

Dancing through Life

If Rachel Carson's groundbreaking book Silent Spring was written with the human body instead of words, Julie Blume would be its alphabet. The PitE alumna choreographed "Ode to Rachel" for her senior concert requirement in the School of Music's dance program.

Blume was the first music student to take advantage of new access to LSA minors. In 2003 she signed on for a minor in the environment. She satisfied her PitE Field Experience requirement with an internship at the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests. She danced her School of Music senior performance in tribute to an ecologist and nature writer. In the same semesters as Blume studied Jazz Dance III and Perfecting Techniques of Modern Dance, she took Environmental Problems in Central Europe and Introduction to Urban and Environmental Planning. And regardless of

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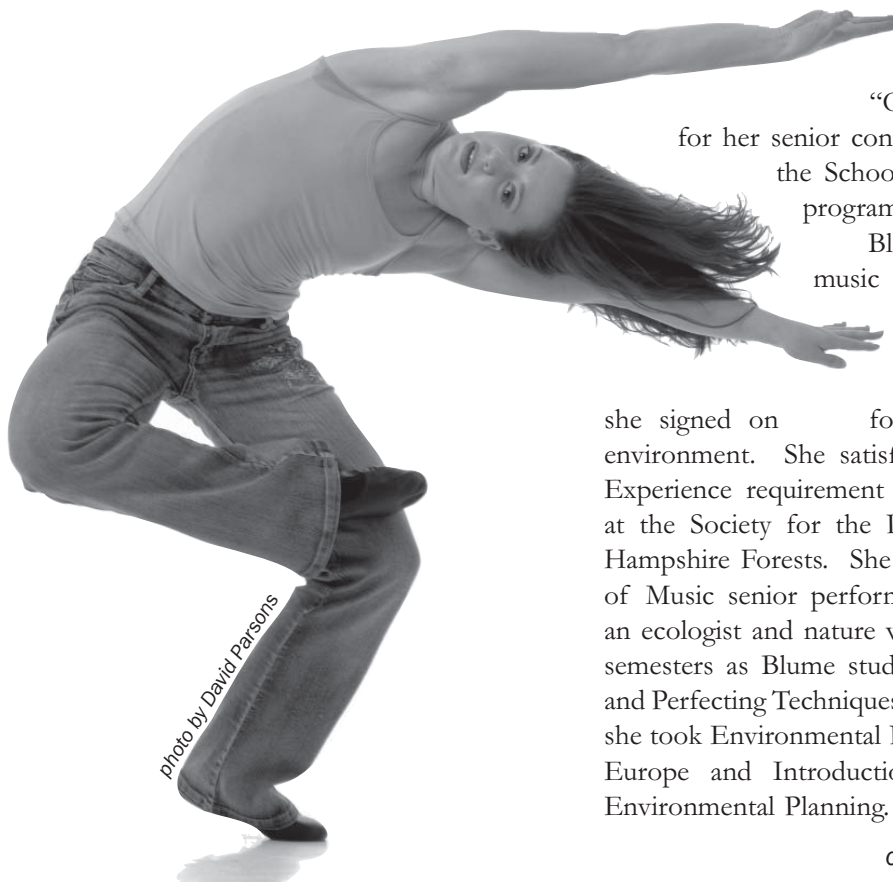


photo by David Parsons

Graham Institute Funds PitE Scholarships

by Katie Talik

The Graham Environmental Sustainability Institute (GESI) was launched in November, 2005. Following the vision of its donor, Donald Graham, the institute will encourage multidisciplinary research and education in environmental sustainability at U-M.

GESI will work with the seven U-M units that are actively addressing environmental sustainability challenges. These are the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts; the School of Natural Resources and Environment; the College of Engineering;

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Letter from the Director: Environmental Humanities in PitE

Dear Colleagues:

This edition of *Crossroads* highlights the “Culture and Environment” component of our curriculum. Among interdisciplinary environmental programs it is rare to offer environmental humanities in addition to more traditional environmental fare in the biophysical and social sciences. The Program in the Environment does this.

In part this reflects English Professor Emeritus John Knott’s early involvement in the program. His leadership in the committees that explored the program’s viability was key. So, too, were the procedures and structure he set up in the program’s first year of operation. Professor Knott retired from the university at the end of the Winter 2006 semester. We recognize his contributions on page 3.

Several faculty teach humanities courses for the Program in the Environment. Associate Professor Susan Scott “Scotti” Parrish is following John Knott’s practice of crafting an English course with PitE students in mind. In its first offering through the program, Scotti’s “Environmental Imagination” enrolled nearly twenty PitE students.

Winter semester will see the return of several popular Culture and Environment courses: Rolf Bouma’s *Environmental Ethics*, David Michener’s *The Built Environment* and Rebecca Hardin’s *Culture, Adaptation and Environment*.

In addition, Beth Diamond will be reviving “History of Human Interaction with the Land,” which has lain dormant since its creator left the university two years ago. And Dargie Anderson, from *Sweetland Writing*

Center, will be teaching a first year seminar in *Environmental Literature*.

Humanities faculty are integral to the success of our Culture and Environment curriculum. The involvement of humanities students is essential as well. Majors from the school of Music and the School of Art and Design pursue the PitE minor in the Environment. They infuse our classes and space with new perspectives. This includes two current PitE concentrators who are enrolled for degrees in both LSA and Art and Design.

To see how environment and the arts compliment each other, read about PitE alumna Julie Blume (page 1), who is dancing – and thinking about the environment – in the athletic and dramatic Parson’s Dance Company. Then view the evolution mural two PitE students helped paint for the Undergraduate Sciences Building (back page; story, page 4).

In a summary of his recent research, PitE faculty associate Tom Princen argues for sufficiency in our culture of consumption (page 7). His work is especially relevant in light of our constant bombardment from media messages that say more is better.

In our next issue we plan to say more about the Graham Environmental Sustainability Institute (GESI) and its support of undergraduate education at U-M. For now, we simply wish to introduce GESI and share the news of its support for our Field Experience requirement (page 1).

Respectfully,

Program's First Director Leaves Humanities Mark

Professor John Knott knows more about martyrdom in Renaissance literature than he does population ecology or natural resources economics. Yet Knott was the person picked to lead the Program in the Environment during its first year and a half of existence.

Neglectful planning? Hardly. "Having someone from the humanities as director made it clear from the start this would be no run-of-the-mill environmental science program," says current director Robert Owen.

"John brought many admirable qualities to the directorship," says former PitE director Barry Rabe. "He fully appreciated the need to move beyond conventional disciplinary lines. Perhaps most important was his consistent sense to step back and ask what was in the best interest of the Program and its students before taking action." It didn't hurt that

Knott had administrative experience as Interim Dean of LSA or that he was heavily involved with the Environmental Theme semester in winter, 1998.

Knott was the Program's Interim Director from August, 2001 to December, 2002. His first year was devoted to all the tasks required to get a new academic unit up and running. "We had to secure space, assemble a curriculum, and develop procedures for running the Program," he says.

Despite this, Knott found time to keep the humanities well represented in the new program. He met with faculty in History, English and Anthropology to encourage new course proposals.

'Writers know how to...speak to broader audiences and arouse the kind of passion that drives a commitment to environmental work.'

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whether it was a dance or environment class, she earned only As.

A minor in the environment was an obvious choice for Blume. She grew up near New Hampshire wilderness. A love of nature has been a constant feature of her life. "Though dance was my main focus in college, the PitE minor served to feed my second passion."

Blume's two passions met in "Ode to Rachel." She explains, "My goal was to pass my respect for Rachel Carson on to those in the audience, many of whom had neither heard of her nor Silent Spring." Five dancers formed symmetrical patterns and "made animalistic gestures." They wore earthy greens, beiges and browns. Quotes and images of Carson shone on a screen behind the performers.

Today Blume is a professional dancer. She was selected from hundreds who auditioned to be one of ten performers with the Parsons Dance Company based in New York. Her employment is an outlet for her love of dance. But her environmental interests are

not forgotten. "One of the most interesting PitE courses I took was [Introduction to] Urban Planning. Living in New York and traveling so much, I am constantly evaluating the "greenness" of this city or that town, this theater or that hotel."

Blume's touring takes her from across the United States and overseas. Regardless of where she is, she uses her little free time to explore the local environment whenever possible. She has even hang glided over protected Brazilian forests. "No matter where I am, I always do my best to have as little negative impact on the environment as possible."

Whether Blume will do environmental choreography again remains to be seen. She says she would like to. Either way, her career has been marked by her environmental education. She says, "Dance is so often inspired by nature. The study and understanding of our surroundings will ultimately heighten our artistry." ■

■ Read more about the Parsons Dance Company at <http://environment.lsa.umich.edu/environment/events/>.

Students wed art and science in evolution mural

Two PitE students have artwork permanently displayed in a university building. Anna Harrison and Lauren Sullivan painted squares in a giant mural that adorns the Undergraduate Sciences Building's eastern stairwell.

Harrison and Sullivan were students in Prof. Mark Tucker's class "Art in Public Places," offered through the Lloyd Hall Scholars Program. They and 22 other students created the mural in conjunction with the Winter 2006 LSA Evolution Theme Semester.

Sullivan says the class spent a lot of time discussing how to represent evolution visually. "We did not want it to be a science cliché." Harrison laughs remembering her initial expectations. "I had this image of a fish coming out of water and walking on land and a progression to man from that original fish. What our class created was so much more unique and beautiful than that typical picture of evolution."

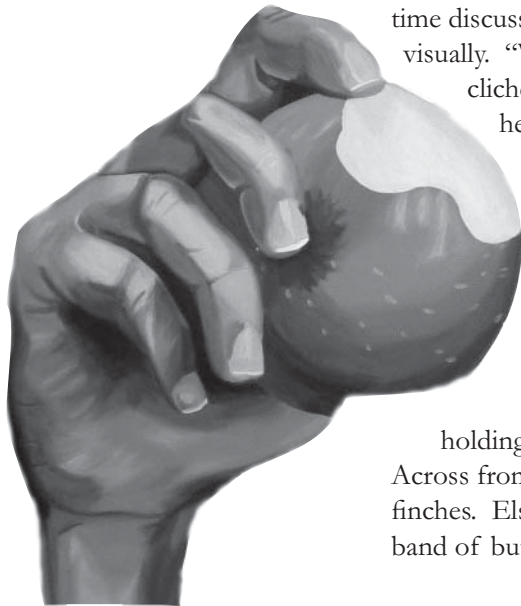
Sullivan's panel depicts a hand holding an apple with a bite out of it. Across from the apple is one of Darwin's finches. Elsewhere is a developing fetus. A band of butterflies cross the panel's upper

plane. Sullivan admits, "I tried to keep the theme of evolution more obvious."

Harrison, too, struggled to create a less literal interpretation of evolution. "[Prof. Tucker] told me that I was being too left-brained, that it was obvious I was an environmental science major. Then as I continued to work on it, it became more abstract." Harrison's panel is a montage of landscapes divided by two spheres: a human brain scan and the earth.

The pride these students have in the mural is evident when they visit it. As much time as they spent watching the panels in progress, they still examine the conglomerate critically and carefully. Sullivan notices a corner of one of the panels is pulling loose from the wall and makes a note to tell Mark Tucker. "I hope it stays up," she worries, looking across from the mural to construction underway on Palmer Field.

"Having something that I produced hang in a university building is a wonderful thing," says Harrison. "I worked so hard to create it." Sullivan hopes people "don't just walk by it. There so much in it." ■



■ Alumni: tell us what you are doing and where you are: environment.program@umich.edu.



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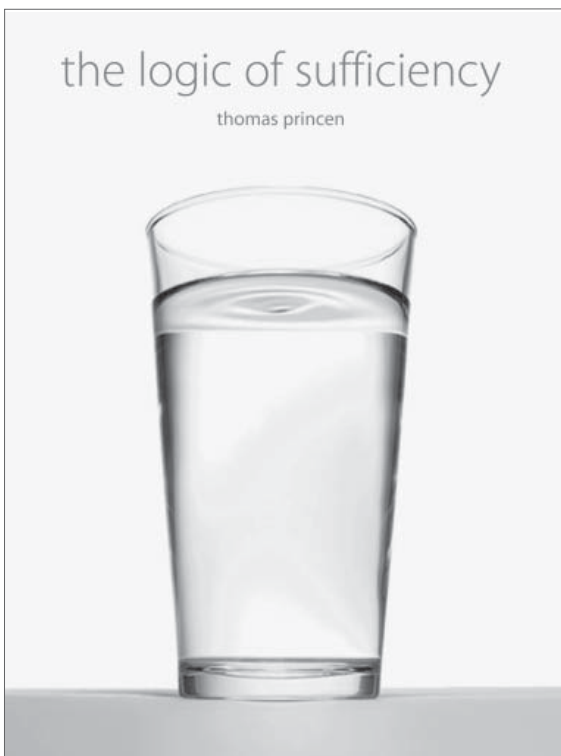
Consumption Culture Challenged by PitE Faculty Associate Princen

What if modern society put a priority on the material security of its citizens and the ecological integrity of its resource base?

What if it took ecological constraint as a given, not a hindrance but a source of long-term economic security? How would it organize itself, structure its industry, shape its consumption?

Across time and across cultures, people actually have adapted to ecological constraint. They've changed behavior and they've built institutions. And they have developed norms and principles for their time. Today's environmental challenges—at once global, technological, and commercial—require new behaviors, new institutions, and new principles.

This is the approach I took in the research leading to my recent book, The Logic of Sufficiency (MIT Press, 2005), and that colleagues and I took in an earlier book called Confronting Consumption (MIT Press, 2002).



I argue that sufficiency is not about denial, not about sacrifice or doing without. Rather, when resource depletion and overconsumption are real, sufficiency is about doing well. It is about good work and good governance; it is about goods that are good only to a point.

With examples ranging from timbering and fishing to

automobility and meat production, the book shows that sufficiency is perfectly sensible and yet absolutely contrary to modern society's dominant principle, efficiency. Seeking enough when more is possible is both intuitive and rational—personally, organizationally, and ecologically rational. And under global ecological constraint, it is ethical. Over the long term, an economy—indeed a society—cannot operate as if there's never enough and never too much.

Other principles such as efficiency and cooperation have served humans well. But they have done so under conditions unique to the resource and waste sink availabilities of the last 300 years. Now a different set of principles are needed, a set that embodies social restraint as the logical analog to ecological constraint, a set that guides human activities when those activities pose grave risks to human survival.

Sufficiency is a class of principles sensitive to critical environmental risks, to the needs of management and self-management when it is otherwise all too easy to evade responsibility for such risks.

The work presented in these two books is for the mainstream reader who sees utopianism in contemporary beliefs such as:

- increasing population and consumption can continue indefinitely;
- prices reflect all significant costs;
- well-being correlates with Gross Domestic Product;
- technology solves more ecological problems than it creates;
- more economic growth solves the problems of economic growth.

Such are the fanciful ideas, we assert, underpinning the contemporary global ecological crisis. These are the myths that justify unending increases in material and energy throughput on a finite planet, that absolve from responsibility those responsible for irreversible change.

The prescriptions we offer are

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Humanities, continued from page 3

Among his first actions as interim director was arranging a roundtable for students with U.S. Poet Laureate Robert



Past and current Program in the Environment directors (from left) Barry Rabe, John Knott and Robert Owen.

Hass. Knott believes strongly that exposure to writers – poets, novelists and essayists – is important for students studying the environment. Good communication serves scientists as well as it does politicians or journalists. Beyond that, however, “writers know how to speak to broader audiences and arouse the kind of passion that drives a commitment to environmental work.”

PitE visiting speakers David Quammen (2002), Stephanie Mills (2003), Tom Bissell (2004) and Bill Roorbach (2006) show that the PitE administration has embraced Knott’s bid for involving writers.

Knott officially retired from the University of Michigan at the end of the Winter 2006 semester. Soon thereafter he packed up for a couple of weeks at U-M’s Camp Davis Field Station in Jackson, Wyoming, where he co-taught History and Literature of the Rockies with U-M historian Phil Deloria.

As Knott uses retirement to continue writing about environmental literature and to pursue other projects – he is currently editing a book for The Nature Conservancy of Michigan – the Program in the Environment reflects his efforts to keep humanities an integral part of its fiber. Susan Scott Parrish, an Associate Professor of English Language and Literature, began offering a cross-listed PitE course this fall. PitE will offer a first-year seminar in environmental literature in the upcoming winter semester. And the list of future writers and poets to bring to campus is long.

PitE’s overall vigor, as well as its growth in the humanities, is a telling legacy of Knott’s early involvement. ▪

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grounded. They are grounded not just in what is conceivable (people *can* be less greedy; they *can* have the political will) but in what collectivities have actually done. And they are grounded in established understandings of human capacity. We reject prevailing assumptions about humans’ inherent short-term thinking, about their inability to self-organize for restrained resource use, about the insatiability of their consumption, about their incapacity to do much more than work (for others) and spend (on what others make).

Our intention is to leave readers and students not with gloom and doom nor with business as usual, greened up to improve

the environment, say, but with realistic signs of hope. The fragility of empire, the potential of discipline, the possibility, indeed likelihood, of systems change all are such signs. Stories and ideas, including organizing principles such as sufficiency, are further signs. ▪

Thomas Princen is a PitE Faculty Associate and Associate Professor of Natural Resources and Environmental Policy in the School of Natural Resources and Environment. Confronting Consumption is the winner of the International Studies Association’s Harold and Margaret Sprout award for best work in international environmental politics, 2003.

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the Ross School of Business; the School of Public Health; the Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy; and the Taubman College of Architecture and Urban Planning.

GESI is providing funding for undergraduate, graduate, and faculty research. It also plans to work with companies, NGOs, and communities to create a strong outreach program. GESI will direct its support towards activities focusing six major sustainability topics:

- Energy
- Freshwater and Marine Resources
- Human Health and Environment
- Biodiversity and Global Change
- Sustainable Infrastructure, Built Environment, and Manufacturing
- Environmental Policymaking and Human Behavior

One specific goal of GESI is to encourage undergraduate students to apply their course knowledge to field study and/or community sustainability challenges. PitE students are eligible for GESI grants. They are selected based upon merit and planned internship challenge. GESI hopes future PitE student involvement may become part of an outreach effort with communities searching for solutions to sustainability challenges.

The next round of applications for the GESI Field Experience Grants finishes this month for students completing their field experiences in the Winter 2007 semester. Another application process will take place in March 2007 for summer and fall 2007 field experiences.

For more information on GESI, please visit its website (<http://provost.umich.edu/gesi>) or send an email to gesi@umich.edu. ▪

Katie Talik is the GESI Marketing Communications Specialist.

GESI GRAHAM ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY INSTITUTE

The following students received GESI Field Experience Grants in 2006:

- **Cassidy Boulan** (Senior in PitE).

Boulan attended the Oxford University Summer Program at St. Peter's College in 2006. She participated in their environmental, urban, and regional studies track.

- **Carly Jankens** (Junior in PitE).

Jankens attended both the U-M Biological Station (UMBS) and Camp Davis Geology Field Station (Camp Davis) in the summer of 2006. She studied sustainable land use.

- **Molly McCullagh** (Junior in PitE).

McCullagh also attended both UMBS and Camp Davis this past summer. She is interested in land use, waste recovery and sustainable transportation.

- **Sierra Patterson** (Junior in PitE).

Patterson is studying this semester at the School for Field Studies Program in Marine Resource Management in Turks and Caicos Islands. She is studying Tropical Marine Ecology and Environmental Policy.

- **Wangki "Johnny" Yuen** (Junior in

Civil and Environmental Engineering with a Minor in PitE). Yuen studied at Camp Davis in the summer of 2006. His interest is in the study of regional impacts on local water quality.



Camp Davis students Leslie McClain and Phil Svabik examine cave rock. Photo by GESI grant recipient Molly McCullagh.



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PitE alumna Anna Harrison (l) and senior Lauren Sullivan stand in front of the Undergraduate Science Building's evolution mural that they helped create. Story on page 4. To see the mural in all its arresting color, visit <http://environment.lsa.umich.edu/environ/events>.