

# WOMEN'S AND GENDER STUDIES

## Inspiring Women in Unexpected Places



Photo by Stephanie Lefeld '13

**Denise Brown**

You won't find this year's winner of the Susan R. Hermes Award for Excellence in Women's and Gender Studies, Denise Brown, in the residence halls or at Timothy's Bar on a Friday night. As a nontraditional student, Denise has been earning her degree in Women's and Gender Studies (WGS), with a minor in fine arts, while also working full-time as the senior administrative assistant for the department of computer science. Though still an undergraduate until May, Denise has already starting working on her master's degree in communication, in which she hopes to focus on topics related to gender and sexuality.

WGS faculty members describe Denise as a "tenacious thinker and writer," one who "digs deeply into herself and her experiences in thinking through issues." As one example of the latter, Denise visited this spring's Feminist Social Change class to speak about her experiences with sexual harassment while working in the construction industry. Instructor Dr. Rebecca Whisnant reported that "Denise's gentle and thoughtful manner, combined with her uncompromising feminist politics, provided a superb learning experience for the students."

Denise says that, given her own fulfilling experience as a nontraditional student, she wants to encourage other staff members who might feel intimidated to "just start out and [get their degrees]." She also aspires to take "a more proactive approach to attract more female students to computer science." She's already had some success in this effort, since her encouragement helped inspire this writer to undertake a computer science major as an undergraduate.

In addition to her school and work responsibilities, Denise has "always practiced art on the side" and also writes poetry, hoping one day to publish a manuscript. To relax, she loves playing with her rescued foxhound, Jazzy.

– Julianne Morgan '12

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## What Can You Do With a Women's and Gender Studies Major or Minor?

### You Can ...

- work for a YWCA battered women's shelter, or volunteer in Thailand with an organization preventing human trafficking, and work in refugee resettlement services  
– **Sarah McCormick '05**
- achieve a master's in English and incorporate gender and other social justice issues into college instruction – **Meredith Effler '07**
- achieve a master's in fine arts with a graduate certificate in WGS, restore antique printing equipment and open a letterpress studio, and partner with the Tulsa Girls Art School  
– **Rachel Dennis '07**
- pursue doctoral studies on feminist and sexual ethics in the Catholic church and facilitate local women's empowerment groups – **Karen Ross '08**
- pursue a doctorate in sociology focusing on violence against women  
– **Emily Bonistall '09**
- live in Central America and work for Witness for Peace – **Lizz Perkins '09**
- go to law school and aim to work in family law and child advocacy  
– **Grace Crivello LeCroix '10**
- earn a nursing degree, become a patient advocate for women in psychiatric units, and be trained as a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner – **Rebecca Mayors '10**
- pursue a graduate degree in clinical psychology, work with mental health agencies to help young women with self-esteem, body image and eating disorders  
– **Andrea Hennel '11**
- launch a publication on LGBT issues in Ohio and become Director of Social Media at a publishing company – **Laura Graving '11**
- work for Rock the Vote and as a field organizer for a national political campaign  
– **Maura LaMendola '11**
- intern with media education organizations and assist a feminist nonprofit with blogging and social media – **Kelly MacKenzie '12**

## What They're Saying...

“My WGS degree was so much more than an education. What I learned in those classes set me free from my past.”

– **Rachel Dennis '07**

“My WGS major has given me a much broader understanding of structural violence and human rights.”

– **Lizz Perkins '09**

“The WGS courses and the passionate professors who taught them inspired me to pursue a life of public service.”

– **Stephanie Moon '12**