

# School of Family Studies

University of Connecticut

**Annual Report, 1997-98**

## Narrative Summary

The "energetic change, renewal, and planning" cited in our last annual report have continued in the current year, and the fruits of these efforts are becoming evident. Developments in education, scholarship, and outreach are moving rapidly, relations with friends and graduates are invigorated, faculty and staff are prospering despite the overload, and our physical plant is showing signs of renewal amidst the struggle against decay. It has been a good year in all domains.

### *Undergraduate education*

The undergraduate program in the School of Family Studies has been central to its mission since the founding of the School in 1893. In the Spring of this year we had 530 students enrolled in the Human Development and Family Studies major (HDFR), an increase of 16 percent over last Spring. Significantly, there is also a larger number of incoming freshmen who have declared their interest in an HDFR major for next year. This latter trend is particularly promising, for when students discover us late in their undergraduate career it is often difficult for them to complete the required coursework in an orderly manner. The overall increase in majors is flattering, to be sure, but if continued it could also prove a problem for the School, which already has one of the least desirable student/faculty ratios in the University.

Several new courses were introduced into the curriculum, most prominently the soon-to-be-required "Diversity Issues in Human Development and Family Relations." In its inaugural offering, the course proved successful by many accounts, and some important lessons were learned for improving it in the future. Overall, faculty continue to invest a major portion of their effort in undergraduate teaching, and HDFR courses continue to be highly regarded by students (the School's average student ratings are above the University's average.).

Two kinds of program development have begun this year which hold considerable import for the future of our undergraduate program. At the more specific level, a committee jointly established with the School of Education has been engaged in designing a new collaborative effort in early childhood education. The goal has been set to bring together the considerable strengths of the two Schools - as well as other units in the University - in order to create a comprehensive, State-certified BA/MA program that will set a new standard for training in this critical area. Planning has proceeded well and we recently filed a formal letter of intent with the relevant State authorities.









