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### Fall 2008, 10 Years Later: Irina Trubetskova Continues Her Work at UNH

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# International Educator

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Center for International Education

Fall 2008

## TEN YEARS LATER: IRINA TRUBETSKOVA CONTINUES HER WORK AT UNH

*In 1998, Irina Trubetskova, PhD in biology and a senior research scientist on leave from the Estonian Marine Institute in Tallinn, Estonia, conducted a year of research with Dr. James Haney, UNH Department of Zoology, studying the effects of toxic blue-green algae on the food web. The research partnership was very successful and resulted in two peer-reviewed articles, a number of invited seminars and presentations at international meetings.*

*Today, Trubetskova can be found at UNH again – this time as a doctoral student in the Natural Resources and Earth System Science (NRESS) doing interdisciplinary research. For the past two years, she also taught IA 501 Global Issues in International Affairs, an assignment which brought her invaluable teaching experience and great satisfaction.*

*How did Trubetskova's life journey bring her back to UNH?*



*Trubetskova says, "My students will recognize the 'talking globe.' Sitting in a circle, we passed it*

When Irina Trubetskova left UNH in 1998, she continued her collaboration with scientists at the Estonian Marine Institute, the Max Planck Institute for Limnology in Germany, and the Michigan Technological University. But at Michigan Tech, in addition to her research, Trubetskova tried something different. She developed and taught "Russia in 20th Century," through which she and her students researched the dramatic history, politics, economy, social life, environmental issues, and culture of the former Soviet Union. Although she had previously taught two lecture courses in ecology, this course was a challenge, because it was at the interface of many disciplines which were not part of her professional focus. However, the class was a success, and Irina discovered that she thoroughly enjoyed interacting with students and working across disciplines.

She also realized that her background and first-hand experience growing up in the USSR, as well as her experience living and working in many different countries and diverse socio-economic and cultural environments were valuable assets for teaching. It was at that point in her life that she chose a path that would alter her life and career.

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*around when introducing ourselves, discussing news and global issues, or sharing views, thoughts and feelings. This helped to build an active learning community and to cultivate a global citizen perspective, which were my main objectives for the class."*

Changing her career from science to teaching was not an easy decision. An established researcher in the field of experimental aquatic ecology, she felt fortunate to have worked with leading scientists in her field. She enjoyed her work as a research biologist, designing and conducting unique experiments in the lab, and seeking out new research projects and collaborations. However, as a professional ecologist she understood the seriousness of the developing global ecological crisis; it was clear

that young people's attitudes toward environmental issues would define the state of the global environment for future generations and, in general, the evolutionary direction of humanity. Through her positive teaching experiences, Trubetskova was confident that as an educator she could effectively contribute to the much needed change for sustainable development.

This belief led her to return to school to broaden her knowledge and obtain the skills needed to become an effective environmental educator. Trubetskova says, "The NRESS program has exceeded all my expectations. UNH has been a great place to do interdisciplinary research and to get professional teaching skills. I am enrolled in the Graduate School Cognate in College Teaching Program and have participated in the Preparing Future Faculty monthly seminars, the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning workshops, and invited lectures."

Trubetskova is also an active member of the UNH community, the International Women's Club, and the Graduate Student Organization (GSO), and serves as the GSO representative on the University Curriculum and Academic Policies Committee. It is no surprise that in 2008 she was nominated by the Graduate School for the UNH Community Scholarship.



*Trubetskova (holding dog) with students in IA501 Global Issues in International Affairs. Their field trip focused on permaculture--the science, philosophy, and art of sustainable living.*

Now, having received a highly competitive Dissertation Year Scholarship, Irina's current focus is on her research entitled "From Biosphere to Noosphere: A Challenge for Educators in the Age of the Sustainability Revolution," an interdisciplinary study at the intersection of Earth system science and sustainability, philosophy and spirituality, ethics and education. Trubetskova's goal is to contribute both theoretically and practically to this global movement by producing a clear conceptual model of universal sustainability education that could be effectively used by educators at all levels and in various settings.

