

## FROM THE DEAN: Engagement makes a difference



In February, 1999, the Kellogg Commission called on state and land-grant universities to engage themselves in community partnerships that are responsive, respectful, accessible, and neutral. UVM has taken leadership among these universities and we have committed ourselves to carrying out instruction and research in a manner which engages faculty and students in solving real problems in communities we serve. UVM's initiative is seeking to redefine the relationship of the university and community from one of outreach, extension and service, to a more interactive model of collaboration, integration and responsiveness.

The College of Education and Social Services is a model for engaged curriculum and programs.

I am particularly pleased not only at what CESS faculty and staff are doing in their communities, but how they are doing it. In CESS, the principles of engagement have long been embedded in our philosophy. I am proud of the extent to which our faculty and students focus on process and relationships in their work, and the ways in which these considerations have shaped their efforts. The CESS approach is to ensure that graduate and undergraduate students gain experience in addressing collaboratively-defined problems through research and direct professional practice. Schools, agencies and communities across Vermont and outside Vermont frequently contact me to let me know what a difference our students and faculty are making!

In this newsletter, you will read about the quality work of CESS students, faculty, staff and alumni/ae, who, in collaboration with community partners, are fulfilling the ideals of the engaged institution.

Jill Mattuck Tarule

## . . .in our TEACHING AND RESEARCH

### Social Work Students Do Whatever It Takes

*Whatever it Takes*, a collaborative project among Mousetrap Pediatrics in St. Albans, the UVM Department of Social Work, and the VT Department of Health, Division of Children with Special Health Needs, placed its second cohort of social work students (2 BSW and 2 MSW) in summer/fall of 1999. Mary Skidmore Taylor, MSW, LICSW is the Project Director, while Fred Holmes, MD serves as Medical Director, and Tracey Wagner, RN as Parent Consultant.

Four social work interns are placed in the offices of Mousetrap Pediatrics in St. Albans, where they receive pediatric referrals of families with complex service needs. With extensive supervision and training, the interns engage with families in developing either intensive social work services or brief services that make sense for the participating families and that address their individual priorities.

The overall goal of *Whatever it Takes* is to improve the quality of life for children and families in Franklin/Grand Isle counties through a partnership among social work students, pediatricians, and the community. Collaboratively they provide and coordinate consistent, creative, and comprehensive services for families and children whose healthy development is at risk, especially those who are challenged by poverty, cultural barriers, social and geographic isolation and/or special health care needs. Families may be dealing with illiteracy, transportation needs, frequent moves, difficult sibling behavior, or even eviction. Interns assist families in getting Medicaid, deal with the landlord and work with the school when kids are sick. They help find recreational outlets for special kids, work on sibling issues, support mothers who are trying to carry out taxing health care regimens for their kids and much more. Interns are prepared to do... "Whatever it Takes" to help families to realize their own goals and to promote the well-being of their children.

### Saw Reading Bring Dreams to Life. . .

So reflected a UVM America Reads VISTA Summer Associate after working with children in reading programs over the summer. In a two-week Bridges to Kindergarten Program, eight pre-kindergarten children ate lunch together each day, engaged in early literacy activities, and learned their way around the school. Althea Hodgson, pre-school teacher and Ann Kalinoski (i76) kindergarten teacher, worked with the assistance of UVM students and Americorps Vista volunteers in a partnership with Headstart, H.O. Wheeler School, and with support from the N.E. Regional Lab at Brown University. Kalinoski met with each child's parent/s to talk about school and their child's talents and needs.

Samantha Gold, (i98) collaborated with parent Terri Goddard to run the six-week Summer Library Program at Chamberlin Elementary School for 30 different children, as another summer effort which engaged young children as readers.

Under the supervision of Jane Meekelsen of Elementary Education, Samantha, Kriisten Nicolosi (i99), and Pat McCoy coordinate and implement America Reads\*Counts. Trained

## . . .for our GRADUATES

### APEX Alums Reflect on Habits of Engagement

"The APEX program was the best thing that ever happened to me in my teaching career, and it still shapes how I do my work," says Don Jarrett ('76), a St. Albans City Elementary School teacher in his 24<sup>th</sup> year of teaching 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade. Decades before the Kellogg Commission's report on the *engaged institution*, APEX, the CESS Elementary Education program of the '70s and '80s, was redefining learning relationships.

In the program, founded in 1973 by professors Charlie Rathbone and Frank Watson, faculty engaged with students, who in turn entered into engaged partnerships with school communities. The relationship modeled in the APEX program emphasized immersion and integration in school communities, mutual respect between faculty, APEX student teachers, teachers and school students, responsiveness to the needs of a given classroom and coordination with school teachers and administrators.

Sue Luck ('77), Associate Director of the Burlington YMCA, recalls that "the gift APEX gave us as young students was the opportunity to *experience* children in classroom settings. At that time, this was not available outside of the formal student teaching experience." Essential components of the program were classroom observation, formal student teaching, teaching seminars and a two-week-long integrated curriculum project while living in a school community.

She recalls that the vision and mission of the program were to explore how children learn, and called for the responsiveness of the teacher to the needs of the student. APEX instructors modeled that idea in their teaching of APEX students. "Children learn in a hands-on way, so we did too. Children have very different learning styles, so we were taught in a variety of different ways, in different settings, with different teachers."

Molly McClaskey ('77), 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher at Charlotte Central, echoed the importance of the APEX program on her work. During her Junior Year "Culminating Experience" at Bradford Elementary, her group carried out a series of projects focusing on a colonial theme. While planning the curriculum for these projects was an essential part of the experience, learning to react to different situations and different students in spontaneous and creative ways was critical. She found that it was not only possible but also necessary for her to bring creativity and responsiveness into the classroom.

McClaskey was also profoundly affected by the respect for children that the APEX indoctrinated in her. Respecting and recognizing children's different ways and paces of learning, teaching the child as "whole" and integrating disciplines within the curriculum are principles of APEX she has carried with her into her classroom to this day. In fact, after so many years of teaching, she says she still learns from children. "I feel like we're all in this workshop - learning together."

The program did not escape outside recognition for its novel approach: in 1976 it won the Distinguished Achievement Award from the AACTE, which was the top Teacher Education Award in the country at that time.

Although APEX formally ended in 1989 when