Psychology professor’s project asks: What’s wrong with masculinity?

Oswego’s Andrew Smiler will explore the positive attributes of teenage masculinity under a three-year $54,000 federal grant through the USDA Cooperative State, Education and Extension Service at Cornell University.

For the project, a collaboration with Ritch Savin-Williams of Cornell, Smiler said he wants to challenge the popular perception that masculinity and male peer groups necessarily represent a societal problem.

“There has been a lot of press the past several years about what boys do, focusing on the negative,” said Smiler, an assistant professor of psychology. “But most boys do graduate high school. Most boys don’t have criminal records. Most boys grow up to be fine, upstanding adults, and we’d like to know how that happens.”

While it’s clear that all-male teen groups function differently from all-female groups, Smiler wants to explore how those male groups influence positive and negative choices. He said one thing that will make the study novel is how it looks at what makes masculinity or male-to-male peer interaction a point of strength — for individuals as well as society.

“We always think of adolescent peer pressure as a bad thing, but it can be a good thing if it supports good behavior,” Smiler noted. “It’s only the past 15 to 20 years that have focused not only on the bad stuff but on what allows people to be healthy, to do well.”

The seniors surveyed include young women as well as men — so in addition to having a large data set available to other researchers, this also presents an opportunity to study masculine attributes in women, Smiler said. “It’s unusual to see how masculinity works in both males and females in the same study,” he added.

The project also could open the door to follow-up surveys five or more years in the future to see how masculinity influences development. “We could see if we can identify what they were doing in high school and how that predicted what happened down the road,” Smiler said.

We could see if we can identify what they were doing in high school and how that predicted what happened down the road,” Smiler said.

"We always think of adolescent peer pressure as a bad thing, but it can be a good thing if it supports good behavior," he said. “We know as part of masculinity we encourage boys to take risks, continue through a task even if it’s difficult, and be problem solvers. Those are skills that should help all college students.”

The process involves pencil-and-paper surveys with 500 to 600 high school seniors about behaviors and attitudes, including the search for strengths or positives related to masculinity and male-male friendships.

“The big issue really is asking what are some of the strengths boys bring to the table, in terms of positive functional development,” Smiler explained.

“In some ways, it’s part of a larger movement in psychology to get away from just studying problem behavior,” Smiler noted. “It’s only the past 15 to 20 years that have focused not only on the bad stuff but on what allows people to be healthy, to do well.”

More convention news

Communications professor performed educational role at Democratic convention last week. Page 2

---

Lighting the way — Student Association President Daniel Nau addresses a packed Campus Center arena and convocation hall during the college’s annual Welcoming Torchlight Ceremony on Aug. 24.

Republican convention is student’s classroom

While many of his Oswego classmates are settling in on campus, senior Tim Farnsworth is getting his lessons at the Republican National Convention in Minnesota.

The Washington Center’s Presidential Seminar draws together students from more than 100 colleges and universities nationwide to both conventions.

Farnsworth was the college’s sole participant this year with the financial backing of the Oswego Provost’s Office.

Farnsworth served as former Student Association President Josh Miller’s chief of staff. The political science and global studies double major also served in the Student Senate his junior year.

“Politics is a lot about navigating conflict, and there is just a thrill about it,” said Farnsworth, a non-traditional student who hopes to work in civil service after graduation.

The Washington Center trip is an opportunity to really get a behind-the-scenes look at national politics.

Farnsworth participated in leadership workshops in the days leading up to the four-day convention, which started Monday.

During the convention, Farnsworth has been able to converse with state delegates, national party leaders, members of the media and representatives of interest groups.

“The cool thing about doing it with school is that I can put what I’ve learned into practice,” Farnsworth said. “It moves it well beyond the classroom.

“I’m going to meet so many people over the next two weeks,” he said Aug. 24, just before leaving for the Twin Cities.

Farnsworth was paired with a member of the media through the program. Oswego-based National Public Radio affiliate WRO also tapped Farnsworth to provide running commentary, via phone interviews, with his take on the convention.

Farnsworth was the college’s sole participant this year with the financial backing of the Oswego Provost’s Office.

Farnsworth was the college’s sole participant this year with the financial backing of the Oswego Provost’s Office.

Warm welcome — Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Susan Coultrap McQuin welcomes Lucina Hernandez (seated at right), the new director for Rice Creek Field Station and an assistant professor of biological sciences, during the Opening Picnic.
College trends

Attracting foreign students

“Oregon State University struck a deal in July with a private company to recruit and educate for- eign students in a college-preparatory program. It was the first time an American college had done so, but it probably won’t be the last. Over the past decade, such partnerships have become commonplace in other English-speaking countries. About 20 per- cent of Australia’s foreign students come into the country through these preparatory, or pathways, programs. In Britain, universities are regularly approached by companies looking to strike multimillion-dollar deals. . . . Champions of the partnerships call them smart moves, financially and academically. They allow colleges to recruit students they couldn’t have reached with their own marketing budgets, and can give those stu- dents the academic grounding to make the transi- tion to full enrollment. And because the pathways programs can seem to expand enrollments of in- ternational students, they provide new revenue to cash-strapped colleges. . . . Critics argue that they outsource core educational functions and that academic standards may well be compromised in pursuit of profits.”


Drinking age

“Approximately 115 college and university presidents are signing a document institutions called . . . for a national discussion on whether to reduce the minimum age for purchasing alcohol as a means to decrease binge drinking and other health related concerns brought on by underage drinking. The Amethyst Initiative argues, ‘The 21-year-old drinking age is not working’ and ‘has created a culture of dangerous binge drinking. In response, Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) argues that statistical trends demon- strate the current law saves lives.”

— Editor, American Association of State Colleges and Universities, Aug. 21, 2008

Textbook prices

“Rampant college textbook prices have driven efforts in Congress and state legislatures to remedy the situation, but it remains unlikely that students will see any savings this fall. Annual textbook costs range from $700 to $1,100, with prices averaging approximately double the rate of annual inflation over a span of almost two de- cades. Legislation passed by Congress will not be implemented until 2010, and while 34 states have introduced legislative proposals on the subject, only 6 states have approved them.”

— Editor, American Association of State Col- leges and Universities, Aug. 21, 2008

Federal research dollars decline

“Total spending on academic scientific research grew slightly in 2007 even as the substantially financed by the federal government fell, after inflation was factored in, according to a new re- port. Colleges and other providers made up the difference from their own pockets — but they weren’t happy about it. The federal government is the largest source of funds for academic re- search, and the 2007 fiscal year represented the second straight year of decline after inflation, according to the report, which was issued by the National Science Foundation. The federal total was $10.6 billion, a net decrease of 5.6 percent compared with 2006. Such a two-year decline had never before occurred since the NSF began tracking those figures, in 1972. But overall spend- ing on academic research totaled $49.43 billion in 2007, an increase of 0.8 percent after inflation. Academic institutions increased their own spend- ing by nearly 7 percent, for a total of $9.70 bil- lion. Contributions from industry also surged, by 11 percent, to $2.67 billion.”


Professor present for Obama nomination at Denver convention

John Karas Smith, professor and interim chair of the communication studies department, was at the Demo- cratic National Convention last week in Denver.

He participated in the Junior Statesmen Founda- tion’s 2008 Election Symposium, a nonpartisan, indepth, behind-the-scenes look at the convention. As a faculty leader at the convention, Smith supervised and directed activities for small groups of students, planned lesson plans, directed and facilitated small- group discussions that enhanced students’ under- standing of a political convention, coordinated a variety of visits to state delegations and other semi- nars, forums and speakers’ programs, and debriefed students on topics related to the convention as well as other activities of a similar nature.

The Junior Statesmen Foundation, a 73-year-old nonprofit educational organization, has been bringing young leaders from throughout the country to nation- al political conventions for years.

Smith has taught courses in politics and public speaking for the foundation’s Summer School, located at Princeton University, since 2003.

People in action

Bruce Aitschler of the political science depart- ment is the author of “Pentagon Papers” in The Ency- clopedia of the First Amendment, edited by Hudson, Schultz and Vile and published by CQ Press. He also wrote a review of The Age of Impeachment: Ameri- can Constitutional Culture Since 1960 by David Kvyg that appears in the Law and Politics Book Re- view and was posted online Aug. 24.

Michael Amneich, professor of communications studies, assistant provost for budget and operations and an avid birder, will speak Sept. 13 in the H. Lee White Marine Museum’s Lecture Series. He will speak at 1:30 p.m. in the Pontiac Room at the muse- um, located on the Oswego harbor at the end of West First Street. Amneich will discuss “Winter Water Birds of Eastern Lake Ontario.” He will highlight a number of waterfowl and other birds that visit the Oswego harbor and other Central New York waterways during the colder months. These include divers like the long- tailed duck, white-winged scoter, scaup, red-breasted and hooded merganser, red-throated loon and others. Amneich has produced nature documentaries that fo- cus on the wildlife and ecology of Upstate New York.

Harold W. Nash, professor emeritus, writes about personal mentors in Three Good Men, a book recently published by OntarioLina Publishing Co.

Lori Nash of the philosophy faculty will receive the Faye Samuel Award for Courageous Service by Part-time Academic and Professional Faculty from United University Professions at its Fall Delegate As- sembly later this month in Albany. She has been the Oswego chapter part-time concerns representative since 2005 and is on the union’s statewide Part-time Concerns Committee. She also organized Oswego’s first Campus Equity Week last fall and is a regular contributor to the chapter newsletter. She is a UUP academic delegate.

Senior Brennan Payne and Andrew Smiler of the psychology department presented a poster “Who Am I? Adoption of Gender Identities and Gender Norms” at the annual convention of the American Psychological Association on Aug. 14. Smiler also served as the discussant for a paper symposium on “Real Men and Masculinities” and, later in the con- vention, presented a paper titled “Acquiring Mascu- linity: Contributions of Family Structure, Media, and Parents’ Beliefs.” USA Today quoted him and other psychologists in its Aug. 25 story “Young guys try to read society’s road map for behavior.”

President to stay at SUNY Oswego

President Deborah F. Stanley announced last week that she has withdrawn her name as a candidate for the presidency of Old Dominion University.

Stanley commented that she made her decision after carefully weighing professional and family considerations. “I was honored to have had the op- portunity to thoroughly explore the presidency there,” she said.

Stanley, who has served as president of Oswego for the past 13 years, said she remains fully engaged in the many exciting projects under way at SUNY Oswego. These initiatives include the development of innova- tive and distinctive new academic programs, a $110 million state-of-the art sciences complex, and the new residential village currently under construction.

Stanley said, “I look forward to continuing to work closely with the New York State Legislature, busi- ness, industry and our alumni to gather additional support for the college and the Central New York region.”

36-year stars — SUNY Oswego’s 19th Annual Employee Recognition and Awards Ceremony congratulated many workers for their longevity and dedication to the college. Among those honored for 30 years of service were, seated from left, Holly Whitmer, the Associate Provost’s Office, Brenda Farnham of the modern lan- guages and literatures departments and Kelly Rosenthal of the President’s Office; and, standing from left, Douglas Townsend of the physical plant; John Sawyer of the Office of Environmental Health and Safety; and Kenneth Trisouner, Kurt Abbott, Steven Ives and Stuart Streb of the physical plant. Also recognized for three decades of dedication, but not in the photo, were Didzravis Eremas, Kenneth Hammond, Thomas Prior and Thomas Siemborz of the physical plant, and Michael Taylor of University Police.
Prominent poet to keynote ALANA Student Leadership Conference

Sonia Sanchez, a well-known African American author and political activist, will be the keynote speaker for this year’s ALANA (African, Latino, Asian and Native American) Student Leadership Conference, to be held Sept. 15 to 20 at SUNY Oswego. Sanchez’s work has been called “a poetic exorcism and recreation of the experiences of African American women.”

Sanchez will speak at 8 p.m. Sept. 18 in the Hewitt Union Ballroom. Admission to her talk will be free, but tickets will be required to attend.

Poet Maya Angelou called Sanchez “a lion in literature’s forest.” The novelist Isabel Allende said of Sanchez, “Only a poet with an innocent heart can exercise so much pain with so much beauty.”

Active in the civil rights movement and an important member of the Black Arts Movement in the 1960s and 1970s, Sanchez also taught at a number of universities and was a pioneer in developing black studies courses. She retired from the Laura Carmell Chair in English at Temple University in 1999.

Sanchez has written more than a dozen books of poetry. Bookstores include "Does Your House Have Lions?" was nominated for the National Book Critics Circle Award, and "Homegirls and Handgrenades" won an American Book Award from the Before Columbus Foundation. She is also the author of plays and essays. After her talk, she will be available to sign copies of her books.

Emphasis on diverse cultures

Other highlights of the conference will include a dance workshop Sept. 16, a presentation on gospel music Sept. 18, “Celebrating Voices of Women Around the Globe” marking the 30th anniversary of the women’s studies program Sept. 17, a fashion show Sept. 19, and a step show Sept. 20.

Student groups will give presentations on such topics as “Proper English vs. Ebonics,” important figures in the Latino Revolutionary Movement and the background of Chinese dumplings (with free samples).

Among concluding conference events Sept. 20 will be the ALANA dinner, featuring Pedro Cabán as speaker. Cabán is SUNY’s vice provost for diversity and education equity and a professor of Latino studies at SUNY Albany. SUNY’s Educational Opportunity Programs and Centers report to him.

Most ALANA conference events are free for Oswego students, faculty and staff, but some free events will require tickets for admission, including Sanchez’s talk and the ALANA dinner. Tickets are available at both the Campus Center and the Tyler box offices.

An exception is tickets for the step show, which may be purchased only at the Campus Center box office. Prices are $13 for students, $18 for the general public, and $23 the day of the show.

The complete ALANA conference schedule is available online from a link at www.oswego.edu/student/services/campus_life/point/alana.html.
College Hour returns with range of timely topics

Oswego’s College Hour returns to Tuesdays for the fall semester, offering wide-ranging programs on academic, cultural and developmental topics. New programs will run from 1:05 to 2:05 p.m. All are free and open to the public.

Timely topics abound. On Sept. 9, political science Professor and President Elect-Scholar’s “Election 2008: Political Parties” will cover the importance of participating in the upcoming election and more in Room 220 of the Campus Center. On Sept. 16, Professor Ming-te Pan of the history department will detail “The Chinese View of Tibet’s Status” in Room 217 of Mahar Hall. On Nov. 4, Mary McCune of the history department and Ranjit Dighe of the environmental sciences department will present “The Tsunami Disaster: Legal and Illegal Immigration to the United States” in Room 217 of Mahar Hall.


Artistic and cultural events will include Pat Pauly, guest curator of "A Personal Landscape: Contempora- rary Art Quilts" in Tyler Art Gallery, discussing the exhibit; "How to Develop a Show Business Career," featuring comedian Owen Benjamin on Nov. 25 in the Campus Center auditorium; and the Music Department Student Performance Showcase Dec. 9 in Room 41 of Tyler Hall.

On behalf of the Oswego Emeriti Association, Robert Schell will present a Founder’s Day Program, “Sheldon’s Nine Commandments,” on Edward Austin Sheldon’s principles of teaching and learning, Oct. 14 in Room 328 of Sheldon Hall.

Psychology-related presentations happening in Room 214 of Mahar Hall will include Leigh Bacher of Oswego’s psychology department discussing “Botswana: Jewel of Africa” on Oct. 7 and social psychologist Donald McCreary exploring “Men’s Body Image and the Drive for Masculinity” on Oct. 28.

The Science Today lecture series will return with talks at 12:40 p.m. preceded by pre-presentation social gatherings at 12:30 p.m. (see related story for more details).

Other programs will include a series of the Office of Financial Aid to help students with money-management and other college issues, sessions from the Compass on topics ranging from exploring majors to finding a job, and academic departments offering opportunities for students to interact with faculty members.

For more information, visit www.oswego.edu/news/events/college_hour.

Science Today series continues

The Science Today lecture series will address such topics as alternative energies and environmental toxins during its fall sessions. Lectures will take place Tuesdays at 12:40 p.m., with a pre-presentation social gathering commencing at 12:30 p.m. in the Campus Center auditorium, except for two noted below.

The series will begin Sept. 9 with Lisa Opanashuk of the University of Rochester, who will discuss dopamine system injury following PCB exposure and implications for neurodegenerative disorders in Room 102 of Stagg Hall.

On Sept. 16, Karen Sime of Oswego’s biological sciences department will explore “Wasp Food: Ecological Specialization in Parasitic Insects.” Eric Hellquist, of the same department, will cover carbon cycling in Yellowstone on Sept. 23.

October’s programs will include Aiko Filler-inger of Ithaca College on materials for alterna- tive energies, Oct. 7; Michael Rogers of Ithaca College on archeological geophysics, Oct. 14; Elizabeth Widom of the Miami University of Ohio on geochemistry of the Azores, Oct. 21; and Kristina Lantzky-Eaton of St. John Fisher College on “Fragility of a Series of Organic Compounds,” Oct. 28.

Karim Limburg of the SUNY College of En- vironmental Science and Forestry will discuss “Neolithic vs. Modern Baltic Sea Cold Fisheries” on Nov. 4.

On Nov. 11, Linda Ivaney of Syracuse University will address global climate change and evo- lution of the shallow marine biota.

The Nov. 18 talk, with Marina Blanton of the University of Notre Dame speaking on “Biometric Key Generation,” will take place in Room 102 of Stagg Hall.

The fall series will wrap Dec. 2 with the Sigma Xi Student Research Forum.

For more information on the series, visit www.oswego.edu/science.

Police report

Since Aug. 15, University Police have investigated several motor vehicle accidents and a case of theft and disorderly conduct and made seven arrests.

Police charged a 21-year-old Oswego man with driving while intoxicated, driving with blood alcohol content above .08, aggravated unlicensed operation of a motor vehicle, and driving on the shoulder of the road.

A 21-year-old Hannibal man was charged with driving while intoxicated, driving with blood alcohol content above .08, driving with suspended registra- tion, failure to keep right and illegal signal.

A 22-year-old Syracuse man was charged with ag- gregated unlicensed operation of a motor vehicle, suspended registration, operating without insurance and driving with improper plates.

Three campus residents were charged with under- age possession of alcohol, and one of them was also charged with unlawful possession of marijuana.

An 18-year-old Webster man was also charged with underage possession of alcohol.

Calendar highlights

- Tyler Art Gallery opening, Sept. 5
- Rice Creek Rambles, Sept. 6 and 20
- Faculty talk: “Election 2008: Political Parties,” Sept. 9
- General faculty meeting, Sept. 15
- ALANA Student Leadership Conference, Sept. 15 to 20
- Faculty talk: “Chinese View of Tibet’s Status,” Sept. 16
- Amelia Piano Trio in concert, Sept. 17
- Poet Sonia Sanchez, Sept. 18

For a more complete calendar, see SUNY Oswego Events online at www.oswego.edu/news/calendar.