were joined by faculty and administrators at a dinner to celebrate the students’ presence at the University. The dinner, hosted at the North Mankato home of Dr. Chris Corley, was the kind of event that is commonplace at small liberal arts colleges where students expect informal interaction with their faculty members and easy access to administrators. While less common at larger, state institutions like Minnesota State Mankato, it’s the kind of event that Corley hopes will help create a sense of belonging and community for this particular group of students—the inaugural class in the University’s newly redesigned Honors Program.

With varied backgrounds and interests, the 2009 first-year honors students present a much broader picture of Honors than the stereotypical group of science or math geeks. There are art majors, science majors, and students who are still undecided. Corley felt that building community was paramount to early success. “I think sometimes we forget what it is like to be on a college campus for the first time,” he said. To that end, he and his wife, Jolly, hosted the dinner at their home. The evening set the tone for the program.

Honors student Cameron Hovey said, “When I first met Dr. Corley, I was immediately impressed and excited about what the Honors Program could offer. I was finally secure in my knowledge that I had done the right thing signing up. The casual gathering at the Corleys’ had a great influence on me,” said Hovey. “Surrounded by these exceptional minds and lives full of experience, I couldn’t help but think, ‘That’s what I want. I want to be like these people.’”

Without knowing it, Corley had been preparing to become the director of Minnesota State Mankato’s Honors Program for years. A former honors student at Bloomsburg University in Pennsylvania, Corley believes his honors experience changed the course of his life. A product of the late ’80s, he originally planned to major in finance. However as a first-year student, one of his first courses was honors introduction to philosophy, and that changed everything.

“It changed how I looked at learning and how I looked at the world,” said Corley. “My experience in the honors program was similar to a religious conversion. The professors and peers were so different from my high school experience and that was very exciting.” He is eager to facilitate that experience for students at Minnesota State Mankato.

After participation slowly dwindled, the Honors Program at Minnesota State Mankato was temporarily suspended for reevaluation in 2007. Campus-wide groups of faculty members and administrators gathered information from national conferences and wrestled with several questions: What kind of honors program should Minnesota State Mankato have? What should it mean to students and faculty? How should it be organized? What are the key components?

Gradually, a new program design emerged, focusing on leadership, research, and global citizenship. Anne Blackhurst, Dean of the College of Graduate Studies and Research, which is the new administrative home for the program, said, “Dr. Corley personifies the new program’s focus on global citizenship, research, and leadership. Aside from being profoundly transformed by his own honors experience, he is an international scholar with a long-standing commitment to undergraduate student research and a respected campus leader.”

As the dinner guests seated themselves around tables in the Corley family’s backyard, conversation turned to the students’ early perceptions of university life and the Honors Program. Students were inspired by Corley’s story of how his own honors experience helped him to excel and flourish. Hovey said, “Dr. Corley shared that it was his intention to give us that same opportunity. It inspires me because that’s what I want to accomplish in my own life—see the world, work hard to overcome challenges, and give back. When I look back, I hope to have made the same impact on others that Dr. Corley and the rest of the faculty have made on me.”
Graduate students who study clinical psychology at Minnesota State Mankato may complete their required practicum almost anywhere in the country. But, graduate student Kendra Homan feels fortunate to have had a unique opportunity close to home.

Homan began her practicum in Olmsted County at Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota during the summer of 2008. Olmsted County is the only place in the world where health care records are centralized for the entire county population. Researchers have access to medical records, from birth to death, to conduct population-based studies on patterns of illness, effectiveness of treatment, genetic predispositions, and more.

When Homan began her practicum, five doctors at Mayo Clinic were in the second year of a five-year study on attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) in children. “I was more interested in adult psychiatric disorders so they suggested that I conduct research on the mothers of children with ADHD. We wanted to see if there was any genetic or environmental link between psychiatric disorders in mothers and ADHD in their children,” said Homan.

Homan soon learned that the blessing of access to the mounds of medical records that enabled her to conduct population-based research could also be a bit overwhelming. The research project required her to develop a protocol and review the entire medical histories of 925 mothers who had children born between 1976 and 1982. Working 40
hours a week during June and July, Homan got through only about half of the files. “It took me a while to develop the protocol,” she said, smiling.

In August, Homan resumed her graduate coursework and teaching assistantship at Minnesota State Mankato. Dr. Daniel Houlihan, Homan’s academic advisor, said, “Kendra seemed to effortlessly balance all of the responsibilities of study, teaching, and research.” Homan’s deadline for the project was November so the paper could be submitted for presentation at the Pediatric Academic Societies conference in Baltimore in spring 2009.

Homan’s research team discovered a correlation between psychiatric disorders in mothers and ADHD in children. “We found that a mother with any psychiatric disorder diagnosed prior to her child’s birth is 2.5 times more likely to have a child with ADHD than a mother with no psychiatric diagnosis prior to her child’s birth. And, among mothers without psychiatric disorders prior to their children’s birth, mothers of children with ADHD were 1.7 times more likely to develop a psychiatric disorder after the child’s birth,” said Homan.

Do maternal psychiatric disorders cause ADHD in children or do children with ADHD cause psychiatric disorders in mothers? The answer to the nature/nurture debate seems to lie somewhere in between.

Dr. Michael Mellon, pediatric psychologist and one of Homan’s advisors at Mayo said, “We have to be very careful about reporting our findings. We can only identify that there is a relationship between children with ADHD and maternal psychiatric adjustment disorders. The study did find a greater probability of adjustment disorders in mothers of children with ADHD; however, there needs to be a great deal more research before we can identify the cause,” said Mellon.

This study is significant because it likely provides the first population-based evidence for increased rates of psychiatric disorders among mothers of children with ADHD.

Homan is obviously proud of her work but seemed most rewarded by the fact that she was treated like a professional both at Minnesota State Mankato and at Mayo Clinic. “One reason I chose the clinical psychology program at Minnesota State Mankato was because the professors treated me as a professional,” said Homan. “And the doctors at Mayo respected my opinion and considered me part of the research team.”

Mellon was impressed with Homan both personally and professionally. “Kendra is a rare person who is kind, motivated, focused, intelligent, and spiritual. She has very ambitious professional goals and I am absolutely confident she will achieve them,” said Mellon.

ROOTS IN THE FAMILY TREE

ROCHESTER EPIDEMIOLOGY PROJECT

The project area in which Homan’s study was conducted is located in Minnesota’s Olmsted County. With health care provided only by Mayo Clinic and Olmsted Medical Center, the project area provides extensive, computerized indices of medical diagnoses for all medical care provided to residents of the county. In addition, Independent School District #535 provides education administration for all public and private schools, giving researchers unprecedented access to medical and school records of county residents.
Three new Fulbright student scholars, (from left) Nhon Thanh Dang from Vietnam, Dira Thokwane from South Africa, and Youssouf Magassouba from Mali began working on their graduate degrees in English in fall 2009.
The roster of former Fulbright scholars includes the names of presidents, diplomats, and professors, as well as business and community leaders. Soon, that roster will include three new scholars from Minnesota State Mankato’s graduate program in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL).

All three of the new Fulbright scholars are focused on making the most of their time here. None are boastful, but the pride in their accomplishments and the energy to pass on their good fortune is palpable. They share an ambition that extends beyond themselves: to use what they learn to help individuals and communities in their home regions of the world.

Speaking English has helped Youssouf Magassouba from Mali in ways he could never have imagined. He has worked as a translator for a security subcontractor for the U.S. Embassy and international companies, meeting dignitaries and traveling the world. Trained as an English teacher, he wanted to help other people in his country achieve similar success.

In 2003, after lengthy negotiations with local government officials, Magassouba was granted permission to offer after-hours English classes at three public schools in a poor area near an international mining operation. It was not an easy task; he endured some criticism for wanting to do things a different way. The program, called “Hey, English Will Help You,” uses both South African expatriate volunteers and volunteer teachers from the American International School of Bamako.

Students of the program have enjoyed great success. One former student, for example, won a prestigious government scholarship of excellence—the only one awarded that year. Magassouba plans to use the education he gains in the U.S. as leverage to expand the program to reach as many students as possible.

Nhon Dang, from Vietnam, recently lived and taught English in a specialized high school in a remote area in Vietnam. English education is limited in remote areas where agriculture is the main focus and education is not often a priority. All family members are needed to work to ensure financial security. In addition, exposure to English speakers is rare.

According to Dang, English is critical for career and education advancement in Vietnam. However, English education in Vietnam is not very effective. Even after seven or eight years of English education, students are often unable to communicate using English.

Dang is passionate about sharing new teaching techniques with his colleagues and hopes to make a difference in how English is taught in Vietnam. “First, I plan to disseminate what I experience and learn here to other teachers through seminars,” he said. “And later, perhaps, I will collaborate with others to offer higher-level classes to English students.”

Dira Thokwane, from South Africa, has more than one goal. “The literacy rate in South Africa is low,” he said. “My primary objective is to teach my fellow citizens how to read. Technology is rapidly infiltrating the whole of South Africa. Most of the materials are in English, so if you don't know how to read that is a problem.”

He also expressed concern about the erosion of the English language in
his country. He said, traditionally, the focus has been on oral communication. Teachers value the message over the mechanics. As long as students can communicate with others, it is considered acceptable. However, the way South Africans modify and naturalize the English language limits their ability to communicate internationally. Thokwane said, "We must help our learners communicate in English internationally."

With such ambitious goals, Thokwane didn't leave his Fulbright placement to chance. "Before arriving, I checked out the university online and I was hooked. The technology is so advanced; the professors are so creative. I am happy to be taught by those who are trained as teachers," he said.

According to the State Department, the goal of the Fulbright Program is to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries. Fulbright foreign student scholars studying in the U.S. (about 1,800 annually) are spread across the country as a way to extend the reach of the program.

So, at the outset of the term, Stephen Stoynoff, Graduate Director for the Department of English and the Director of the MA TESL program, noted with surprise that the three new students would increase the total number of Fulbright scholars in the TESL program to five.

According to Stoynoff, Fulbright placement officers do not typically allow so many students to enroll in the same program at the same time. He believes these extraordinary students are at Minnesota State Mankato because the University offers them a positive educational experience. "We reached out to Fulbright placement officers and let them know we had a strong TESL program and we are committed to the ideals of the Fulbright program," he said.

Fulbright placement officer Peter Raucci said, "Overall, Minnesota State's TESL program is a wonderful academic fit for many of our grantees."

"In addition," said Stoynoff, "I think it helps that the campus and community are welcoming and students leave with a positive experience. We have been really effective at helping these students develop friendships and connections within the University and the local community."

Stoynoff's feelings were echoed by the students. Nhon Thanh Dang said, "Cultural activities—not just books—are a part of learning. My main purpose here is to be exposed to everything possible. And both the learning and living facilities here are excellent."

"I am making friends who I hope one day will come to my country," said Dira Thokwane. "The community is good. I feel safe walking home from the library or gym. I feel like I can focus on what I came here to do."
biochemistry, women experience telescoping on the road to addiction: Even though women may begin problem use later in life, they become addicted more quickly than comparative male clients.”

Therefore, treatment options need to be different. Pepperell and Briggs recognized early that the 12-step program, which has been wonderful for millions, wasn’t the most effective for treating addictions of women and girls. “It doesn’t take into consideration the complete person. We believe that in order to treat addiction, you have to look at the whole person,” said Pepperell.

Written primarily for counselors and counseling educators, Women, Girls, and Addiction covers more than just substance abuse. It also discusses process addictions such as shopping, gambling, and self-harming behavior. The authors note that treatment is not about the substance but rather the process and the needs of each individual woman.

From idea to book in hand, Pepperell estimates the process took about 18 months. Although the work was intense, Pepperell enjoyed the process. “Quite frankly, it was one of the most fun projects I have worked on,” she said.

Pepperell and Briggs plan to continue working together. Their next research project involves alcohol use in college-age women.

Women, Girls, and Addiction: Celebrating the Feminine in Counseling Treatment and Recovery was published in June 2009 by Routledge. It is available at Minnesota State Mankato’s Memorial Library and for purchase from the campus Barnes and Noble, the Maverick Bookstore, and online.
Mohamed Seck is a McNair scholar pursuing a double major in international relations and anthropology. He is currently studying Arabic in Irbid, Jordan.

When Minnesota State Mankato officials announced the goal to increase global outreach, they probably didn’t know about Mohamed Seck. A McNair scholar pursuing a double major in international relations and anthropology, Seck is currently studying Arabic in Irbid, Jordan. While he may not be a typical college student, Seck reflects the caliber of faculty and students who study and teach at the University.

So far, Seck’s experience discussing politics in Jordan has been much different from his experience in the United States. “People in Jordan are passionate about politics and very aware because it affects their lives so much they cannot ignore it,” he said. “In contrast, Americans can watch VH1 reality shows and be completely detached from political realities because things are stable.”

Born in West Africa, Seck grew up in Connecticut, graduated high school in Georgia, and was recruited to play Division I football. Last summer he served as an intern for New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg’s office.

As a first year McNair scholar at Minnesota State Mankato, Seck did not shy away from complicated and controversial research. In fact, he seemed to dive right in. “My research project centers on sovereignty and national identity and the role these factors have played in perpetuating the Arab-Israeli conflict,” said Seck. “Since Israel’s establishment as an independent state in 1948, the social and political currents of Israel and Palestine have been a constant source of debate. The societal conditions of both Palestinians and Israelis have sparked questions among social scientists, policymakers, and people in the region,” he said.

Seck first travelled to Jordan in summer 2008 for a six-week Arabic language study and cultural immersion study abroad program supervised by Dr. Abdalla Battah. Seck extended his stay another six weeks. “I spent three months in the region last year, one and a half of which were spent collecting field notes in refugee camps in Palestine, Lebanon, and Jordan,” said Seck.

Seck’s second trip to Jordan began in August 2009, after he received a Boren Scholarship. The Boren Awards were established by the National Security Education Act of 1991 in an effort to “understand foreign cultures, strengthen U.S. economic competitiveness, and enhance international cooperation and security.” They include undergraduate scholarships, graduate fellowships, and institutional grants and focus on “geographic areas, languages, and fields of study deemed critical to U.S. national security.”

Although still a student at Minnesota State Mankato, Seck is studying Arabic at Yarmouk University, which he called one of the most renowned language study centers in the Middle East. In addition, he is also conducting a literature review. “I am intent on researching a topic that will have a meaningful impact on an understanding of the Arab-Israeli conflict,” he said.

Director of the McNair Program, Laura Bartolo, said, “This is a new experience for us to have one of our scholars involved in international study abroad. We strive to facilitate education experiences that are in the best interest of our students. And for Mohamed, it includes studying Arabic and conducting field research in Jordan.”

In addition to his studies and research, Seck also volunteers as an English teacher at a refugee camp one day a week. Aside from a short visit home around Thanksgiving, he plans to stay in Jordan until July.

Seck appreciates his connection to Minnesota. “I kind of found myself at Mankato. The University has brilliant professors who are passionate about what they do and who are willing to lend a hand to students.” After he graduates from Minnesota State Mankato, Seck’s plans include graduate school and eventual federal government or community service.
12TH ANNUAL UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH CONFERENCE WILL SHOWCASE OUTSTANDING STUDENT PROJECTS

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. Grants are awarded in three categories: Small Grants, Large Grants, and Foundation Grants, which are funded by a generous donation from the Minnesota State Mankato Foundation Board, provide stipends of $1,000 and up to $1,000 in supplies. Foundation Student Research Award recipients and their faculty mentors are listed at right.

Students: Vashti DeRosier, Molly Hyland
Project: The Effect of Training with Nintendo Wii Fit Balance Programs on Measures of Balance in Older Women
Faculty Mentor: Mary Visser, Human Performance

Student: Indumini Weeramantri
Faculty Mentor: Trent Vorlicek, Chemistry and Geology

Student: Naomi Timm
Project: More Than a Guy Thing? Going Beyond Gender to Investigate the Influence of Sex Roles on Alcohol Attitudes and Consumption
Faculty Mentor: Dawn Albertson, Psychology

Student: Lauren Kinkead
Project: Investigation of the Correlation between Viability and Optimal Oxygen Demand of Dormant Mycobacterium avium subsp. Paratuberculosis
Faculty Mentor: Tim Secott, Biological Sciences

Students: Ashley Keul, Christopher Somage, Daniel Winterlin
Project: Mapping Crime Locations on Minnesota State University Campus
Faculty Mentor: Forrest Wilkerson, Geography

Students: Carl Sorenson, Jacob Moser, Adam Nix, Mark Origer
Project: Waste Water Treatment Evaluation for the Effect of Antibiotics on Septic Systems
Faculty Mentor: Stephen Druschel, Mechanical and Civil Engineering

Students: Derek Schelling, Melissa Hanson, Nichole Gilbert
Faculty Mentor: Dan Toma, Biological Sciences

Students: Eric Miller, Travis Mrkvicka
Project: Analysis of CA6 Trinucleotide Repeat in the Novel Polyglutamine Protein KIAA1946
Faculty Mentor: Geoff Goellner, Biological Sciences

Students: Lauren Harding, Renee Lips
Project: IMR Deconstruction and Reconstruction: Mental Health Group Recovery
Faculty Mentor: Christine Black-Hughes, Social Work

Student: Margaret Steck
Project: Love and War: Rubens and the Fusion of Venus into the Personification of Peace
Faculty Mentor: Curt Germundson, Art

Student: Rachel Kruger
Project: Examining the Relationships between Self-Perception and Behavioral and Emotional Functioning in Young Girls
Faculty Mentor: Sarah Sifers, Psychology
More than 2.3 million individuals are housed in America’s prisons and jails, and about 1700 offenders are released daily. The most recent statistics reveal that 67.5 percent of people released from prisons reoffended within three years.

Why do some people rise above the odds and successfully transition from prison to society while others don’t? Minnesota State Mankato sociology and corrections professors Vicki Hunter and Kim Greer are investigating whether self-perception is, in part, related to the success of transition. Do people who reoffend have a different perception of self than those who do not?

Because women account for only 7.2 percent of the total prison population, the bulk of the research on crime and prisoners is focused on men. However, the number of women prisoners is growing at an alarming rate. From 1995 to 2005, the total number of female prisoners increased by 57 percent.

Both Hunter and Greer have studied women and incarceration. Recently, they became more interested in the process of prisoners’ reentry into society and in 2008 began a longitudinal study documenting women’s reentry experiences over four years.

Greer said, “This study is a natural progression of our research, although I don’t think either of us would have taken on a study of this magnitude without a committed research partner.”

Hunter added, “I believe that the partnership helps to
make the research more sound, both methodologically and substantively."

The study includes a pool of 43 volunteers who agreed to participate in several interviews: one prior to their release from prison and eight subsequent interviews beginning December 2008 and conducted every six months for four years.

When asked what they expect to find in their research, Hunter responded, “The beauty of qualitative research is that we don’t go into it expecting to find anything. We go in to learn something.”

Through personal interviews, Hunter and Greer are learning about women’s relationships with their families, their probation officers, and support programs, and how those relationships shape women’s decision making, behavior, and, ultimately, their access to services, family, jobs, and housing.

Speaking in generalities, Hunter explained that reentry is difficult in different ways for women than for men. “In spite of the progress of the women’s movement, women in the U.S. are still the primary caregivers,” she said.

When men are incarcerated, if they are fathers, their partners usually maintain the home and family unit. When women are incarcerated, they are often single parents and their family experiences greater disruption. The children may be separated and placed with relatives or in foster care and homes are lost. Women struggle more intently to reestablish their role in society.

“Preliminary analysis of the data revealed several emerging themes of concern for women talking about their reentry: labels they carry with them, negotiating their relationships, and locating necessary resources,” said Greer. Below are some examples of what the soon-to-be-released prisoners said about the challenges they face.

“I come from a very small town. And ... just people’s reactions, ‘cuz I’ve been gone a long time ... I’m sure I’m gonna worry about what they think. Everybody knows why I went to prison.”

“I worry about reconnecting with my daughter. I think... that’s one, one major thing... because I think it would have been easier if I hadn’t been locked up for so long, to... reconnect with her.”

“The main thing that I’m worried about at first is maybe finances. I don’t know if I’m leaving with a hundred bucks, or three hundred bucks—which really ain’t nothin’ when you’re trying to get back in society.”

These words reflect the concerns of women who are still in the early stages of reentry, anticipating challenges and trying to figure out what success will look like for them. For some, simply not using drugs to the extent their lives are in chaos is success. For others, success means a secure home, job, and an intact family.

Hunter and Greer hope to discover how women’s perceptions of self impact their transition and, ultimately, their vision of success. Once that is understood, perhaps policymakers, service providers, and released prisoners will be able to decrease the rates of recidivism. And that will look like success no matter what your point of view.
On their way home from school in Bolgatanga, Ghana, this group of 1st and 2nd grade girls stopped to check out the abruni or foreigner. The abruni was Dr. Hans-Peter DeRuiter, assistant professor of nursing, who was visiting Ghana exploring the Kintampo Health Research Centre research area. KHRC researchers map out the health status of the population and conduct research to determine the most efficient and effective ways to deliver care. Dr. DeRuiter is working to place Minnesota State Mankato doctoral nursing students with KHRC.