

Fall 2010

Kahn Chronicle: Fall 2010

Smith College, Kahn Liberal Arts Institute

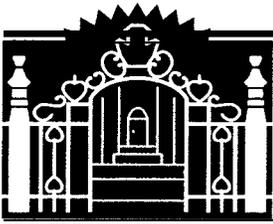
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Marking Time

Fellows from the Institute's *Telling Time* project have created a time capsule to document their time and work together

Some claim the Mayan Long Count calendar predicts that the world will come to an end on December 21, 2012. Fellows in the Kahn Institute's project *Telling Time: Its Meaning and Measurement*, reassured by a lecture from archaeoastronomy scholar Anthony Aveni (Colgate University), have adopted a more optimistic view, banking on the future lasting until at least 2060.

That is when *Telling Time* Project Fellows have scheduled their 50th reunion, at which they plan to retrieve and open the time capsule they created to commemorate their work throughout the 2009-2010 academic year.

The time capsule was the brainchild of Organizing Fellows Bosiljka Glumac, *Geosciences*, and Richard Lim, *History*, who thought it would make an appropriately tangible and enduring summation of the group's activities, one that could encompass their joint discussions and scholarship, the input of visiting experts and scholars, and the individual research of each Fellow.

The decision to create the capsule sparked a mini research project of its own. What should be included? Where could it be put? What sort of container would be required to help ensure the contents would survive intact? What steps could be taken to make sure its location would not be forgotten or damaged as the years passed?

The first and most critical issue to resolve was location. Experts in time capsule preparation advised against burying it due to the high potential for water damage, accidental excavation, and vandalism (not to mention difficulties locating it again for recovery).

Director of Libraries Christopher Loring resolved the placement problem when he and a College construction team agreed to seal the time capsule into a wall slated to become part of the new reading room on the first level of Neilson Library. The location, which is both very close to the Kahn Institute Colloquium room where the *Telling Time* Fellows met throughout the year and safely indoors, was also scheduled to be

under construction at just the right time to incorporate the time capsule into it.

With a location established, the Fellows turned their attention to the capsule's contents. Many of the items selected for inclusion reflected the research of individuals within the group (such as rock samples from the dating project being conducted by Bosiljka Glumac, and a collection of ancient coins and pottery shards contributed by Richard Lim). Other items reflected topics covered by the entire colloquium, such as a group photo and details about the 2012 doomsday prophecies. Some Fellows contributed personal letters intended for themselves or addressed to the future students and faculty who will recover and open the capsule.

Over the course of a month, the Fellows put together a collection of items they felt reflected the project and the present, and prepared to commit it to the future.

Advisers from the Smith College Archives and from Future Packaging & Preservation (FPP), an archiving company based in Covina, California, helped select a stainless steel canister 12 inches wide by 12 inches deep by 20 inches tall to house the selected items. Those consultants also assisted in determining how to prepare the contents to protect them from corrosion and decay over the 50 years they are scheduled to be in the library wall. Paper documents were printed on acid-free paper and stored in buffered envelopes. Photos and printed documents were inserted into polypropylene sleeves. Metal and plastic items were inserted into special plastic pouches designed to reduce the chance that corrosion or gases leaking from them might damage the other items in the canister.

Each item was cataloged and a complete list of everything that was included will be provided to the Smith Archives. In addition, the group registered the time capsule with the International Time Capsule Society, an organization established in 1990 at Oglethorpe University (Atlanta, GA) to promote the careful study of time capsules.



The contents were shipped to FPP in California, where they packed them into the container, applied dessicants and oxygen-reducers, welded it shut, and returned it to the Kahn Institute. On Thursday, August 19, 2010 at 1:00 p.m. in the Neilson Browsing Room, a ceremony was held to dedicate it and officially hand it over to the construction team to be sealed in the reading room wall. Its location will be marked by a plaque so it will be easy to locate and recover it for a grand re-opening ceremony at the Fellows 50th Reunion in May 2060. Until then, it will mark the time of those who spent 2009-2010 in *Telling Time*.

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About the Kahn Institute

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Director and Advisory Committee Chair,
Barbara Richmond 1940 Professor in the
Social Sciences, and Professor of Sociology

Chrissie Bell

Administrative Coordinator

Kara Noble

Project and Publicity Administrator



From left to right, Kara Noble, Chrissie Bell,
and Rick Fantasia.

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Nalini Bhushan, Professor of Philosophy

Judith Cardell, Associate Professor of
Computer Science

Mlada Bukovansky, Associate Professor of
Government

Christopher Loring, Director of Libraries

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Faculty Fellowship Information Session for 2011-2012 Long-Term Project: Evil

Faculty Fellowship applications are now being accepted for the Kahn Institute's 2011-2012 yearlong project titled *Evil*, which is being organized by Joel Westerdale, *German Studies*, and Craig Davis, *English Language & Literature*. This project will bring together a diverse group of scholars to explore the concept of evil and the practices of its invocation and reception. The goal will be not so much to establish the nature of evil in the world, but to examine and try to determine the functions it serves in various discourses, systems, actions, and interactions.

More information about this project will be available at an open information meeting for interested faculty on **Monday, September 20, 2010 at 12:00 Noon** at the Kahn Liberal Arts Institute, which is located on Level 3 South in Neilson Library. Lunch will be provided. A description of the project can be found on the Kahn Institute's Web site at www.smith.edu/kahninstitute/future.php.

Faculty Fellows who participate in this project will receive research grants of \$3,000. Junior faculty (only) have the option of choosing either a research grant or one course release during the project year.

The deadline to apply for a Faculty Fellowship in the *Evil* project is **Friday, October 15, 2010**. If you wish to apply, please email the Kahn Institute's Director, Rick Fantasia (rfantasi@smith.edu) by that date. In your email, please include the title of the project, and explain why you are interested in it, what you would bring to it, and what you hope to gain from it.

Faculty Fellowship Information Session for 2011-2012 Long-Term Project: Renaissances

Faculty Fellowship applications are now being accepted for the Kahn Institute's 2011-2012 yearlong project titled *Renaissances: A Multiplicity of Rebirths*, which is being organized by Nalini Bhushan, *Philosophy*, and Jay Garfield, *Philosophy*. This project will bring various analytic frameworks to bear in exploring the general phenomenon of renaissance and the similarities and differences between distinct types and instances of them. Fellows will examine case studies ranging from the European Renaissance after the Middle Ages to the revolutionary transformation of Mongolia in recent times.

More information about this project will be available at an open information meeting for interested faculty on **Thursday, September 23, 2010 at 12:00 Noon** at the Kahn Liberal Arts Institute, which is located on Level 3 South in Neilson Library. Lunch will be provided. A description of the project can be found on the Kahn Institute's Web site at www.smith.edu/kahninstitute/future.php.

Faculty Fellows who participate in this project will receive research grants of \$3,000. Junior faculty (only) have the option of choosing either a research grant or one course release during the project year.

The deadline to apply for a Faculty Fellowship in the *Renaissances* project is **Friday, October 15, 2010**. If you wish to apply, please email the Kahn Institute's Director, Rick Fantasia (rfantasi@smith.edu) by that date. In your email, please include the title of the project, and explain why you are interested in it, what you would bring to it, and what you hope to gain from it.

Kahn Institute Student Fellowships Awarded

The following Smith students have been awarded fellowships in connection with the Kahn Institute yearlong project for 2010-2011, *Why Educate Women? Global Perspectives on Equal Opportunity*. Fellows in the project will undertake a cross-cultural examination of women's ongoing struggle to become literate, educated participants in the societies into which they were born. The project is being organized by Susan Bourque, *Government*, and Rosetta Marantz Cohen, *Education & Child Study*.

Deborah Abiola Aho '11, *Sociology*

Chi Gao '11, *Biochemistry & Mathematics*

Gwen Gethner '11, *History*

Ella Hartenian '11, *Environmental Biology
& Sustainable Development*

Juliana Jackson '11, *Medieval Studies &
English Language & Literature*

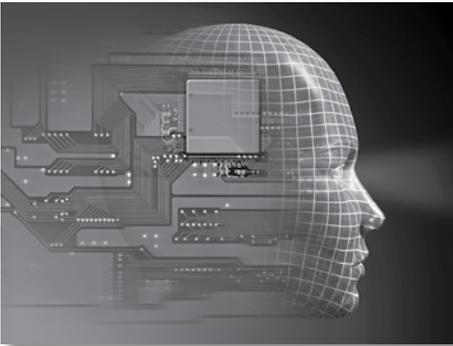
Samra Nadeem '11, *Economics*

Darcy Rendon '11, *American Studies
& Spanish*

Fellowship News

Faculty Fellowship Available for 2010-2011 Short-Term Project *Beyond Human Intelligence: The Possibility of Technological Singularity*

Organizing Fellows: *Judith Cardell, Engineering & Computer Science;*
James Miller, Economics • November 12-13, 2010



Will we reach a point in the future when artificial intelligences have been enhanced so much that machines are vastly smarter than people? Will there come a time when computers and networks have advanced to such an extent that they will have acquired a con-

sciousness of their own? How far in the future might that happen? At such a point, what would happen to humans? “Technological singularity” is a name used to describe a possible future in which such enhanced human or artificial intelligence exists and is billions of times more powerful than human intelligence, pushing the future beyond human imagination. Although the concept may seem crazy, (or at least centuries away) or reserved only for the domain of science fiction, some argue that humanity is inexorably headed toward such a destination, and much sooner than we think. Indeed, there are those who think that a state of “technological singularity” may be reached by the middle of this century. Beyond science fiction.

The most basic argument for the plausibility of a condition of computer super intelligence capable of reaching, and even exceeding, human intelligence is that anything that exists can potentially be modeled by a computer program. Thus, a sufficiently detailed computer program that models the human brain could develop human-like intelligence. Current research is rapidly improving our understanding of how the brain operates, and it seems likely that we will soon have enough information about the human brain to be able to create an accurate and comprehensive model of its structure and function, a model that could be used to generate a machine that works in the same way, an “artificial general intelligence” (AGI). Given that we have access to the “source code” for the human brain (DNA), which we are getting exponentially better at reading, and we can perform increasingly detailed scans of the human brain, some singularity proponents believe that by 2030 we will be able to create a machine that has human-level intelligence.

Once a working model has been created to match human intelligence, the argument suggests, it should be possible to surpass it relatively quickly, with computing power advancing much faster than almost any other technology. When coupled with AGI, such a dramatic amplification of computer performance would create staggeringly fast applications of intelligence, capable of remaking human civilizations. On one level, remarkably complex tasks would be accomplished within remarkably short time frames—perhaps writing a brilliant novel instantly or creating pharmaceuticals that can anticipate all possible viral or bacteriological mutations anywhere in the world, or designing fantastically advanced sys-

tems of transportation. But such capacities would also permit the design of new and more powerful weapons—material, symbolic, biologic—that could exert and enforce unimaginable degrees of control and repression and exploitation over human populations. Indeed, a super-enhanced ability to manipulate human genetic material creates the possibility for wholly fabricated populations of human-machine hybrids.

Physicist Stephen Hawking warns that AGI poses an existential threat to humanity, asserting, “In contrast with our intellect, computers double their performance every 18 months.... So the danger is real that they could develop intelligence and take over the world.... We must develop as quickly as possible technologies that make possible a direct connection between brain and computer so that artificial brains contribute to human intelligence rather than opposing it.”

It seems that the very prospect of such a state of “technological singularity” can quickly erode any walls in our collective imagination separating utopian possibilities from dystopian applications. We think that there is an intellectually fruitful and important discussion to be had by tackling this issue frankly, rationally, and analytically. This short-term Kahn Institute project will be such a discussion. In it we will consider arguments by proponents and skeptics of a possible state of technological singularity, with attention to how, when, or whether it might occur, as well as to the broad range of potential outcomes. We welcome to this discussion the ideas and thinking of colleagues from the arts and humanities, the social sciences, and the physical sciences.

Project Schedule

- Friday, November 12, 2-6 pm
Discussion session followed by dinner
- Saturday, November 13, 9 am-4 pm
Discussion session (includes lunch)

Call for Application for Faculty Fellows

This short-term project is now accepting applications for Faculty Fellows; it can accept up to eight Fellows, and each one will receive a stipend of \$500.

Faculty who are interested in applying are encouraged to read the project description or to contact the Organizing Fellows for more information. Judith Cardell can be reached via email at jcardell@smith.edu; James Miller can be reached via email at jdmiller@smith.edu.

To apply, send a letter of interest via email, campus mail, or Five College mail to Rick Fantasia at rfantasi@smith.edu, the Kahn Institute’s Director, on or before **Friday, October 8, 2010**. In your email, please include the title of the project and provide a brief explanation of why you are interested in it, what you feel you can bring to it, and what you hope to get out of it.

What Does It Mean to Study the New Testament?



Wayne A. Meeks

2010-2011 William Allan Neilson Chair of Research



Wayne A. Meeks is Woolsey Professor of Biblical Studies Emeritus in the Department of Religious Studies, Yale University, where he taught from 1969 until 1999. In September, 2010, he will come to Smith College as the 2010-2011 William Allan Neilson Chair of Research, a position commonly called “the Neilson Professor.” Since 1927, the William Allan Neilson Chair of Research has brought

to Smith some of the most distinguished scholars in the world, including poet W.H. Auden, writer Eudora Welty, historian Romila Thapar, and anthropologist Victor Turner, among others. In the spring of 2010, the Neilson Committee (the faculty committee charged with recommending scholars for the Neilson professorship to the President) joined the Kahn Institute to expand upon and enhance that tradition by mounting a joint Neilson-Kahn faculty seminar to provide the visiting Neilson Professor with a welcoming and stimulating intellectual community and to increase opportunities for Smith scholars to interact with and benefit from the scholarship and experience of these visitors. This fall, Professor Meeks will join in the second such Neilson-Kahn Seminar to explore current scholarship surrounding the study of texts from the New Testament. In this interview with the Kahn Institute, he introduces himself and his work and reflects on his role as this year’s Neilson Professor.

Kahn Institute: Scholars in the field of Religion undoubtedly know of your work already, but those in other departments may be less familiar with your research and writings. How would you introduce yourself and your work to students and faculty from other disciplines at Smith?

Wayne Meeks: I was trained as a New Testament scholar. But what it means to study the New Testament has changed significantly over the half century or so that I’ve been at it. I would like to think that my students and I and my immediate colleagues have had a small role in those changes. When I started graduate school, we took for

granted that the New Testament was a theological document. Our job, once we were made into experts, was to employ all the tools of scientific history—yes, scientific history—to discover exactly what the theological ideas were that were hidden in these few pages of Greek text. Or, alternatively, what theological ideas were implied by what really happened “behind” those texts. Or, if we followed the latest German import, what existential way of being in the world ought to follow from the challenge of those texts.

It was quite a grand project. Unfortunately, by the time I had finished my dissertation, with a year of teaching some very bright undergraduates behind me, I had come to two conclusions. One, it was a very limited kind of history that we were doing. Two, while

What kind of group speaks in puzzles? When is a puzzle a preferred form of communication?

theological ideas and one’s individual existential choices were doubtless important, neither described the way most people actually live.

Fortunately I had a number of close colleagues who were beginning to have similar doubts. There developed a network of people working in related fields who turned to the social sciences to develop a different order of questions. We began to try to practice a kind of ethnography of early Judaism and early Christianity as groups adapting to the culture of the eastern Roman provinces.

My first halting effort was on the topic of my dissertation, which had to do with the Gospel of John. Every commentator said that this Gospel is a puzzle, and then tried to crack the code. I decided the

Through a Glass Darkly: Reading the New Testament in a Postmodern World

Neilson Professor Lecture Schedule

September 27

The Myth of the Self-Interpreting Text: Communities Making Scripture Making Communities Communities may be created by sacred texts—but sacred texts evolve in communities. What is the social and cultural process by which this dialectic works?
4:30 pm :: Neilson Browsing Room

October 18

Naming Jesus: History, Midrash, and Myth The earliest followers of Jesus struggled to find appropriate images to say who Jesus was—to themselves and others. Comparison with other movements of the time helps us to understand this process better.
4:30 pm :: Neilson Browsing Room

November 8

The Rise and Fall of Historicism—and What Do We Do Now? Confidence that scientific history could determine what the New Testament means has been severely shaken in recent decades. If history can't answer our questions, what can?
4:30 pm :: Neilson Browsing Room

prior question was, What kind of group speaks in puzzles? When is a puzzle a preferred form of communication? That led to an essay on “The Man from Heaven [the way Jesus is described in the Fourth Gospel] in Johannine Sectarianism,” which got a lot of attention and provoked not a little dismay. Then I decided, again while teaching undergraduates, that the letters of Paul constitute a mine of raw data for the social historian. After a dozen years of labor, I published *The First Urban Christians: the Social World of the Apostle Paul*, which I suppose is the book I'm best known for. Later I returned to an issue that had interested me from the beginning of my studies, that is, how a religious community shapes the moral intuitions of its members. That led to several essays and lectures and the book called *The Origins of Christian Morality*.

Kahn: What factors or events most influenced your choice of a field of study?

Meeks: I grew up in the Bible Belt, in Alabama, in a day when both Fundamentalism and Racism were both endemic and unremarkable. But I was a Presbyterian, and Calvinists, we somehow learned, are rational. We are supposed to think. The Presbyterian youth organization and the Presbyterian student movement in turn, and through them, my contact with the ecumenical student Christian movement, utterly transformed my thinking about the world. That

led me into the ministry; I went to seminary in Austin, Texas. A trip to Rio de Janeiro to lead a work camp in a favela. A Fulbright year studying in Germany. Involvement in the civil rights movement, both in college and later as a campus minister. The excitement of my first pastoral work, among students in Memphis, Tennessee. A series of extraordinary teachers. The odd intellectual dissonance set up by the fact that I had chosen physics for my college major. All these, by some kind of serendipity, led me in the strange way I have come.

Kahn: What do you find most intriguing about participating in the Neilson-Kahn Seminar?

Meeks: Any time a bunch of smart people get together—especially if they come with different concerns and different areas of expertise, in a context where they are encouraged to speak honestly and openly to each other—exciting things tend to happen. I expect to learn a lot.

Kahn: What do you hope to bring to the Neilson-Kahn Seminar and to the Smith College community overall during your tenure as the William Allan Neilson Chair of Research?

Meeks: Memories of a rather long life, which, I hope, has taught me a few useful things. And an insatiable curiosity.

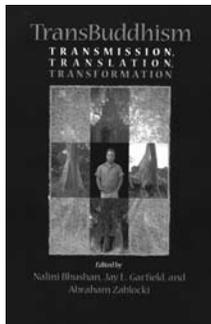


Neilson-Kahn Seminar Participants

Joel Kaminsky, *Religion, Organizing Faculty*
Vera Shevzov, *Religion, Organizing Faculty*
Suleiman Mourad, *Religion, Organizing Faculty*
Scott Bradbury, *Classical Languages & Literature*
L. Scott Brand, *Religion*
Robert Doran, *Greek & Hebrew (Amherst College)*

Richard Lim, *History*
Michael Penn, *Religion (Mount Holyoke College)*
Patricia Skarda, *English Language & Literature*
Colleen O'Toole '11, *Student Auditor*
Natalie Sargent '12, *Student Auditor*
Lilian Jackman, *Graduate Student Auditor (Yale University)*

Book by Kahn Institute Project Fellows Published by University of Massachusetts Press



Eight Project Fellows and five other scholars have joined forces to produce a book that derives from the research carried out as part of the Kahn Institute's 2003-2004 long-term project *Transbuddhism: Transmission, Translation, Transformation*. The

book, published in late 2009 by the University of Massachusetts Press in cooperation with the Kahn Institute, includes a collection of essays that examine the religious and cultural conversations that are occurring as the global

spread of Buddhism gives rise to new forms of religious complexity, exploring the process from a diverse range of disciplinary, methodological, and literary perspectives.

The volume was edited by Project Fellow Nalini Bhushan, associate professor of Philosophy at Smith, Organizing Fellow Jay Garfield, the Doris Silbert Professor of Humanities and a professor of Philosophy at Smith, and Project Fellow Abraham Zablocki, assistant professor of Religious Studies at Agnes Scott College. Contributors include Thomas Rohlich, professor of East Asian Languages and Literatures at Smith; Jane Stangl, instructor in Exercise & Sport Studies at Smith; Constance Kassor '05, a Student Fellow who is now a graduate student in Religious Studies at Emory University; and

Student Fellow Elizabeth Eastman '04. Images of Thai trees and monks created by independent artist and Faculty Fellow Meridel Rubenstein, who was the Harnish Visiting Lecturer of Art, frame individual chapters with a nonverbal exploration of the themes discussed.

Other contributors include Mark Blum, professor of East Asian Studies at The University at Albany; Mario D'Amato, associate professor of Religious Studies at Rollins College; Susan M. Darlington, professor of Anthropology at Hampshire College; Judith Snodgrass, professor at the Centre for Cultural Research at the University of Western Sydney (Australia); and Karma Lekshe Tsomo, associate professor of Religious Studies at the University of San Diego.

Why Educate Women? Project Presents a Public Lecture by Girls' Education Advocate May Rihani

On Monday, September 20 at 7:30 pm in the Neilson Browsing Room, the Kahn Liberal Arts Institute project *Why Educate Women? Global Perspectives on Equal Opportunity* will present a lecture by May Rihani, the Senior Vice President and Director of the AED (Academy for Educational Development) Global Learning Group in their Center for Gender Equity. Ms. Rihani is a leading voice on the relationship between girls' education and health, reproductive health, HIV and AIDS and economic productivity. She is an expert in designing and implementing women's leadership programs, and has designed, planned, and managed cross-cutting gender programs and girls' education projects in Afghanistan, Benin, Congo, Egypt, Ghana, Guinea, Jordan, Kenya, Mali, Malawi, Morocco, Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan, Qatar, Tanzania, and Yemen.

Her extensive work in girls' education includes research work, policy assessments, innovative designs, systems analysis, and management of country programs. She has presented lessons learned, best practices, and strategies on girls' education at a large number of international conferences and symposia addressing education for all. Due to her extensive and

worldwide experience in gender equity and equality, she has been elected as the Co-chair of the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative

She has written extensively on girls' education in works including *Keeping the Promise: Five Benefits of Girls' Secondary Education*; *Learning for the 21st Century: Strategies for Girls' Education in the Middle East and North Africa*; and *Strategies to Promote Girls' Education: Policies and Programs That Work*.

Her lecture, titled "The Power of Secondary Education and the Transition of Adolescent Girls to the Labor Force," will discuss several key and linked educational issues, such as advancing from primary school to secondary school, and the fact that secondary education still is an uncommon opportunity for girls. In addition, this presentation will discuss the social, health, and economic benefits of girls' education. The presentation will conclude by analyzing gender inequalities in economic opportunities, illustrating that when women increase their participation in the labor force, benefits accrue to the individual, the family, and society.

This lecture is free and open to the public.

Grants Awarded from Betty Hamady Sams '57 and James F. Sams Fund

The Kahn Liberal Arts Institute administers a restricted fund established by Betty and James Sams to support the study of Arab history, culture, politics, religion, and art at Smith College. The intent of the fund is to foster greater understanding among Americans and the people of Arab countries.

During the spring of 2010, three grants were awarded to Smith faculty in support of research that furthers the intent of the Sams Fund.

Dawn Fulton, Associate Professor, *French Studies*, received a grant to present a paper titled "Urban Silhouettes: Mohand Mounsi's Creolized Paris," which examines the literary and musical works of an Algerian immigrant

writer in France and explores the ways in which his work incorporates Arab communities and histories into representations of Paris.

Suleiman Mourad, Professor, *Religion and Director, Global Studies Center*, received a grant in support of his research on women's education in the medieval Arab-Islamic world. He is currently working on an article on a group of medieval women based in the region that is now Syria, Iraq, Iran, and Afghanistan with whom the celebrated Damascene scholar Ibn 'Asakir (d 1174 CE) studied Hadith, the most important source of law and religious thought and practice in Sunni Islam. This work is part of his preparations for a new course on Islam and Women in the Arab World, as well as writing a monograph on women's education in the

medieval Arab-Islamic world.

Ellen Kaplan, Professor, *Theatre*, received a grant to attend a forum on Arab representation that is part of a festival of Middle Eastern theater in San Francisco and to visit theater companies in the West Bank to gather new works to include in her course on contemporary Israeli theater.

Faculty interested in applying for a grant from the fund should email Rick Fantasia (rfantasia@smith.edu). Uses of grant funds may include, but are not limited to, support for Smith College faculty research and travel, student research and travel, student internships, guest speakers and special events, library and art acquisitions, or other appropriate uses.

The Kahn Institute is pleased to welcome Tes Slominski as its Andrew W. Mellon Foundation/ACLS Recent Doctoral Recipient Fellow for 2010-2011. She will be in residence at the Institute throughout the academic year, participating in the yearlong colloquium *Why Educate Women? Global Perspectives on Equal Opportunity* and conducting research on traditional music performance opportunities for women in Ireland in the early and mid-20th century.

Tes received her BA in Literary and Cultural Studies from the College of William and Mary in 1996 and went on to pursue a Master's degree in Ethnomusicology at the University of Limerick (Ireland); she received her MA in 2002. She returned to the U. S. to enter the PhD program at New York University in 2004 and completed her dissertation, titled *Women of the House, Boys of the Town: Music, Gender and the Public Sphere in Twentieth Century Ireland*, in June 2010. The fellowship at the Kahn Institute will allow her to spend a year at Smith continuing her research on the gendering of music education in Ireland in the 20th and early 21st centuries.

Her background as both a performer of Irish traditional music and a music educator have helped to lay the foundation for her research and have provided Tes with a unique frame of reference to bring to the *Why Educate Women* project. She plays both the Irish fiddle and the concertina, and she has performed at the Kennedy Center Millennium stage, the Irish Embassy, and the Catskills Irish Arts Week; she also won second place in slow airs in the all-Ireland Fleadh Cheoil music festival. She is looking forward to tuning up and delving into the Irish music scene at Smith and throughout the greater Northampton area. As a co-founder of the Blue Ridge Music School, a nonprofit organization "dedicated to teaching the living art of Irish traditional music and fostering a dynamic environment for it" in central Virginia, she is also well grounded in the issues and challenges associated with music education.

Tes's fellowship is supported by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation ACLS (American Council of Learned Societies) Early Career Fellowship program. She is one of 25 young scholars nationwide who will receive a one-year Fellowship as part of the Recent Doctoral Recipients Fellowship program. These Fellowships are awarded to "assist young scholars in the humanities and related social sciences in the first or second year following the completion of the PhD. The program aims to assist recent doctoral recipients to position themselves for further scholarly advancement." This Mellon/ACLS award is designed to allow recent PhD recipients to focus on research and

writing, rather than requiring them to turn their attention primarily to teaching, in the year immediately after the granting of their degrees.

While at Smith, Tes plans to focus on questions that arose while she was working on her dissertation. First, she will consider how the gendering of Irish traditional music influenced the reception of women musicians in the early 20th century, and how it still shapes the ways they are remembered a century later. Second, she wants to examine how the idealization of informal, "traditional" learning contexts affects women's full participation in traditional music today, especially given that women have long been associated with formal music education in Ireland. She plans to include this new research in her first monograph, which will be the first extended scholarly work on Irish women traditional musicians.

She is particularly excited about beginning her new research in the context of an interdisciplinary colloquium "of open, curious scholars who are willing to share their own disciplinary perspectives."

"My current work intersects with a number of disciplines and methodologies within the humanities and social sciences, and is unified by a foundational concern with gender and the experiences of women," she explains. "I am eager to participate in a project that begins from a similar point of departure. I'm also interested in the role education plays in enabling or complicating citizenship in the (post) nation: for example, who represents the face of Ireland in a rapidly changing Europe, and is this face gendered? How might traditional music be implicated in questions of citizenship in Ireland?"

"I'm particularly intrigued by the opportunities for creative ways of thinking cross-culturally, cross-historically, and cross-disciplinarily that the *Why Educate Women* project offers. Specifically, I'm interested in the resonances between the questions 'why educate women?' and 'why support arts education?' Both questions are often answered using a similar set of rationales, including arguments for cultural maintenance, inalienable rights, political and economic expediency, and empowerment—and both have the potential to productively intervene in current debates about education in the U.S."

Her unique dual perspectives on the oral (and aural) traditions of Irish music will surely broaden the already rich range of scholarship and the investigation of women's education worldwide in the *Why Educate Women?* project and in all her endeavors while on campus. Please join us in welcoming Tes to Smith.

Fiddle Me This

The Kahn Institute Welcomes
Ethnomusicologist Tes Slominski
as the 2010-2011 Mellon/ACLS
Recent Doctoral Recipients Fellow



Year-End Report



Mary Harrington, *Psychology* & Benita Jackson, *Psychology*
Organizing Fellows

In our yearlong *Wellness & Disease* project we explored the multi-faceted, complex nature of health determinants. The Fellows participating in this project came from disciplinary orientations pertinent to health research, including scholars from a wide range of content areas and methods. At times it was challenging to find a common language while engaging in conversation with a community encompassing such a breadth of knowledge. It has meant being willing to ask questions that might seem obvious (“What does that mean?”) and also being open to having colleagues question some of the most fundamental premises in one’s own thinking.

We emphasized studying mechanisms spanning the cellular, psychological, and social levels, as well as how those levels interact. Our guest speakers in the first semester gave us stunning examples of how one might successfully bring multiple levels of analysis to research questions such as “Can a behavioral practice like meditation actually effect physiological processes such as inflammation?” (Dr. Charles Raison, Emory University); “If wealth predicts health, why is life in the U.S. ‘nasty, brutish, and short’?” (Dr. Ichiro Kawachi, Harvard University); and “How do our closest social relationships shape the ways people cope with an illness?” (Tracey Revenson, City University of New York). In the second semester, we hosted Greg Miller, faculty member at the University of British Columbia and co-director of the Psychobiological Determinants of Health Laboratory, who talked about his research on children reared in low so-

cioeconomic environments and how experiencing those conditions during certain life stages can shape the epigenetic landscape of the developing nervous, endocrine, and immune systems. We also discussed ideas with Geneviève Rail, Principal of Simone de Beauvoir Institute at Concordia University, who provided a feminist perspective on health in her discussion of obesity and body image. Using Foucault’s formulation of the “confessions of the flesh,” she described how obesity discourses in popular media, for example, discipline subjects to believe in intervention processes that will supposedly lead to “salvation.”

We began the second semester with a sense of urgency as we processed the news about the aftermath of the earthquake in Haiti. Mary Renda from Mount Holyoke College and Joshua Miller from the Smith College School for Social Work joined the colloquium to discuss the history of Haiti and the response to the crisis brought on by the earthquake. Josh, who had just returned from a service trip to Haiti, helped us understand how mental health professionals support people in dealing with the psychological aftershocks of disaster, while Mary brought a nuanced historical perspective that provided us with a deeper understanding of social and political forces that shape current-day Haiti.

Throughout the second semester, we read widely and discussed papers on nationalism, borders, inequality, and health, and we invited

Wellness & Disease Fellows

Mary Harrington, *Psychology, Organizing Fellow*

Benita Jackston, *Psychology, Organizing Fellow*

Barbara Brehm-Curtis, *Exercise & Sport Studies*

Emily Earl-Royal ‘10, *Comparative Literature*

Liora O’Donnell-Goldensher ‘10, *Sociology*

Suzanne Gottchang, *Anthropology*

Lori Harris AC ‘10, *American Studies*

Shannon Houlihan MS ‘10, *Exercise & Sport Studies*

Leslie Jaffe, *College Physician, Director, Health Services*

Kiran Jandu ‘10, *Economics*

Susan Levin, *Philosophy*

Jessica Magyar ‘10, *Studio Art & Psychology*

Meenakshi Menon ‘10, *Anthropology*

Sarah C. Miller ‘10, *Anthropology & French Studies*

Margaret Mumbi Mongare, *Biochemistry*

Albert Mosley, *Philosophy*

Maria-Fatima Santos ‘10, *Philosophy*

Jane Stangl, *Exercise & Sport Studies*

Christine White-Ziegler, *Biological Sciences*



experts who could share diverse perspectives on disaster, suffering, and healing. **Michael Lundquist**, Director at the Polus Center for Social & Economic Development shared his experiences in providing assistance to land mine victims internationally. He discussed current best practices for developing and implementing community-based interventions and opened our eyes to issues associated with circumstances involving extreme violence.

On a lighter note, we co-sponsored a performance of *The Complete Works of Shakespeare, Abridged* as part of the Northampton Arts Council's Four Sundays in February program at the Academy of Music Theatre.

“Can a behavior practice like meditation actually affect physiological processes?”

If humor does promote health, as Norman Cousins famously espoused in his classic book *Anatomy of an Illness*, those who attended got a boost of both to chase away some of the winter chill.

We also spent some of our time considering more closely the interactions between patient and physician. **Amy Rothenberg**, co-director of the New England School of Homeopathy, discussed the concepts of wellness and disease from complementary medical practices such as naturopathy and homeopathy; her practice as a naturopathic family physician; and the challenges and progress

in applying Western scientific inquiry in her field. After presenting some esoteric ideas, she moved our cerebral explorations into more embodied awareness by guiding our group in some simple self-care activities—including alternate-nostril breathing and qi gong exercises—for increasing parasympathetic (relaxation) responses. We were informed by our prior discussions of various models of the physician-patient relationship and philosopher **Susan Levin's** scholarly research on Plato's evolving ideas about the role of the physician.

Our research Fellows brought their individual projects to a close with final presentations to the group during spring semester, covering a fascinating collection of research projects. **Jessica Magyar '10** shared her work not only with the colloquium, but also with the wider campus community by putting together a show of art created by cancer survivors that she annotated and presented at the Campus Center. She also presented details of her research on arts therapy at the Celebrating Collaborations Day event in April; her talk was titled *How Medical Arts Therapy Affects Shape Experiences with Illness*.

Other Student Fellows also presented their research at the college's Collaborations Day. **Emily Earl-Royal '10** gave a presentation titled *Dowry-Related Domestic Violence and Its Treatment in India* in which she discussed her research and in particular her trip to India in January, 2010, describing her experiences working with doctors and burn patients in a teaching hospital there. **Kiran Jandu '10**, examined the impact that access to clean, affordable, and reliable water sources has on individual and community health in her presentation, *Development Paradigms*

for Water Management. **Meenakshi Menon '10** considered the extent and consequences of widespread infection by two prevalent tropical diseases in Asia in her talk, *Tracking Malaria and Dengue Fever in Battambang and Ratanakiri Provinces in the Kingdom of Cambodia*. **Sarah C. Miller '10** shared data

“If wealth predicts health, why is life in the U.S. ‘nasty, brutish and short?’”

from her research on a relatively recent form of drug abuse in the U.S. in her presentation, *Treatments, Responses and Discourses: Illicit Oxycontin Use and Dependence in Rural America*, while **Margaret Mumbi Mongare '10** considered how national policies related to the delivery of health care have influenced success rates in the treatment of eclampsia in pregnant African women in her presentation, *The Impact of Health Policies on Maternal Health Care in South Africa*.

After two semesters of colloquium meetings, engaging discussions with guest scholars, and lively fellowship, we celebrated the year-end with Fellows from the Kahn Institute's other yearlong project, *Telling Time, Its Meaning and Measurement*, and with the invaluable staff of the Institute: Kara Noble, Chrissie Bell, and Rick Fantasia. We began the summer with new ideas and new friends, and look forward to continuing the discussions we began during this year participating in the *Wellness & Disease* project.



Year-End Report

Bosiljka Glumac, *Geosciences* & Richard Lim, *History*
Organizing Fellows

“We must wait for the future to show...”

— Virginia Woolf “Time Passes,” *To the Lighthouse*

Throughout our project year, *Telling Time* Fellows managed to balance their keenness to grapple with the multifaceted aspects of time with a sense that approaching a topic as comprehensive and ponderous as ours was neither an easy task nor one to be rushed. The project began auspiciously as twelve Faculty and seven Student Fellows from the fields of Anthropology, Art, Astronomy, Biology, East Asian Languages and Literatures, Economics, English, Geosciences, History, the Museum or Art, Music, Philosophy, Physics and Spanish brought their disciplinary training and perspectives to bear in impressive ways. The range of fields represented around the table developed into a considerable asset as Fellows took pains to learn about the materials, methods, and concerns that shaped each other’s work and outlook. Our initial meetings helped us become more deeply acquainted with each other’s projects as we focused two colloquia on identifying shared concerns and themes. Along with nurturing a growing reflexivity regarding the questions and methodological approaches that may have united us (or not) as a group, we deepened our belief that Fellows had much to gain from engaging with each other week by week.

Sociable conversations that began at lunch merged imperceptibly into more structured discussions in our Friday afternoon seminars to create collective goodwill and intellectual comradeship. That our subject matter was one that no one could plausibly claim to be the reigning expert on (except in a modest area) rendered the seminar a highly collaborative venture, which in turn allowed individual strengths to emerge and play a full role that benefited us all. We credit the positive outcome of the year to the fact that we had Fellows of high caliber who possessed the capacity and willingness to participate in joint intellectual exploration, as well as to our group élan.

With space here to offer but the most cursory summary of Fellows’ projects, seminar topics, and invited speakers, we hope that we can nevertheless illustrate the scope of intellectual coverage and the sense of excitement that we experienced. Geoscientists **Bosiljka Glumac** and **Sara Pruss**, along with visiting scholar and University of Massachusetts geosciences professor **Michael Williams**, shared their passion for and perspectives on fine-tuning chemical dating processes of rocks, minerals, and fossils, allowing us to come to a better understanding of the earth’s geological developments. **Carolyn Wetzel**, along with her biologist colleague, visiting scholar **Rob McClung** from Dartmouth College, helped us appreciate the importance of biological circadian rhythms, particularly in plants. Harmony and rhythms played a central role in the projects of music major **Christine Woodbury ‘10** and physicist **Nat Fortune**, who devoted his attention to Johannes Kepler’s theory of the harmonic spheres. Astronomer **Suzan Edwards** gave us the gift of her wide interests, expertise, and ease in moving between intellectual fields. This latter quality was also shown by California Institute of Technology physicist **Sean Carroll**, who discussed key ideas from his recent book *From Eternity to Here: The Quest for the Ultimate Theory of Time*, arguing inter alia that the directionality of time was a result of the Big Bang.

Visiting Zen master **Richard Clarke**, philosophy major **Katherine Zubko ‘11**, and historian **Richard Lim** led a reading-based discussion that highlighted common understandings of temporality shared by Zen Buddhism and Existentialist philosophies.

The structuration of time through narrative emerged as one of this year’s key themes, one shared by humanists and natural scientists alike. We approached and explored it in various ways, includ-

Telling Time Fellows

Bosiljka Glumac, *Geosciences*
Organizing Fellow

Richard Lim, *History*
Organizing Fellow

Nancy Bradbury, *English*

Darcy Buerkle, *History*

Carolyn Collette, *English (Mount Holyoke)*

David Dempsey, *Museum of Art*

Maggie Dethloff '10, *Art History*

Suzan Edwards, *Astronomy*

Brigid Fitzgerald '10, *Anthropology*

Nathanael Fortune, *Physics*

Catharina Gress-Wright '10, *English*

Jina Kim, *East Asian Studies*

Lonicera Lyttle '10, *Economics & Spanish*

Marla Maccia '10, *Biological Sciences*

Cornelia Pearsall, *English*

Sara Pruss, *Geosciences*

Carolyn Wetzel, *Biological Sciences*

Christine Woodbury '10, *Music*

Katherine Zubko '11, *Philosophy*

ing discussing Virginia Woolf's "Time Passes" and—thanks to library Special Collections curator **Karen Kukil**—viewing the autograph manuscript and associated photographs that reside in Smith's rich collection. Indeed, this allowed us to form a connection with a Spring Smith Art Museum exhibition on the Bloomsbury Group, a project on which two Fellows, Victorianist **Cornelia Pearsall** and German historian **Darcy Buerkle**, collaborated. Both Fellows also contributed valuable insights into their work on the imagination and commemoration of death in modern and Victorian Europe. Medievalists **Nancy Bradbury** and **Carolyn Collette** (Mount Holyoke College), along with their New York University colleague, **Carolyn Dinshaw**, led the group to a contemplation of the richness of medieval European temporalities, inviting us to envisage a cultural world before the innovation of the mechanical clock reshaped their temporal imaginations. Just as Dinshaw theorized on the meaning of the existence of plural and layered medieval times in folktales, English major **Catharina Gress-Wright '11** explored ghost stories as a discourse of multiple temporalities. Koreanist **Jina Kim** related the constructions of an early-modern admiral who fought against Japanese invasion to the evolution of modern Korean nationalism. Shifting socio-cultural conditions reshaped approaches to time, as biology major **Marla Maccia '10** found in tracing the development of New England almanacs and economic and Spanish major **Lonicera Lyttle '10** also saw in the transformations wrought by the technology of modern railroads in the U.S. Richard Lim traced how new temporalities such as the seven-day week came increasingly to the fore due to the cultural contest over the shaping of civic life in late antiquity, while Kahn director and sociologist **Rick Fantasia** guest-led a discussion on how modern industrial work shaped our conceptions of time.

Contemporary visual art and culture address issues of time and temporality in explicit and interesting ways. Art major **Maggie Dethloff '10** and Art Museum Associate Director **David Dempsey**, along with Carolyn Wetzel, helped us understand the importance of temporality in the creation, curation, and conservation of art, leading a group trip to the Yale University Art Gallery to view the exhibition *Continuous Present*. Meanwhile David Dempsey and Whitney Museum of American Art conservator **Carol Mancusi-Ungaro** shared with us the challenges inherent in attempting to conserve contemporary art that artists designed as ephemera and hence were not meant to last. Maggie Dethloff presented a mock exhibition of the works of Hispanic artist Enrique Chagoya to show how one might curate artworks that play visually with the representation of time and temporalities. Film represents an especially notable modern time-based art form. Viewing Chris Marker's 1962 *La Jetée* with film studies specialist **Alexandra Keller** allowed us to see how this remarkable film addresses different modalities of time and its representation. Appropriate temporal framing may even be the key to our own collective survival, as anthropology major **Brigid Fitzgerald '10** argued

in discussing the importance of a sustainable utopian vision.

Over the course of an academic year, during which several Fellows experienced personal loss and adversity while two others gave birth to healthy babies, we developed a strong sense of camaraderie, growing into a caring and enduring emotional community aware of the finitude of human life and the push and pull of multiple temporalities. We discovered that pursuing a project with high intellectual purpose does not have to be a stilted exercise; instead, we had great fun as we learned. We are grateful that in this we received the full understanding and support from the Kahn Institute Director Rick Fantasia, from members of the Advisory Committee and, on an almost daily basis, from Kahn Institute administrators **Kara Noble** and **Chrissie Bell** and their helpers. Given the challenges faced by the College during a time of dwindling resources and competing needs, we wish to underscore the great value of the experience that the Kahn Institute afforded us and urge that it be fully supported. Our Kahn Institute is virtually unique in the country in creating a setting that forges peer intellectual bonds among faculty and undergraduates. In our case, we found that the experiment can be immensely—indeed exhilaratingly—successful.

Having now left our weekly intellectual effervescence in the past, we return to our individual pursuits and routines with stronger minds and spirits. Aside from the new ways of thinking that we helped each other formulate, we also created several legacies for a wider public. *Telling Time* jointly contributed to the Northampton Arts Council's Four Sundays in February by helping to identify and bring to fruition a rousing performance of *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged)*. Led by David Dempsey, we also identified the conservation of a damaged sundial on campus as a collaborative project that can help us appreciate the effects of time on materials and the ethical and practical challenges of conservation (see the Fall 2009 *Kahn Chronicle* for more details). The sundial will soon be restored thanks to input from art conservator **Monica Berry** and art history major **Makana Hirose '10**, who sculpted a replica of the bronze faceplate of the sundial in plasticine from archival photos and drawings.

The Project's first public speaker, cultural anthropologist and astronomer **Anthony Aveni**, debunked popular fears regarding the predicted Mayan apocalypse of 2012. Having been assured that the date marks the calendrical close of the Mayan Long Count rather than the eschatological "end of the world," Fellows readied to make projections into a longer future. Our most grandiose endeavor in this regard is our project *Time Capsule*, which will be installed inside the walls of Neilson Library, the site of our colloquy and fellowship, during that building's summer 2010 renovations. Marked by a plaque that will include the line from Virginia Woolf with which this report begins, the time capsule is due to be opened by *Telling Time* Fellows in 2060 at their 50th Reunion.

A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Autonomy and Generosity

By Rick Fantasia, *Director*

Photo by Jim Gipe



From almost any angle the Kahn Institute must be viewed as a huge success for Smith College. Over the course of its 11 years, over 150 members of our faculty and over 200 students have participated in 21 yearlong projects, while a combined 300 faculty members from Smith and the Five Colleges have participated in 25 short term projects. Moreover, its reputation

has expanded in step with these numbers. When I served as Acting Director in 2001-02, many students and faculty members didn't know what the Kahn Institute was, where it was located, or why one might participate in it. When I returned as Director four years later, the Institute was widely known and well-regarded across the campus, occupying an important place in the intellectual life of the College.

The outlines of the Institute's success were inscribed in its initial foundation when three senior faculty members (Professors Lester Little, Marjorie Senechal, and Andrew Zimbalist) proposed to then-President Ruth Simmons the idea of establishing an institutional vehicle to support faculty scholarship and encourage collaborative faculty research. Their vision was of an institute that would not be restricted to the Humanities, like most other such centers, but one that would represent the broad spectrum of the liberal arts. This was quite a bold idea which, when combined with the plan to thoughtfully integrate undergraduate students into a faculty research institute, constituted a truly innovative model for intellectual engagement and organization, one that would come to be sculpted, refined, and implemented by the founding Director Marjorie Senechal.

With much of the Kahn Institute model set into motion during its formative period, I was handed the keys to a vehicle that was already operating quite smoothly. This was a great situation, not only for me but for the Institute as well, because it made it possible to implement good ideas, to try new things out, and to pursue promising possibilities, without having to lurch from crisis to crisis. This is a remarkably privileged position to be in, but I would insist that it is absolutely crucial that the Kahn Institute be able to continue in this way. I see two necessary conditions for the continuing vitality of our Institute: the ability to maintain a certain *generosity* (of both spirit and pocketbook) and an ability to uphold our *autonomy*.

We have consciously tried to project an ethos of generosity at the Kahn Institute, and our first inclination must always be to say "yes" to good ideas, to create an atmosphere of intellectual possibility for those who participate in our projects. To do that, we must offer the freedom to explore intellectual questions without having to be constantly concerned about "efficiencies" of one form or another. One colleague has said that what she appreciates about the Kahn Institute is that it feels like one of the few places left where one can experience a feeling of extravagance. This sense of extravagance is specifically intellectual, but it is not without attention to material comforts as well, reflected in our physical space, the good food we provide, and in the stipends

we offer. We have consciously cultivated this sensibility even as we have had to trim our budget by more than 14% in the current year, as we have had to assume various additional expenses for the first time, and as we have had to manage without inflationary increases for the last five years.

Let me quickly add that this is no different from other departments or programs at the College that have had to make cuts or do without funding increases in response to the economic crisis. I don't want to imply that there has been a lack of support for the Kahn Institute. But while I should perhaps be gracious and say that the Kahn Institute should not be treated differently with regard to budgets than other programs or departments at the College, I actually think that it should be! The basis of our creativity in programming and our ability to respond to spontaneous ideas and proposals from faculty come from funds that have carried over from unspent monies retained from previous years. A situation of level funding means that those "carry over" funds have been steadily shrinking—and soon so will our ability to respond to faculty initiatives. With budgets being trimmed on campus, the feeling of responsiveness and expansiveness—of ideas and of resources—becomes harder to perceive. An ethos of generosity, along with the powerful sense of collegiality it produces, ought to be preserved wherever it can be.

In my view, the other crucial condition for the continuing vitality of the Kahn Institute is our autonomy. What may not be fully appreciated is that we do not organize our intellectual activities around projects that are simply interesting themes proposed by the Director—or anyone else for that matter. Kahn projects are generated out of real problems and questions that have arisen from within the actual research of faculty scholars and that is their only source. Our intellectual practices are thereby shaped by intellectual practitioners, by scholars and scientists and artists trying to figure things out, and not by the demands of the classroom curriculum, or the ideas of the Director, or the agenda of an Administrator. Indeed, the current Administration has been very supportive and respectful of the Institute and its work, but if an administrator were to suggest an idea—even a very good one—it simply wouldn't fly as a Kahn project because it would not have been generated in faculty research. Were we to begin to organize our projects on the basis of someone's idea for an interesting theme, but abstracted from the process of scholarly research, the Institute would soon become little more than the ideological vehicle of its Director or the intellectual extension of an administrator's agenda. Either way, we would be sunk as a true center of scholarly activity because we would lose the very element that infuses our projects with intellectual life and energy.

Both autonomy and generosity must be sustained if the Kahn Institute is to continue to thrive. This will require a measure of vigilance by the faculty and by the College.