

Education First

THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA ♦ COLLEGE OF EDUCATION ♦ NEWSLETTER

Education Firsts

First South African Black Woman Masters Music at UI

In December, **Yolisa Nompula** (PhD '00) graduated from the College and became the first black woman in South Africa to receive a doctoral degree in music. "Yolisa is a pioneer among black women in music in South Africa," said **Ken Phillips**, professor of music and music education. "She will be a role model for the next generation of young, black women."

Nompula is not only a role model, but also a beautiful singer. Rather than become a performer, she decided she wanted to teach. "I want to teach people how to sing and conduct choirs," she said, "because choral music is a tradition and quite dominant in South African black communities."

In South Africa, under the apartheid system, music was not offered in "black" schools. Nompula decided to pursue music in the United States to



PHOTO BY GENE BECHEN

Ken Phillips celebrates Yolisa Nompula's accomplishments.

be able to improve and develop the standard of music in South Africa. And now that Nompula has resumed her post as an assistant music professor in the University of Transkei Music Department, Eastern Cape region, South Africa, she is preparing music teachers in a multicultural world of music education.

"By learning music of a culture, children begin to understand that particular culture and its people," Nompula said.

Phillips was honored to work with Nompula as her dissertation advisor. "Her pioneering work of infusing indigenous Xohsa music into the South African schools brings a new understanding of and appreciation for the folk music of her people," Phillips said.

Enhancing Learning with Technology

What has four wheels, a dozen Apple iBook computers, and an airport bus for Internet access? Answer: the College's CLOAK (Classroom On A Kart) unit. Purchased last summer, CLOAK has enriched student-centered learning throughout the College.

"In a traditional computer lab, linear placement of the computers can impair learning and limit teaching strategies," said **John Achrazoglou**, lecturer and coordinator of technology. With CLOAK, teachers are allowed the flexibility to more easily incorporate technology in learning.

"Any classroom can become a computer classroom,"

Achrazoglou said. "Instead of leaving the classroom to learn technology, CLOAK brings technology into the learning environment."

Assistant Professor **Betsy Palmer** used CLOAK in a course last semester. "My students used CLOAK for problem-based learning in small interactive groups." Palmer said.

Primarily, CLOAK gave the students Internet access. It allowed them to easily find contacts, interview professionals in the field, and look at other institutions online, thereby finding the pieces necessary to solve the problem with which they were confronted.

"The availability of the computers saved us a lot of time," graduate student **Joshua Walehwa** said.

Graduate student **Laura Guthrie** agreed. "We were able to look up last minute details and settle points of argument during class," she said.

"It worked particularly well," Palmer said. "Students soon realized they could get a lot more done while working on the computers together in a small group."



CLOAK unit

PHOTO BY AMY ALBERTS



Master's students in Student Development Program using CLOAK

Dean Damico Addresses Legislature, Affirms Quality of Teacher Training

Dean **Sandra Damico** believes in the College's dedication to train knowledgeable and highly skilled teachers and administrators. "We do a good job, in part," she said, "because we are fortunate in having highly qualified and bright students selecting education as a career."

Dean Damico had the

opportunity to share this belief before the Iowa House and Senate Education Committees. The committees invited college of education deans from the three Regents

universities and two private colleges to address important issues in education for a joint meeting Jan. 23.

"Having high standards for certification and then upholding them appears to be the key to high-quality instruction and learning," Dean Damico said. "High quality teachers do make a difference."

In addition to Dean Damico's presentation on Iowa's quality teacher preparation, UNI Dean Thomas Switzer spoke about teacher testing and ISU Dean Walter Gmelch addressed the value of

teacher induction systems.

State House Representative Betty Grundberg appreciated the opportunity to hear from the state's college of education deans. "All the presenting teacher preparation institutions appear to be providing Iowa students with excellent preparation," Grundberg said.

"I thought the committee asked very good questions," Dean Damico said, "and I hope this is the first of many opportunities to address the high quality of education in Iowa."



February 2001

Making Meaningful Connections

Educator takes her teachings to prison inmates

By Christoph Trappe



Dog Days & Love Letters by artist Rachel Williams

Rachel Williams likes her job as an art educator at the University of Iowa, but she does what few other teachers do.

Once a week she travels to Mitchellville to visit the Iowa Correctional Institution for Women.

She helps female inmates draw, paint and learn the beauty of all kinds of art.

"It's not better than teaching high school," Rachel says about her experience in Mitchellville. "I loved teaching high school,

but there are so many good people teaching in high school and so few in prison."

For one project, Rachel helped the inmates select three women who mean something to them. Portraits of these women were projected onto a canvas, which was put on a prison wall.

The art students traced the pictures and painted them on canvas.

"There is not much on those prison walls," Rachel says. "This makes it a little more lively for them."

Rachel, 28, of Mount Vernon, says she always has worked outside the traditional teacher-student environment.

She doesn't get paid for her weekly visits to the prison. She doesn't do it for the money anyway, she says.

"I believe in volunteering and getting something back for other people," she says. "It helps me reconnect with what art has been all about."

Her work is appreciated by inmates and people working in the prison, says Jane Parsons, a correctional counselor at the prison.

"We feel privileged to have her come here," Jane says. "We don't have the background on how to do this.

We think she is dynamite, and I can't say enough positive things about her," she adds. "It's enormously uplifting to have her come here and she is very enthusiastic."

Although Rachel writes about some of her experiences at the prison and uses her encounters there for research, she says she mainly does it to help the women.

"There is not much for them to do," Rachel says.

"This gives them a greater status and others will even ask them to make something for them."

Some of the women would paint self-portraits with their children and then use those as birthday presents.

"A birthday is coming up and what are you going to get them?" Rachel asks. "Buy them something at the prison store? "This reminds their kids that they are thinking of them."

In addition to her work at the prison, Rachel will teach one undergraduate course and one graduate-level course at the University of Iowa in the spring. She loves teaching high school and college students, but nothing gets close to the experience in the prison, she says.

Before Rachel moved to Iowa in 1998, she worked with women at prisons in Wisconsin and Florida. She says she connects with the female inmates and most of them learn to do something meaningful when they study art in prison.

"Those women are the best students I have ever had," she declares. "They are very enthusiastic about this and they are fun to work with."

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In addition to volunteering at the Iowa Correctional Institution for Women in Mitchellville and the Iowa Juvenile Home in Toledo, Williams also volunteers at the Montana women's prison, the women's detention facility in Key West, Florida, and the Oaknoll Retirement Residence in Iowa City.

Excellence and Distinction

C&I Assistant Professor **Cynthia Lewis** has been elected to membership in the National Conference on Research in Language and Literacy. The goals of NCRL are to further research in the teaching of English and to improve instructional practice through dissemination of research results.

CRSD Professor **Nicholas Colangelo**, director of the Belin-Blank Center, was inducted into the Iowa Academy of Education. Colangelo was selected for his "scholarly contributions to the field of education," particularly his research on gifted and talented students.

CRSD Assistant Professor **John Wadsworth** was one of 15 UI faculty selected to receive a 2000-01 Instructional Improvement Award. Wadsworth plans to preserve and make accessible existing video instructional material featuring UI faculty and alumni recognized as leaders in the field of counseling.

Education First is produced monthly by The University of Iowa College of Education Office of External Relations, Jill Fishbaugh, director. Send items of interest to her at The University of Iowa/ College of Education/452 Lindquist Center N/Iowa City, IA 52242-1529 or by e-mail to educationiowa@uiowa.edu.

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The College has a new website design.

www.uiowa.edu/~coe2

Check out our new look!