Greetings from Women’s and Gender Studies at UNI! I am pleased to welcome you to the latest newsletter from the program. It has been another difficult year that brought many new challenges, but also exciting new opportunities to build the program further. Since I last wrote to you, I have been working with Kalyani Kannan in the Gender and Sexuality Services Center to create a Women’s Center at the university, which as many of you know has been a longtime goal of the WGS program. Although there have been several hurdles to overcome, we are in the process of identifying a space to make this dream a reality. We have also just begun the creation of a major, and I am hopeful that we will soon start recruiting students in fall of 2023.

These changes would include an option for a combined 4+1 degree, an accelerated program in which students would begin graduate work in their senior year and complete the Master’s degree with only one additional year of coursework. Although there is still much work to be done on both of these initiatives, I am grateful to those who have supported our efforts, understanding that there remains a clear need for these resources both on campus and in the larger community. As recent events (such as the efforts to destroy the advances to women’s health brought by Roe v. Wade) have demonstrated, sustainable change must occur through education, outreach, and the tireless efforts of every generation to protect the rights of women and marginalized populations from those who would erase them.

As you scroll through the following pages and meet the many amazing people that make up our little community, I invite you to ponder their lives, their struggles, and their dreams—the hope for the future lies within them and others like them.

Best wishes for a joyous holiday season!
Wendy Marie Hoofnagle
Orientations are important programming events in our Department. This year’s WGS orientation was in-person. Sedomda, Staycie, and Wendy joined in to have a mini-series of lectures on the program, life on campus as graduate students, and other necessary tools needed to equip new our students on their road to success at UNI.

**SWAG Forum**
The Sexuality Women’s and Gender (SWAG) is our monthly program held every first Monday of the month. This forum creates a platform for faculty members and students to share current research on SWAG issues. After a year of Covid-19 uncertainty, we are proud to bring back the SWAG Forum.

Kicking off the first SWAG Forum was Dr. Michele Devlin, who is a professor in the Health, Recreation & Community Services department at UNI. She presented "Women in the Wild: Tales of a Lake Superior Medic & the Role of Women in Remote Area Medicine".

On our second SWAG Forum, we had Dr. Bettina Fabos, a professor of Visual Communication and Interactive Digital Studies at UNI. She presented "Feminist Personal Narratives and Digital Platforms". Dr. Bettina Fabos introduced three feminist digital projects from 30 years of digital video and website production.

The third and last SWAG Forum of the Fall semester, was held on December 6th. The WGS students shared their challenges as international or UNI students. They further encouraged a culture of building connection and sharing.
The Clothesline Project

The Women’s and Gender Studies Program at UNI continued the annual tradition of The Clothesline Project. It is organized in conjunction with Relationship Violence Awareness month in October. It is done in an attempt to bring awareness to the continual violence against women, children, men, the LGBTQ+ community, and other marginalized communities through the decorating of shirts. On the last day of the project, shirts were hung around the university for Bearing Witness.

Reproductive Rights March 2021

Many groups across the 50 states marched for reproductive rights on Saturday, October 2, 2021. In the Cedar Valley, many women and allies gathered in downtown Waterloo in support of reproductive rights. The march started at 11 am with various presentations from the organizers including Black Hawk County NOW and Americans for Democratic Action Iowa. Students in the WGS program joined for the march as well.
**Student Research**

Sedomda was the recipient of the WGS Yang Travel Award that sponsored her trip to Ghana this past summer for her research. "Even though the Global Pandemic brought so much uncertainty, I love that I am still getting the full experience with my research abroad and this scholarship opportunity made it a success."

The thesis title is on Agrochemicals and Rural Women's Health in the Volta Region of Ghana. Sedomda spent eight weeks in the Volta Region of Ghana—North-Dayi District. During her stay in Ghana, she had interviews with women, visited farms, and held meetings with the women.

**Three Minute Thesis Competition**

The Graduate College held its inaugural Three Minute Thesis competition at UNI. Students have to present their research in three minutes using simple words. Hakima who is one of our second year students from Afghanistan won the People's Choice Award for this competition.

Her preliminary Thesis Title is Marriage Practices in Afghanistan: a Study Based on Interview with Afghan women.

"In Afghanistan, marriage is considered as something that completes life and faith. However, there are several practices and beliefs attached to marriage that violate Afghan women’s fundamental marital rights and their happiness, but these practices and beliefs continue unquestioned. In my thesis, I want to analyze some of the marriage practices, such as dowry and bride price from the perspectives of married Afghan women".
MEET OUR NEWLY ADMITTED GRADUATE STUDENTS

Saja Abd El Hai
she/hers

I’m a Palestinian who lived and grew up in Israel. Coming from that background, the issue of identity always played an important role in my life. I’ve always been passionate about women’s and minorities’ issues and rights. I got a BA in TESOL from Israel, and now I’m on a thesis track for a Master’s in Women and Gender studies. For my thesis I will be focusing on the Palestinian–Israeli conflict, so stay tuned for that!

In my free time, I enjoy baking, eating, walking, and binge-watching The Office. I also love the ocean and fossil hunting and listening to True Crime podcasts.

Fatima Saadat
she/hers

First year Thesis Track
From: Bamyan, Afghanistan

Figuring out my thesis topic and path, I am inspired by Alice Walker, Breeze Harper, or Zora Neale Hurston, to look for different literary forms such as ethnographic fiction and social fiction to have a deeper impact on any audience through creative writing and personal stories.

Fun Facts: If you are a fan of horror, mystery genres, and Afghan Folklores, I welcome you to my world by reading "The Worms" featured in the upcoming Fiction work "My Pen is the Wing of a Bird: New Fiction by Afghan Women" coming out in February 2022.
MEET OUR NEWLY ADMITTED GRADUATE STUDENTS

Noshaba Shafiq  
First year Thesis Track  
From: Pakistan

Growing up in my community, I witnessed various forms of violence and injustice against women and children, which have caused most of these vulnerable populations on the streets. This inspired me to pursue a master's degree in WGS to gain a thorough understanding of social justice and violence prevention strategies to help champion this course in my community in the future.

Fun Fact: I love photography!

Gideon Bawuah  
First year Applied Track  
From: Ghana

Fun Fact: I played football in High School.
I am working on my thesis and starting to look at Ph.D. programs!

What I did in the summer of 2021 -- I crocheted over 20 projects and read (for fun)!

I am currently working on my thesis: Afghan women resisting marriage practices

Summer 2021: I visited my family in Turkey

Fun Fact: I like cooking, gym, tennis, and long walks.
My thesis applies public health theories to assess agrochemicals and rural women’s health in the Volta Region of Ghana.

This summer: I visited Chicago, Kansas, and North Carolina before traveling to Ghana. In Ghana, I collected data for my thesis, spent time with my family, and visited Wli Waterfalls.

Fun Fact: If I had to eat one type of food for the rest of my life, it would be plantains!
Agathon Fellowship
This fellowship supports students, (graduate and undergraduate) who have demonstrated a strong commitment to, and have had active roles in, supporting the LGBTQ+ community. Preference given to WGS MA students. Applicants must have a 3.0 GPA and will be full time at UNI in the 2022-2023 academic school year.
Deadline: March 1st, 2022

Francis L. Webster Scholarship
The Francis L. Webster Scholarship seeks to support any declared WGS graduate student or Sexuality, Women and Gender (SWAG) minor who has completed or is completing at least six hours of Women’s and Gender Studies required courses, and who will not graduate before December 2022. Applicants must have six completed hours of WGS or cross listed courses by the end of spring 2022 semester.
Deadline: March 1st, 2022

Outstanding Graduate Paper Award
This annual competition is designed to encourage and reward graduate scholars (within or outside of the WGS program) on their research in the area of gender issues. The prize includes a $100 cash award and being spotlighted as our final SWAG Forum presenter for the academic year. Applicants must submit a paper, identified as but not limited to the following: a chapter from a graduate thesis; a paper submitted for a course at UNI as a graduate student; a conference paper; or a creative project focusing on any of gender identity intersections. *Author of the winning paper must be willing and available to present at the SWAG Forum on Monday April 4th, 2022*
Deadline: February 15, 2022

Yang Travel Award
This fund is to be used to provide travel support for undergraduate and graduate students of the Women's and Gender Studies Program. The award is to be used for study and research outside of the United States and is to be awarded annually. The recipient(s) must have a GPA of 2.5 or above, and will be used during the 2022-2023 academic school year. The amount of the award is to be determined, travel related expenses and financial need shall be a consideration.
Deadline: April 15, 2022

For more information on applying for any of these awards, please e-mail wgs@uni.edu
Melody is working with Riverview Center as a sexual assault advocate. In this role, she wears many hats and each day looks different! While Melody realizes that there are many excellent resources for LGBTQ+ people in the Cedar Valley, more can be done. “Having a degree in Women's and Gender Studies has given me a foundation of understanding the intersections of identity and how these identities impact the experiences of survivors of sexual assault. During my MA in WGS, there were many conversations of power and control and privilege and oppression.” A few of the main responsibilities she has include: providing information and support to survivors of sexual assault when they receive the evidence kit collection, legal advocacy which includes filling out no-contact orders, working with law enforcement, Title IX offices, and navigating the court systems, counseling, and connecting clients with resources in the community. She does a significant amount of outreach in an effort to build community partnerships to work together to combat sexual assault.

Melody provides presentations on healthy relationships to students in addition to defining consent and what to do to act as an upstander against sexual assault. Additionally, she works on creating an LGBTQ+ coalition in this area (the Cedar Valley).

This coalition will be dedicated to providing resources and support to this specific population while supporting each other and each member’s respective agency/organization.

"I see these dynamics at work every single day, but having a thorough understanding from my coursework has helped me to navigate these issues with clients more effectively."
Save the Date!

**Cedar Valley Women’s March**  
Saturday, January 29th, 11:00 am  
Contact abdels@uni.edu for more information

**Black History Month SWAG Forum**  
**Speakers:** Dr. Reverend Belinda Creighton-Smith & Joyce Levingston  
Monday February 7th, 11:00 am

**Women’s History Month Keynote Speaker:**  
Gabby Rivera  
Thursday April 7th

*There is always light, if only we’re brave enough to see it. If only we’re brave enough to be it.*  
Amanda Gorman  
The youngest inaugural poet in US history