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Medusa Magazine

Hannah Kristin Warren

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Medusa Magazine

A Capstone Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements of the Renée Crown University Honors Program at
Syracuse University

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and Renée Crown University Honors
May 2012

Honors Capstone Project in Magazine

Journalism

Capstone Project Advisor: _____
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Reader Title & Name

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Date: 26 April 2012

Abstract

Medusa Magazine is a student-run campus publication, co-founded by the author of this project and Samantha Lifson, a 2011 graduate of Syracuse University. The idea for the magazine came together over the summer and fall of 2009, with *Medusa* gaining official status as a Recognized Student Organization in the spring of 2010. The first issue was printed in April of 2010, and we have published two issues per semester since.

The process of *Medusa*'s creation involved the drafting of our constitution as a student organization, numerous meetings with Bethany Piraino, our consultant within the Office of Student Activities, to ensure we met all the criteria to become a student organization, and application to the Student Association for the funding necessary to print. To create the format, which we have perpetuated in each subsequent issue, Samantha and this author worked very closely with Chloe O'Connor, our first design editor. We established coherent sections to the book, and set examples for things like the sex column, writing style for the features section, profile writing format, and photo/art spreads. We held numerous general interest meetings, and constantly recruited writers. We set an editorial process, which the staff follows consistently twice a semester to ensure the issues are printed on time and distributed to the student body efficiently. We also developed a style guide of general style rules for the publication, as well as a feminist style sheet, dictating the kind of politically correct language that should be used to discuss feminist issues in the publication.

Medusa was founded to promote a feminist discussion on campus, and to bring into the public eye the outstanding achievements of women in their chosen career field. We feature art, poetry and opinions by female writers, and we allow column space to anyone with arguments to express. The publication was also founded to act as a critique of cultural norms, and to view and analyze current events and trends through a feminist lens.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

I worked as a camp counselor for the summer of 2009. It was my first summer working at Camp Lutherlyn, and there were days that I worried for the girls I was responsible for in an almost irrational way. One week, I had junior high campers, a group of bright, talkative, friendly girls. There was a female camper in another cabin group who had issues from the very beginning of her stay at camp, and because of the large group “get to know you” activities we did at the beginning of the week, my cabin members knew of her.

By the middle of that week, she was sent home, because she had refused to eat and was no longer able to last through a full day of camp activities. It was discovered that she had the beginnings of an eating disorder, and so I decided to use one of our free times for hanging out as a cabin group as a time to talk about body image. What I discovered then became the motivation for starting *Medusa*. Most of the 13- and 14-year-old girls in my cabin group were dissatisfied with their bodies, and a few had already put themselves on diets. Some were merely following the examples or wishes of their mothers; others controlled their eating because their friends did. But none of them were happy with the way they looked, and they hadn’t even entered high school yet.

During an afternoon in the staff lounge, I spoke with Meg, a fellow counselor and an outspoken feminist and LGBT activist who often reached out to kids who were having problems finding acceptance. Meg was my counselor

numerous times during my childhood, and was one of the few people I was personally comfortable reaching out to. After listening to me gripe about how unfair the world was for the campers that we met every year, and how much anger welled up when I thought about how difficult middle school already was, without the added insecurities passed down from mainstream media.

After a whole lot of nodding and agreeing with what I was saying, Meg piped up, double-checking that I went to a journalism school, and asking me what my major was. I replied, “Magazine Journalism.” She shrugged, looked at me and asked, “Why don’t you start a magazine about it?”

That weekend, after I said goodbye to all the members of my cabin group from that week, I texted Samantha Lifson, a sister in the service sorority I had just joined and also an outspoken feminist, and asked if there was a feminist magazine on the Syracuse University campus yet. She responded that there wasn’t, and I suggested we start one of our own. She quickly agreed, and we set about making it happen during the fall semester of 2009.

I wish I could say there was more of a process for coming to the idea, or for developing it at all before I arrived back on campus. There wasn’t much of a transition process from Meg’s suggestion to my contacting Sammy, either. I was just so content to be able to do something, even on a small scale, to try and change things. It felt good and final to be able to focus my hopes and energies on something tangible, and to be honest, it helped the nagging sadness I’d felt for the girls I’d met who were going through difficult times. This was the point when I also realized I wasn’t really cut out to be a counselor long-term; I finished out the

summer and returned to work at Lutherlyn for another season as a counselor, but each time I heard of another camper's difficulties and felt powerless to change them, I hated how powerless I felt.

Upon our return to campus, I looked up the paperwork and contacted Sammy again. I wasn't sure that she took me seriously when I suggested the project, but when she realized I fully intended to start a publication, we set to work. Before we could begin to plan the content of the issue, we first worked out how we would fund the venture. We soon realized that starting a magazine outside the academic community and financial support of the university would not be possible; we were not able to independently raise enough capital or sell advertising space for a magazine that did not yet exist. We were also conscious of the fact that some people would not be receptive to or supportive of what we were trying to accomplish. We knew we needed to print enough copies to reach a wide enough swath of campus, and for that, we needed funding from the school. In order to request funding at all, though, we needed to become a recognized student organization (RSO).

The process of becoming an RSO through the Office of Student Activities (OSA) involved creating a constitution and setting membership rules, finding a faculty advisor, and gaining approval from the OSA to request funding from Student Association (SA). We then discovered that, because it took a full semester to complete the recognition process, we wouldn't be able to request funding from SA until the 2012 spring semester, and that that funding would not be available for use until fall 2010.

We had planned, reported and designed the issue at the same time as we started the RSO. This left us with an issue that was prepared, packaged, and ready to be sent to the printer, but without money to pay the printing service.

We reasoned that by the next fall, the content in Issue 1 would be old news, and that printing a book of dated articles would set us back in our petitions for funding in the future. With something approaching desperation, we appealed to the Women's and Gender Studies department for help, but were met with the reality that their finances could not support us. (They did, however, offer to provide refreshments for our launch party.) Eventually, we made a call to the university's vice president of public affairs, Kevin Quinn, and requested the funding from Chancellor Nancy Cantor as we were recommended to do by WGS department chair Chandra Mohanty. We were granted the money to print 750 copies of Issue 1, and were officially on our feet as a student organization and campus publication. We launched in April 2010.

Chapter 2

The Road to Regular Operation

After our first launch party, when the euphoria wore off, we set to the task of honing what we had into a sustainable model that could be replicated and improved upon in future issues. We were granted funding to print two black-and-white issues, at 1000 copies. Sammy and I corresponded through the summer of 2010, sending e-mails back and forth to plan a workflow for the next semester.

One of the first things we did that fall was hold a general interest meeting for people who already had an interest in feminism. We sought to get a working definition of feminism from the attendees (a difficult proposition at best, and a changeable one), and a sense of what they wanted to see *Medusa* do. Here is a general rundown of the topics we covered at this meeting, thanks to the careful notes of Mary Cappabianca, our PR chair at the time:

- What is feminism? Where does it come from? Why should it be important to students here on campus?
- Most attendees felt *Medusa* was so far too “Second Wave.”
- Wanted to see a broader scope... challenge more... be FIERCER and unafraid.
- Adopt and reflect more complicated notions of gender.
- Use *Medusa* as an educational tool, with the typical feminist buzzwords. Make it accessible, but not overwhelming.
- *Medusa* blurb in each issue, about the ancient Greek character herself.

- Include poetry and other artsy student work or applicable pieces we find.

The group also helped us come up with a few feminist guidelines for running the publication. These dealt with the question of whether we wanted to portray women as more important than or equal to men in our writing; we concluded that, in our publication's mission to highlight women and uplift those in our community who are successful and respected, we were in essence putting women on a pedestal. But highlighting females was our goal because they are often overlooked in the common discussion. Our work was an attempt to bring them on the level with their male counterparts.

Eventually, we agreed upon a working definition and goal of sorts: *Medusa* would serve as a general "critique of power." The attendees suggested that we define any words we used in each article that might be unfamiliar to the average reader; introducing and defining them once would be a start in the print issue, but attendees suggested we include multiple definitions (from different people with varying perspectives) online.

For example, the word "intersectionality" is tossed around in academic circles and readings in WGS classes to help pinpoint a person's social location. The word refers to an ability for each person to identify and discuss her thoughts and feelings, from her perspective in her socio-cultural position—that is, where she specifically locates herself on many axes (such as race, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, age, class, etcetera). However, without a working definition and explanation hosted somewhere in the issue or online, the average

student who picked up a copy of *Medusa* on campus may not read an article and pick up on all of its intended meaning.

Per their recommendations, we put together a language style sheet for each writer to read and understand before he or she started reporting. Attendees also wanted a certain level of disclosure from us, the “powerful” publication disseminating information. They demanded that we understand our privilege, and get responses and input from multiple people about the subjects we included and how we included them. They also wanted to know more about each writer, and suggested that we include short bios of each writer online at the very least.

Chapter 3

The Way Things Work

The process of deciding each issue's content was often accomplished during one staff meeting. Though it seems a rushed process at times, such quick planning is necessary to keep the publication on schedule. And as a student publication, we must take into account the needs of the university-sanctioned printing services. It usually takes ten business days to print our order, longer if our liaison at the publication office is having a busy week. So each issue requires a up to five weeks to plan, assign, write, edit, fact-check, design, double-check all of the content cover to cover, and approve a hard copy proof from the printing office before we can launch mid-semester.

The rapid nature of this process can also be a major factor in the kind of editorial decisions we must make. For example, if we don't receive a draft from a writer within a day of our first deadline, we must often decide between cutting the piece entirely, assigning it quickly to another writer and risk that he or she can't deliver the kind of product we need under even quicker deadline turnaround pressure, and replacing it with content generated internally by the editorial staff. The size of our pages and also the kind of widespread interest we try to generate isn't ideal for dense, long stories with more verbose academic language. We steer writers away from dry, academic writing if they submit such a draft to us, and most are happy to oblige.

In November 2010, we hosted a roundtable discussion about *Medusa* to discuss ways we could improve it with a group of ten to twelve upperclass WGS

majors. We had heard of a general sentiment of discontent among many students with a WGS background, in that *Medusa* was not inclusive enough in the subject matter and populations we covered. In some ways, I agreed with this judgment. I belong to the white, upper-middle-class subset of our student body, and so does Sammy. I'll admit that if I'm not paying conscious attention and making a pointed effort to include other groups, diversity in the subjects we cover and the issues we discuss can fall by the wayside. I was frightened that we were permanently alienating ourselves from this group, and I felt guilty for already making some apparent oversights. I worried (and still worry) that I wouldn't ever be able to include everything our readers wanted us to be concerned about, and I also fretted that without Sammy's fuller background in feminist thought and organizing, I wouldn't be able to continue producing a publication that met people's standards.

That same subset of readers (most of them WGS majors) told us that *Medusa* simply wasn't not feminist enough. We got the impression that this group wanted to see the kind of straightforward, heavily researched, supposedly unbiased critique that they encountered in the readings for their WGS courses, a format that was and is not easily supported in a magazine or even literary journal format. At this point, I personally started to get defensive, reasoning, for example, that they wanted to know more about each writer in order to "out" the predominantly white, middle-class people who often wrote the stories because they were the first to volunteer for them. The rapid turnaround process we schedule further limits the demographic of writers who will write for us.

By the end of the session, I had started to shut down my listening faculties in favor of my emotional ones, and felt that this group was more keen on cutting down the work that someone else put time into than on volunteering their own time to help where their work and effort was needed.

This is where Sammy's opinions were invaluable. I began to feel like the academic community was giving us the cold shoulder, and that the WGS department was unwilling to support us and help us improve the publication because they disagreed with our efforts to remain general in the way we presented issues, unbiased (especially in that, if someone said they were feminist and so were their beliefs, we didn't question that statement in the writing but instead left that interpretation up to the reader), and focused on the larger student body as intended audience. Sammy addressed this frustration in an e-mail to me in January of 2012:

"I think at first they were very supportive. Right at the beginning—we were using their office as a base, we were going to them with funding requests, [and] they helped us out a lot at first. But I don't think they liked the direction we took *Medusa*. I think they wanted it to be one way, and we did it another way. And maybe it was hard for them, because they felt that we were representing the department so they wanted a say in it, but they also wanted us to thrive and do it how we wanted.

The WGS department is the greatest, in a lot of respects. It's a lot more intersectional and race-conscious than other Women's Studies departments, and I think they felt that *Medusa* wasn't reflecting that—and maybe it wasn't, at first. I remember distinctly for our "abortion issue," one assistant professor refused to comment, because she knew that in the piece, there was a question as to whether pro-life folks could also be feminists. She felt that just asking that question wasn't something she could stand behind, so she didn't want to lend her voice to a publication that was willing to take that stance or ask that question.

I respect her for that now, and I agree now with her that pro-lifers, by definition, are not feminists, but it was really upsetting that someone in the

department was so clearly deciding not to support *Medusa* and the direction we were taking it.

We thought we were trying to be good, unbiased journalists. I don't have the journalism background that it really took to run a feminist magazine - I have the op-ed, feminist background. It was really hard for me to balance that out and navigate those waters. The other feeling I really remember was that we didn't know what was going on in the department and how they felt about *Medusa*, and that was really frustrating too.”

Chapter 4

Editor at Large

I went abroad for a semester to study in Strasbourg, France, leaving Sammy to run things on her own. She produced two issues with the help of our dedicated staff, and reported an improvement in our public perception, even from a few of the people who originally didn't like what we were trying to accomplish. Sammy brought two feminist editors to campus while I was gone as well—Vanessa Valenti and Miriam Perez of Feministing.com. *What the Health*, *Zipped Magazine* and Women in Communications co-sponsored the event along with the magazine department, which paid for the speakers' transportation to Syracuse. Sammy reported that the Joyce Hergenhan auditorium was half full for the event, and she was very pleased with the turnout and the reception the event received.

Maybe it was because I was more interested in experiencing life abroad than on reflecting on current events or gender rights issues in Syracuse, NY, but for all intents and purposes, I was not involved with *Medusa's* daily functions or in decisions made while I was away. I occasionally checked the e-mail and interacted with Sammy and other staff members when they came to me with questions or needed something that they couldn't find alone, but I basically had the semester off.

While I was gone, Sammy took the reins in a very literal sense, running the staff meetings in her own more social style and working to make the staff of *Medusa* a closely knit group of friends, not just colleagues who came together

with a particular goal in mind. She saw the magazine as both a community for discussion and disclosure and also with the potential to be a major feminist organizing machine. As the e-mail trail I've tracked on our shared account suggests, she worked to involve and inform as many student organizations as possible of the events she planned.

After Sammy graduated, the organization reverted to the function of a magazine, probably because of the time constraints I was under as a senior working on this Capstone and involved in other organizations across campus. We did lend our support to organizations like SASSE, when they screened the film "Miss Representation," by helping to spread the word, post fliers and disseminate their news releases using social media. However, we have returned to acting solely as a feminist publication, and I have worked to maintain efficiency in both our staff meetings and other publication-related tasks.

Chapter 5

Issue Synopses

ISSUE 1: Pilot

As mentioned, we were given funding to print 750 copies of the inaugural book, 36 pages, black-and-white ink on the cheapest stock of paper available, and the funding directly from the chancellor's office.

The first issue of what was our brainchild, and our “baby” was very general interest. We featured a 1,000-word article about a pole-dancing studio; a woman-only space that promoted fitness and, while acknowledging the sexualized nature of the dance in the performance format, referred to it as a way to become strong and confident. Because *Medusa* would be the first publication of its kind on the campus, we wanted to bring “feminism” to a level of relatability for as many people in the student body as possible. We included a quiz titled, “Are you a feminist?” as an attempt to help people realize and adopt the word. Faces of Feminism also grew out of this desire to make the word more human; we profiled at least two students who identified as feminists until Issue 8.

The most controversial part of Issue 1 was the sex column, in which a heterosexual female argues that it's empowering to perform fellatio on her boyfriend. Numerous members of the women's studies department were not happy with this inclusion. They argued that there was an abundance of options for us to take for that first sex column, and that to include an article of a sexual act performed solely for a man's pleasure made them question what we were trying to

do. In their opinion, the column was not feminist at all; our stance was that, if giving sexual favors to her boyfriend made our columnist feel powerful and the favor was being reciprocated, we didn't feel comfortable telling her she was wrong.

One other article we fretted over for a long time was "What History?," a piece meant to give a basic historical overview of feminism. Understandably, this is a difficult task. Sammy wrote the article, and had only 650 words to work with. She spent far longer than I remember wanting her to on the article, working to make sure she was providing the most important ticks on the feminist timeline. She spoke to at least three professors and agonized over getting it right. In the end, I felt like a lot of our articles were like that—we agonized so much over the wording so as not to offend anyone or leave anyone out. Sometimes that backfired, and the end results were meandering, wordy and inconclusive to the point that they "said" nothing. In this case, though, I felt it turned out well, and I was relieved that enough conclusions were made to help paint a general picture for our readers without feminist backgrounds.

ISSUE 2: The Abortion Issue

The biggest thing I remember about this issue was the message we received from a Newhouse advertising agency relating to the "Feel Boobies. Get Objectified." blurb at the very end of the publication. The ad was hosted all over The Newhouse Agency's website, and so we credited it to them. However, the ad was apparently developed by another student-run company, and we got an

indignant e-mail from the agency's PR rep demanding that we give them due credit for the misogynistic ad we critiqued in the article below. It was depressing to think that our point was being blatantly overlooked—but, on the other hand, enough people had apparently seen the issue for the credit error to be of concern.

The overarching theme for the feature articles in this issue was the battle over abortion and contraception that was (and is) happening between policy makers. We discussed how abortion was seldom part of TV show plotlines, highlighted a sex education group facilitated by Planned Parenthood, and also discussed (without making a claim or conclusion on either side) where exactly feminism fit in on the pro-choice vs. pro-life debate. As mentioned previously, some professors in the WGS department thought we should not have permitted room for argument on this issue and that a person who identified as pro-life simply could not be a feminist. I was personally not willing to draw that line, with the level of expertise and authority I thought I could muster at the time, and the rest of my staff was in agreement. We thought, “Who are we to make such a designation?” I think this was the right way to look at the issue at the time, but in hindsight, I think I agree with the professor's opinion.

In this issue, I was particularly proud of a piece, written by Sammy, that pointed out how volatile the word “choice” is, especially when it comes to varying levels of access to women's healthcare between members of socio-economic groups. And Dr. XX stuck to her controversial beginnings, writing about how she enjoys S&M, and that because getting “dominated” in bed was

something she enjoyed, she was exercising her choice, which didn't make her any less feminist.

ISSUE 3: The Art Issue

I think the article I remember most about this issue, from an editor's perspective, was the one about Women Transcending Boundaries, an interfaith dialogue group started by a woman who felt it was wrong that Muslim women were being mistreated after the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. When our fact checker contacted Betsy, the group's leader, to review the facts in the article (via paraphrasing, which is the policy for most campus magazines), she insisted on seeing the full text version, and reserved the right to contact us with changes. We didn't hear back from her until the day before our submission deadline to the printing office, but the issue was on time, and I thought it was one of the best feature pieces we've ever run.

In this issue, there was a great piece on the exclusion of trans women from the Michigan Womyn's Festival and a heartfelt column on the It Gets Better campaign. This was also the first (and only) time we assembled a fully-fledged holiday gift guide; a compilation that seems small at first glance, but seemed to take the most time and energy to assemble, out of all the issue's content.

ISSUE 4: The Power Issue

This was the first issue I wasn't around to help orchestrate and put together. I was listed in the masthead as "Editor Abroad," though I will fully

admit that I did no editing while I was in France. However, it was certainly an interesting process to watch unfold from the few times I would check the Medusa e-mails, and it was helpful for me to be on the other side of the process, reading the content for the first time after the issue was distributed.

As an insider who became an average reader, I was very impressed with Sammy's work as the head of things. My favorite pieces were the STEM fields article, which discussed the lack of encouragement and therefore interest in science, technology, engineering and mathematics fields, the piece on the co-opting of "power" as a function of misogynistic beauty ideals in female cartoon characters, and "Clits in the Pit," a piece about the female-friendly hardcore scene in Syracuse.

ISSUE 5: Feminism as a Genre

I was so excited about this issue. There were stories from a variety of locations, by a wide variety of diverse writers. Luke Lanciano's piece about women's role in the Arab Spring was right on target, and perfectly relevant to what was happening in the world when the issue was released. The photography and the writing for the piece on the Syracuse Peace Council were perfect, and the piece about Pauline Lombardo's status as one of the few female music composition majors in Crouse College was a very interesting look into one of Syracuse University's smaller and more insular colleges. However, reading through the piece on "stay-at-home-girlfriends" left me confused; the article concluded with a diatribe about how it was possible to be a feminist stay-at-home wife/mother figure, but that the media

didn't portray such a role, and it was thus hard to define and relate to. However, the only examples provided were, in my opinion, of a distinctly non-feminist variety. While I agree that it's possible for such a role to exist, and part of feminism is granting women full license to do whatever they want as their profession, it left me wanting more in the way of arguments and conclusions. Similarly, while I agree that animator Mary Blair should be applauded for her masterful work behind some of Disney's most loved animated films, I wanted to read more about the male-dominated culture and efforts (if any) to change it, and also about the women who are currently working in the environment at Disney.

ISSUE 6: The Fashion Issue

The theme for this issue was born from a heated discussion about Victoria's Secret's fashion show during one of our staff meetings. Fashion week was in full swing in New York at that time as well, and so it seemed like we all had outrageous fashion stories to add to the discussion.

I love the photo shoot we included in this issue. The idea was to present both men and women as blank canvasses (i.e. what they were wearing was unimportant—they all were dressed in almost the exact same basic white tee and jeans), but to pose them in the opposite of the traditional poses they'd adopt in magazines and in advertising. It turned out extremely well, and I think Elina, our photographer, got the point across beautifully that woman are posed in sexualized, submissive, seductive ways for something as simple as a clothing advertisement.

I was also blown away by numerous writers for this book. Yelena wrote a great piece on the issue of “whitewashed” Asian beauty standards, and Sakina started researching sustainable clothing and accessories literally as soon as she got the assignment; I was very impressed with her results. A few of the topics made me nervous (especially the ones on party fashion)... a few times, I found myself asking a lot of big questions, like, “Who are we to be dictating or judging, or even suggesting what’s best for someone? Is “going out” fashion even something feminists should be discussing? What makes the sexy standards? How can we ignore those standards while feeling attractive and being seen as attractive/making an effort?” As we closed the issue, I left feeling like there was more to be said. Sadly, I’ve found that this is a common occurrence—there simply isn’t enough space to say it all, and I think we can always work harder to make sure that we’re saying something of value, and saying it succinctly.

ISSUE 7: The “Team,” or “Solidarity” Issue

This issue ended up being a bit of a hodgepodge. The original idea was to make it a women in sports theme, especially from the photographic standpoint. But we ran into many issues trying to organize photo shoots with the athletic department and the many stages of clearance to take photos of student athletes. However, we did take some great shots of a few members of the women’s track team and ROTC. I was happy to include many articles about female dignitaries, including a front of book piece on the three female winners of the 2011 Nobel Peace Prize, and of female politicians’ stances on hot-button political issues. I was glad to read about

the Africa Bound Culture Club as well, an organization that works to help African American children embrace their unique heritages and to combat race separatism within the black community.

ISSUE 8: “Dual Identities”

This was the first issue that we made some changes to our established content model. Instead of featuring two “Faces of Feminism,” students who openly identified themselves as feminists, we decided to start writing about “Little Known Women”—females with great accomplishments and interesting stories that few had heard of otherwise. This was also the first issue we tried creating an interactive page, which ended up being a paper doll of Aziz Ansari with spring-break-themed cut-out accessories.

This was also the issue that seemed to come along with the most headaches. We had brought on a new photo editor, who had little experience with studio photography and went into the shoot without help from an editorial staff member. So we ran into numerous problems with her shots and with a lack of information about the people pictured. But headaches aside, I was still heartened by the way things came together, and loved reading and editing the pieces on female comedians and Marilyn Monroe.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

For me, *Medusa* marked a huge transition in my college career. I went from a newbie freshman, with no real experience in campus magazines and no real knowledge of how they worked from the inside out, to planning and running one. It was a huge responsibility I gave myself, and I think I've emerged from it with a more accurate reading of my capabilities and my limitations. I also went from having no knowledge of feminism (except for a vague desire to help lift girls away from the destructive messages of the media and to empower them to do great things) to diving into the discipline of women's studies, with its diverse concerns and criticisms that came before accolades.

I appreciated the help given to us from the women's studies department, but I think we went into the experience with crossed intentions and messages. WGS didn't realize we intended to live right at the nexus of two conflicting writing styles, and I can understand why they didn't take kindly to what we were doing and how they thought we reflected their goals and opinions to the public. Still, I have trouble understanding what's productive about condemnation and talking about what something should be; if you want something done a different way, you have to get involved and make it happen, and we aren't getting much input or participation from women's studies students or teachers.

I think *Medusa* is at a relatively healthy place. Our designer will be returning from abroad, and Lauren is a very capable editor, with a keen eye for good stories when they arise. We have the funding for two print two issues in full-

color next semester, with added pages for more content. Looking at the staff members we currently have on board, and who I expect to be involved next semester, I believe *Medusa* will continue to evolve. I'm very proud of the number of people we've been able to involve in this single endeavor so far, and hope it continues to grow.

Summary of Capstone Project

Medusa Magazine is a student-run campus publication, co-founded by the author of this project and Samantha Lifson, a 2011 graduate of Syracuse University. We developed the idea for the magazine over the summer and fall of 2009, after it was inspired by Hannah's campers at a summer camp where she worked. In the beginning, Hannah contacted Sammy with the idea in order to combat harmful body image problems among girls like the ones she met at camp. When she arrived and began the process, she realized that "feminism" is not just about women's empowerment and airbrushing in magazines, and began taking Women's and Gender Studies courses to further her understanding of the movement.

Medusa gained official status as a Recognized Student Organization in the spring of 2010. The first issue was printed and released in April of 2010, and we have published two issues per semester since, all of them black-and-white, printed in half-page format similar to many other campus publications. Stylistically, *Medusa* looked like a literary publication for issues 1 through 5. We featured illustrations by student artists on the cover, and the text inside each issue was very small and close together. Starting for issue 6, we began to rework the look of the publication, using large blocks of blank space in black and white to create a more graphic statement. We also began featuring photographs of students on the cover and tried to make the language used in the writing more snappy and conclusive

and less wordy. We have received funding for our first two color issues next semester—a feat long in the making.

The process of *Medusa*'s creation involved the drafting of our constitution as a student organization, numerous meetings with Bethany Piraino, our consultant within the Office of Student Activities, to ensure we met all the criteria to become a student organization, and application to the Student Association for the funding necessary to print. To create the format, which we have perpetuated in each subsequent issue, Samantha and this writer worked very closely with Chloe O'Conner, our first design editor. We established coherent sections to the book, and set examples for things like the sex column, feature writing style, profile candidates, and photo/art spreads. We held numerous general interest meetings, and constantly recruited writers. We also set an editorial process, which the staff follows consistently twice a semester to ensure the issues are printed on time and distributed to the student body efficiently.

Medusa was founded to promote a feminist discussion on campus, and to bring into the public eye the outstanding achievements of women in their chosen career field. We feature art, poetry and opinions by female writers, and we allow column space to anyone with arguments to express. The publication was also founded to act as a critique of cultural norms, and to view and analyze current events and trends through a feminist lens.

Since the magazine's inception, we have worked to navigate a healthy balance between the dense academic critique that academics and students in women's studies have come to expect from feminist discourse and a lighter, more

readable narrative style that we feel brings feminism to a level students can understand and relate with. We've received both praise and criticism for this, along with the length restraints we must place on articles to ensure enough diverse topics are included, and also for the time restraints we must ask our writers to work under in order to produce two full issues a semester.

The magazine was founded to promote a discussion on campus, and I like to think that we have fostered one. It seems like each time I mention Medusa magazine to someone who asks where I am an editor, I get a reaction of recognition—whether it's positive or lukewarm because of disagreements with our ideology varies greatly across our audience, but the things we write do reach people and put feminist issues on their radars of thought and discussion.