Alumni gifts top national standards

BY LAURA BROTHERS

Ithaca College was one of the few institutions nationwide to see an increase in alumni donations in 2009.

The Council for Aid to Education released results from its annual Voluntary Support for Education survey, reporting a 1.9 percent decline in donations — the sharpest decrease in the survey’s 50-year history.

The national survey also reported that in 2009 alumni donors dropped to 10 percent, a record low, as well as a 18 percent drop in the size of the gifts given by alumni donors.

Private liberal arts colleges reported the largest declines of any other institution — an 18.3 percent decline in donations — according to the Chronicle of Higher Education.

Shelley Semmler, vice president for institutional advancement, said the college saw a 12 percent increase in alumni dollars but a 2.8 percent decrease in the number of donors.

Semmler said 5 percent of alumni donations are unrestricted, meaning institutional advancement can use the money more freely. Another 5 to 10 percent is allocated to the individual schools and 10 to 15 percent goes towards scholarships. The remainder is for capital projects, such as the Athletic and Events Center.

“We are seeing larger gifts from fewer people,” Semmler said. “People who give smaller gifts less than $100 are not giving.”

Gifts of more than $1,000 have increased, but smaller gifts are decreasing. The college is in the process of hiring a director for the Ithaca Fund, the annual giving program for the college, which will help to increase smaller gift donations, Semmler said.

From Feb. 8, 2009 to now, all donations of more than $1,000, mostly from alumni, went from 324 units that donated to the college to 370 units — an increase of 64 additional units.

For the same time period, donations of up to $99 are down from 6,764 units to 5,996 units. A decrease.

Gifts of $99 have decreased from last year but gifts ranging from $100 to $1,000 are increasing, Semmler said.

“Our [donor] loss is almost 100

Women in science find time for career later in life

BY RACHAEL HARTFORD

Contributing Writer

Now that Jean Hardwick’s children are in their teens, Hardwick says it’s a bit easier to focus on her research.

“My research program has grown [recently] ..., and there is no question that I spend more time working now than I did when my kids were little, because I didn’t have that much time,” Hardwick said. “There was more I had to do at home.”

Hardwick was recently awarded a $495,000 grant to study chronic heart disease, as well as therapeutic treatments for heart disease, for four years. But she said if she had received this when her children were young, she would have never been able to pursue the research.

According to a study done by the National Science Foundation, more unmarried women and women without children became full professors from 1958 to 2006 than married women or women with children. Significantly fewer females, compared to males, are going on to become full-time tenured professors and researchers because of responsibilities associated with raising a family, according to the NSF.

Beth Clark Joseph, associate professor and chair of the physics department, is also responsible for taking care of the children and household chores while simultaneously striving to reach her own career goals.

Clark Joseph is part of a research group that has been selected by NASA as a finalist for a National Science Foundation grant. If the group receives the grant, then they will be part of the next spacecraft mission, which is set to launch in 2016. The proposal aims to sample the surface of an asteroid between Mars and Jupiter.

Clark Joseph said she and her husband decided to adopt so that she could continue working longer than if she were to have a child.

“It never seemed like the right time in my career,” Clark Joseph said. “I had to get a post-doc, I had to get a tenure track, so I kept putting it off.”

Hardwick, a professor of biology, began teaching and researching at Ithaca College when her children were 5 and 7. Now that they are 17 and 19 and don’t need as much attention, she said she has been able to devote more time and energy to her research and work.

“As they have gotten older and been less demanding of my time, I’ve been able to put more energy into my work just because there is only so much of me to go around,” Hardwick said.

Hardwick will be working with East Tennessee State University Professor Marie Sotherland on her heart disease research along with a research team that will consist of some undergraduate Ithaca College students.

According to the NSF, females are still showing interest in the sciences as undergraduates, but where the drop off occurs is after the four initial college years and during graduate school, typically when women begin to have families.

Ithaca College is working to curb these statistics and retain more women in the field of science in order to promote diversity in higher education.

David Garcia, executive associate dean for the School of Humanities and Sciences, said the school is aware of the under-representation of women in certain science fields.

“Dean Lewis is very interested in working with the faculty to think of ways to recruit the college that they most want and need,” Garcia said.

Women in science find time for career later in life
Professors remember iconic author

ZINN

Senior Allison Tenenbaum is reading Zinn’s book in Schack’s class. She said she enjoyed the book because it caused even though it tells a different side of history, it’s where most Americans receive their history.

“Usually the saying is, ‘History is written by the spokes’; but in this case Zinn has written a bottom-up history,” she said. “When you’re young, you’re taught history through the rich white man’s view. Zinn’s book is very much the opposite. He’s talking more about the common American.”

In a New York Times review in 1980, Columbia University historian Eric Foner said, “Professor Zinn writes with an enthusiasm rarely encountered in the lewd prose of academic history.”

Michael Smith, assistant professor of history at the college, has used “A People’s History of the United States” in his freshman seminars class. Smith said he has his students read Zinn’s book because it challenges them to think of history in the eyes of ordinary people – something they were probably not exposed to in high school.

“He really gives voice to ordinary people who are workers and minorities, those who are not in the most progressive textbooks would just be a shadow,” Smith said.

After reading the book, Smith said, his students usually leave with a revelation.

“It’s like Zinn is saying, ‘Wait, there’s a really important history here’,” he said. “It’s more about us and our history we know because we are all famous and powerful.”

Smith said by showing history through different narratives, Zinn became more than a historiographer – he was also a civil rights activist.

Zinn was born Aug. 24, 1922, in New York City. He joined the Army Air Corps in 1943, and when he returned to the United States, he earned a bachelor’s degree at New York University through the GI Bill and later his master’s and doctoral degrees at Columbia University. He began teaching at 1956 at Spelman College, a historically black women’s college where his students included the novelists Alice Walker. In 1964, he started teaching at Boston University, where he taught history for the next two decades.

During the Civil Rights Movement, he marched with students for civil rights. In 1963, he was fired from Spelman College for his participation in the Civil Rights Movement. He ended his last teaching contract at Boston University early in 1988 so he could join a protest, according to the New York Times.

“You can’t be a dispassionate observer about history – or the world around you,” Smith said. “In fact, Zinn would say as a historian, you are being irresponsible to not use your knowledge of the past to make an intervention in current events.”

It was at an anti-war rally in Washington, D.C., a few years ago where Jeff Cohen, associate professor of journalism and director of the Park Center for Independent Media, met Zinn. The two were speakers.

Cohen said he immediately felt “inspired” when he met Zinn and was taken aback by how much energy Zinn had in his 70’s.

Cohen remembers Zinn’s enthusiasm and the optimism that the famous historian had – optimism that was shown in “A People’s History of the United States.”

“No matter how bleak the situation was, he was always smiling and being optimistic about things changing,” he said. “The key to the book is the inspiration that ordinary people can change things.”

Paul Alan Smith, a Hollywood agent who knew Zinn for the past 10 years, was with Zinn the night before he died in Santa Monica, Calif. Alan Smith, who described his friend Zinn as ‘witty, open-minded and caring,’ says it is not the book itself that is so important but rather the idea behind “A People’s History of the United States.”

“Howard told history in the voice of those who are seldom heard,” he said. “And they should be heard.”

Senior Zach Williams, a history major, read “A People’s History of the United States” in Smith’s freshman seminar as a first-year student. He said the book “significantly altered” his life.

“It really is a powerful story because what you learn in high school,” he said. “It’s such a shock value.”

Academia aims to retain more female scientists

The dean is also working on a program for predoctoral fellowships, where advanced graduate students would be able to come to the college for a year to teach and finish dissertations with the intention of someday becoming tenured professors and researchers.

The college hopes this fellowship program will promote and encourage the retention of women scientists.

Anna Sperber, chair of the department, said it can be hard for women to have a career and a family life. With these conflicting responsibilities, she said it is often hard to take time off from work for family needs.

“For pregnancy and childbirth, that can be six weeks of pay, which is relative to other cultures in the world, a really small amount of time,” Sperber said.

Hardwick said one thing that is missing at the college is help for further the college’s efforts to increase gender diversity and help women with young families is on-site day care.

“Any program that gives flex- ibility and recognizes that life happens in a perfect, happy little way, that things occur that aren’t expected, and you can make adjustments that don’t just derailed the process helps a great deal,” Hardwick said.

Senior Caillen Ahearn, a physics major, says she feels more pressure to do well in her major and her future career because she is a woman.

“I feel like I have to represent my gender well,” Ahearn said. Markenzie Zimmerman, a freshman physics major, said she is happy that there is at least one female professor in the college’s physics department.

“I like that she is my adviser, being the only female in the department, because she is really open and helpful, and it’s nice to be able to relate to a woman,” Zimmerman said.

According to Clark Joseph, in the college’s physics class of 2013, eight of the 19 students in the department are female.

Sophomore Patricia Santelli, an environmental science major, said gender differences in the classroom don’t really affect her educational experience.

“I’m not more intimidated by intelligence than gender. … It nev- er really bothered me that I was in classes with more boys than girls,” Santelli said.

Senior Sarah Burleson, a physics major, says she’s conflicted about her own future in science as a woman.

“If I just knew that if I do become a doctor, it would put off having a family for a long term,” Burleson said. “And I know that since I do start a family, I wouldn’t want to be working all the time.”

Alumni give generously in economy

The decrease in donors who give in 2009 was 9 percent, Charles Phlegar, vice president for alumni affairs and development, said.

Cornell was the third-highest public university on the Carnegie Foundation’s open access rankings for charitable giving to higher education with $446.75 million. The Ivy League include Harvard University and Harward Univer- sity, according to the Chronicle.

“The loyalty of our alumni and their support of Cornell,” Phlegar said. “During this economic time they stayed with us, meaning that our alum- ni donations increased.”

“Most of the donations are restricted, so the donor specifies where they want the money to go. If there is no specified department, Cor- nell urges the donor to give it to students in need.”

“The president emphasized student financial aid and that’s always been close and dear to our alumni’s hearts, making Cornell accessible to all income levels, so that’s the way we system- atized that helped us through this time,” Phlegar said.

“If we are a requestor of Voluntary Support for Education survey, said this was an expected result because of the current state of the economy.

“It is a very dramatic story, but a very simple story because nothing unusual happened,” Kaplan said.

Kaplan said on average the study showed it was not a great year for private donations but there were exceptions.

“There are all kinds of little reasons why one institution or another would be OK,” Kaplan said. “There were a couple of insti- tutions where they got gifts from wills — so somebody died, the will went into probate and they got a check and that has nothing to do with the economy, and these gifts could be huge.”

Kaplan said using the economy as an indicator, next year looks as if it will be better for donations to colleges and universities.

“We don’t have a forecasting model, we don’t look at what contributes to giving going up and down, you expect it to be flat, but nothing is bigger,” Kaplan said.

The college and Cornell are two such exceptions to the na- tion’s general trend in donations.

“In 2009 [fiscal year] we are doing fine,” Semmler said. “Dol- lars are steady and alumni dona- tions are up.”