



**Unstoppable**

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**University of Wisconsin-Madison  
School of Human Ecology:  
A Story of Two Deans, One Vision,  
and an Unstoppable Future**

By Doug Moe and Jeanan Yasiri Moe

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“The values of the concept of human ecology are very important to me. I very much believe in human ecology as an infrastructure for a school or a college to bring people together, to look at from a research standpoint, the issues and problems that are faced by families and individuals. In fact, it’s never been needed more than it’s needed now.”

**Robin A. Douthitt**

*Dean Emerit, School of Human Ecology*

“We are a school and discipline so essential to the process of solving problems that people should scarcely think of the University of Wisconsin–Madison without thinking of Human Ecology.”

**Soyeon Shim**

*Elizabeth Holloway Schar Dean, School of Human Ecology, Ted Kellner  
Bascom Professor, Consumer Science*



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This story is dedicated to  
those who have made our collective dream possible:

faculty and staff,  
alumni and board members,  
visionary investors, community members,  
campus leaders, and students  
who believe in the mission of the School of Human Ecology  
to make life better for children, families, communities, and  
the marketplace.

Together, we are unstoppable.

Thank you.

Soyeon Shim,  
Elizabeth Holloway Schar Dean  
and  
Robin A. Douthitt,  
Dean Emerit

# Introduction

**This is a story about transformation and building momentum to meet the urgency of the world's needs.**

It is about facing and overcoming enormous challenges, taking calculated and strategic risks, and realizing tremendous gain. Moreover, it is the story of two women who spearheaded separate transformations of the schools they respectively led and later, unified their vision to take one school, the University of Wisconsin School of Human Ecology (Human Ecology), boldly into its next century of service. In the 1990s, some thought Human Ecology would not survive into the next century. In fact, similar schools around the country did not. However, today, Human Ecology not only thrives but strategically grows its faculty, programs, and contributions to research and outreach to benefit our world.

UW–Madison celebrating its 175th anniversary in 2023 provided a unique opportunity for Human Ecology to reflect on its past and imagine the possibilities of the future. In this essay, the history of the school is briefly introduced from its inception of domestic science in 1909. It also features stories about many inspiring women, who were fearless early leaders influencing one another and building the foundation for Human Ecology today.

The focus of this essay is on the first 20+ years of the 21st century and how two women — Robin Douthitt and Soyeon Shim — strategically shaped Human Ecology, positioning it to flourish into the second half of the 21st century. Theirs is also a moving story about their career-long friendship, unwavering drive, and dual vision to collaborate on the transformation of Human Ecology. Their lives started in different parts of the planet, but their commitment to excellence, drive, and fearlessness allowed them to meet at the right time for this transformation to be possible.

# Colleagues and Friends

**I**t was the late 1990s. The National Association of State Universities and Land-grant Colleges, America's oldest higher education association, regularly invited deans and directors from campuses around the country to exchange ideas and strategies for advancing public research institutions.

Robin Douthitt and Soyeon Shim first met at this conference and had a few things in common, starting with their gender. There was not a surplus of female deans and directors in the 1990s. And both were interim: Douthitt, interim dean of the School of Human Ecology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison; and Shim, interim director of the School of Family and Consumer Sciences at the University of Arizona-Tucson. They connected at the conference.

"We were the new kids on the block and we kind of clicked right away," Shim said.

They had dinner together and made a point of meeting up at future conferences. As they grew closer, Douthitt raised the possibility that somewhere down the line, Shim might replace her in Madison.

"We developed a friendship," Douthitt said, "and could be completely open and honest about what we were dealing with on campus."

They came from vastly different backgrounds — Douthitt growing up in southern Ohio, Shim in Seoul, South Korea — but both their families stressed the value of higher education.

Early on, neither may have seen herself as a human ecologist, and they took different paths to the field. But by the time of their late '90s meeting — and subsequent dinner conversations — one thing was clear: the field of human ecology was at a crossroads, with even its name a point of controversy.

At American universities, there had for years been a move away from "home economics" as a discipline, which, fairly or not, was associated in many minds with not much beyond baking and sewing. Universities changed the name (UW's School of Home Economics became the School of Family Resources and Consumer Science in the 1960s) or, in some cases, dropped the school altogether and assigned its departments elsewhere.

By the 1990s, "human ecology" was the norm, and at UW-Madison this name change to the School of Human Ecology was adopted in 1996. But settling on a

**Robin Douthitt and Soyeon Shim first met at a conference, discovering they had a few things in common.**



*Robin Douthitt (L) and Soyeon Shim (R), UW-Madison School of Human Ecology, June 2018 (Photo by James Gill).*

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name settled little else. If human ecology nationally was at a crossroads, at UW–Madison it was approaching a crisis.

The man who had been the dean of the School of Human Ecology at UW–Madison since the mid-1980s stepped down in summer 1999. Chancellor David Ward asked Robin Douthitt, who had been on campus and in the school since 1986 as a professor of consumer science, to serve as interim dean.

It would be hard to overestimate the challenge Douthitt faced.

“Financially, the school was in a lot of trouble,” she said. “We didn’t have good accounting. There were problems between departments. Animosity between departments.”

The university administration was aware of the issues. Douthitt sensed the prevailing feeling that the school could not survive long-term. Through the first year of her interim appointment, the university did not even begin a search for a permanent dean.

“I don’t think the chancellor believed that the school would be able to pull up,” Douthitt said. “So, the first year was extremely intense.”

Douthitt leaned in.

“I don’t know how many spreadsheets I personally put together. I was doing purchase orders, really in the trenches, doing everything that had to be done here.”

Douthitt — who was appointed permanent dean in 2001 — not only pulled the school back from the brink, but she also oversaw a decade of extraordinary growth in research productivity and community outreach, along with an enhancement of the quality of the school’s academic programs. Her leadership culminated with the September 2012 opening of Nancy Nicholas Hall, a stunning, state-of-the-art, 200,000-square-foot new home for Human Ecology on the Madison campus. It was the first academic building on campus named for a woman. Back from the brink, indeed.

A year earlier, in summer 2011, Douthitt had announced she would be retiring as dean just prior to the new building’s opening. Always forward thinking, Douthitt intended that her successor should be in place for the celebratory unveiling of the new building. It would provide an unparalleled opportunity for the new dean to meet major donors and the extended Human Ecology family.

But who would the new dean be? While Douthitt could not be actively involved in the search for her replacement, she was able to nominate people. Soyeon Shim, her friend from all those conference dinners — where they eventually shared, as Douthitt said, “the good, the bad, and

**If human ecology nationally was at a crossroads, at UW–Madison it was approaching a crisis. Douthitt sensed the prevailing feeling that the school could not survive long-term.**



*Students in a personal finance class practice working with financial planning software, April 2024 (Photo by Rosie Yang).*

the ugly” of being a female leader on campus — was at the top of her list. She’d watched Shim’s rise to a leadership role at the University of Arizona, during which time Shim created seven endowed professorships, three endowed centers of excellence, and a successful \$25 million campaign for a new center for retailing on the Arizona campus.

The thing was, Shim was happy in Tucson.

It was at another conference dinner — their last — that Douthitt leaned in again.

“Listen, Soyeon,” she said. “I have held on as dean until the time at which your children were leaving home. And so, really, you have to at least apply. Because I’ve held on just for you.”

“I sensed how serious she was,” Shim said.

Shim’s appointment as the next dean of the School of Human Ecology at UW–Madison was announced in July 2012, and she assumed her new role in late August, two months before the opening of Nancy Nicholas Hall, Human Ecology’s sparkling new facility.

The passing of the baton could scarcely have gone better. It was a precursor of a remarkable decade for Human Ecology and its entrepreneurial new leader, in which the school launched a master’s degree program in design and innovation in collaboration with the College of Engineering and others; created its first new undergraduate major in more than 50 years; and inspired donor support for an endowed deanship, which cemented the school’s future as a separate and distinct entity within the university.

**The passing of the baton between the deans could scarcely have gone better. It was a precursor of a remarkable decade of Human Ecology and its entrepreneurial new leader.**



Between 2012 and 2022, enrollment in Human Ecology tripled. A study from 2018 to 2022 of the undergraduate majors adding the most students included two from Human Ecology: consumer behavior & marketplace studies, and personal finance. By 2023, UW identified these as two of the 10 most popular majors on the entire campus.

Jerry O'Brien, executive director emerit of the Kohl's Center for Retailing at Human Ecology, spoke about the transition and the ensuing decade in an interview with *Madison Magazine*, calling Shim's arrival "a great example of the right person at the right time. Robin endeared herself to a lot of people on a personal level, raising the money for [the new] building, and got people engaged in a vision of the future. Soyeon came in and had the skills to take the vision to reality, while keeping the vision going."

As for that vision going forward, Shim regularly asks her faculty and staff about how Human Ecology should look in the future. The dean herself said, "We need to make our program relevant to the greatest needs in society," even as those needs continually evolve.

Asked about a definition of human ecology today, Shim said any simple definition would be too limiting. "We apply science to everything you care deeply about — children, families, communities, diversity, design, and more," she said. "It's human ecologists' responsibility to make sure that we apply science to improve the lives of everyone."

In her acclaimed 2021 book, *The Secret History of Home Economics*, Danielle Dreilinger wrote about a late-19th-century woman, Ellen Richards, "who found her life's work: to improve the home, and thus society, through science."

Sometimes the past is prologue.

**"Dean Shim's arrival is a great example of the right person at the right time. Robin endeared herself to a lot of people on a personal level, raising the money for [the new] building, and got people engaged in a vision of the future. Soyeon came in and had the skills to take the vision to reality, while keeping the vision going."**

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**Dean Soyeon Shim**

*Master in Fine Arts student Esther Cho works with handmade paper in a studio at Nancy Nicholas Hall, March 2023 (Photo by Sarah Maughan).*

# Beginnings

From the very beginning, the contributions of the profession of home economics to the nation were vast. Beyond the applied research and education home economists provided at both the secondary and post-secondary levels, they were recognized as experts in human nutrition following World War I and taught America the need to increase consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables as well as other healthier foods. In the 1920s and 1930s they lobbied for safer food, drug, and cosmetic inspections and helped pass national policy to ensure these protections were in place. They became presidential advisers to Warren Harding, John F. Kennedy, and others as the consumer movement grew across America, advocating for more product safety and marketplace protections for consumers. In the 1960s, they were integral in addressing America's War on Poverty, and improving health care and food access as well as early childhood education for the poor. In the 1980s and 1990s, they became executives in industry, leveling the relationship between consumers and big business. Their roles and advocacy evolved over time but always with an eye on social and economic progress benefiting households.

A significant moment in the earliest days of home economics at UW actually occurred in Kansas, when, in 1887, a woman named Nellie Kedzie Jones was promoted to the position of full professor at what was then Kansas State University Agricultural College and became the first woman to head a department at the college.

**In 1903, domestic science became first four-year undergraduate program at UW to admit women.**

In an essay on its website, the Wisconsin Historical Society notes: "In her new position, Jones soon found herself administering and teaching all the courses in the new home economics department. She lobbied the legislature to secure funding for a new building, and Domestic Science Hall became the first building in the U.S. built for the sole purpose of teaching home economics."

One of Jones's early and most accomplished students was Kansas native Abby L. Marlatt, who, upon graduating, organized departments of home economics at schools in Utah and Rhode Island.

Marlatt landed at UW–Madison in 1909. Her subsequent (1943) front-page news obituary in the Wisconsin State Journal noted that "for 30 years, from 1909 to 1939, Miss Marlatt directed the department of home economics at the University of Wisconsin." (Her Kansas mentor, Jones, was named UW Extension's home economics leader in 1918.)

When Marlatt came to Madison in 1909, there wasn't yet a home economics department at UW. The domestic science department was created by the Board of Regents in 1903 with great influence from women's suffrage, peace, and civil rights activists and Wisconsin's first lady, Belle Case La Follette. Domestic science was the first four-year, undergraduate program at the UW to admit women.



The contributions of home economists to the nation were vast. Beyond applied research and education, they were recognized experts in human nutrition following World War I. They lobbied for safer food, drug, and cosmetic inspections and helped pass national policy. They became presidential advisers as the consumer movement grew across America, advocating for consumer protections. They were integral in addressing America's War on Poverty and improving health care and food access as well as early childhood education for the poor. They became executives in industry, leveling the relationship between consumers and big business. Their roles and advocacy evolved over time but always with an eye on social and economic progress benefiting households.



*Students in the Foods and Nutrition Lab in the University of Wisconsin School of Family Resources and Consumer Science, now known as the School of Human Ecology, October 1962 (photographer unknown).*





A student tests the tensile strength of a fabric as part of a textile chemistry experiment at the UW School of Family Resources and Consumer Science, now known as the School of Human Ecology, circa 1960 (photographer unknown).

Also in 1903, Caroline Hunt was appointed UW's first professor of home economics. Hunt left in 1908, and the department was reassigned from the College of Letters & Science to the College of Agriculture. Marlatt oversaw the department name change to home economics and brought textiles, art, design, and more into the curriculum.

"By the time she retired in 1939," the *State Journal* noted, "the department had become one of the strongest in the country with its graduates in demand for positions throughout the United States."

Marlatt's successor, Frances Zuill, served 22 years and further enhanced the department's reputation, at one point serving as national president of the American Home Economics Association.

"Through her single-minded scholarship," a *Capital Times* profile at the time of Zuill's 1961 retirement noted, "the old stereotype that 'Home Ec' was a course of study which taught girls how to sew and cook has all but disappeared from the public mind in Wisconsin."

The article noted that graduates of the department go on to varied careers, including teaching home economics: "Others become dietitians, nursery school directors, community nursery teachers, textile chemists, and interior decorators. Wisconsin sends a steady flow of students to major department stores such as Marshall Field in Chicago and J. L. Hudson in Detroit, where they become buyers and merchandising experts."

**"Home economists found the need for change energizing — it's what birthed their discipline, after all"**

**Danielle Dreilinger**

*Author of the 2021 book **A Secret History of Home Economics***

Yet the second half of the 20th century would bring a reckoning as to the field's future, both in Madison and nationally. New leadership and a new vision for home economics would be required.

According to Danielle Dreilinger's well-received 2021 book *A Secret History of Home Economics*, the American Home Economics Association, formed in 1908, marked its 50th anniversary in 1958 with a task force that produced a document called "New Directions," which stated, "Home economists must be among the first to anticipate and recognize change."

"The good news for home economists," Dreilinger wrote, "is that they found the need for change energizing — it's what birthed their discipline, after all."

Eventually, the UW–Madison School of Human Ecology would become a leader in the field with a vision of educating its students to identify problems and work in collaboration to craft solutions to improve people's lives, making a better, more equitable and sustainable world. But that was still some decades away.

The 1960s loomed, a turbulent decade in American history that at UW–Madison also saw home economics become the School of Family Resources and Consumer Science.

One future consumer studies student, Robin Douthitt, was then growing up in the Appalachian foothills of southern Ohio. Her father was a teacher and one of only two people in his family to have stayed in school beyond eighth grade. He spoke about how proud his master's degree made his mother and how glad he was that she lived to see it.

But if his daughter was going to go to college, she was going to have to finance it herself. She chose Morehead State University in Kentucky for its inexpensive tuition.

"That sounds crazy," Douthitt said, but it proved an excellent choice, with small classes for the basic sciences, and a successful freshman year at Morehead propelled her to transfer to Ohio State University.

The assumption was she'd be a teacher.

"As a woman, if you were going to work in my little hometown, you better be a teacher or nurse," Douthitt said.

But Morehead had widened her horizons, and in Columbus, Douthitt met a woman named Francille Firebaugh, who a year before Douthitt's arrival had been named director of the School of Home Economics at Ohio State.

Douthitt was studying consumer science — "I wanted to be a [Ralph]



Robin Douthitt in front of the School of Human Ecology, 1999 (photo provided by Robin Douthitt).



Nader's Raider," she said — and met Firebaugh while both were involved with a student leadership council.

Nearing graduation, and considering graduate school but uncertain about that path, Douthitt found herself summoned to Firebaugh's office.

"I was a little nervous about why I was being called in," Douthitt said. Was it bad news?

It was not. Firebaugh said, "I understand you're applying to graduate schools."

"Yes, I am," Douthitt said.

"I would be delighted to write a letter of recommendation for you," Firebaugh said. "But I would ask you to consider my alma mater, Cornell University."

Douthitt had never heard of Cornell — or the Ivy League — but on Firebaugh's recommendation, she applied. (Firebaugh would return to Cornell herself in 1988 as dean of the College of Human Ecology.) Douthitt earned multiple doctorates at Cornell: in microeconomics, microeconomics labor, and family and consumer economics. It was there as well that she met her husband, Brian Gould, also an academician. The couple first took jobs at the University of Saskatchewan before coming to UW–Madison in 1986.

Douthitt was an assistant professor in the consumer science department of what was then UW's School of Family Resources and Consumer Science. It didn't take long for her to become a champion for women on the Madison campus. After learning that female faculty were leaving the university untenured at a rate three times that of men, Douthitt took action, launching the Women Faculty Mentoring Program, plans for which she drew up with a group at her kitchen table.

"I felt a real need to connect women academically, not socially," she said.

Some years later, Douthitt chaired the Friends of Nancy Denney Committee, named for a UW psychology professor who had dreamed of buying a house near the campus that could be a home and resource center for single, undergraduate students and their children.

"Nancy was an undergraduate single mother," Douthitt said. "She died [in 1995] of breast cancer before she could realize this dream."

(Douthitt herself received a breast cancer diagnosis in 1998 and in 2000 learned it had metastasized. She was named interim dean during this period and facilitated both her health and the turmoil at Human Ecology in a manner that in retrospect seems nothing short of heroic.)

**After learning that female faculty were leaving the university untenured at a rate three times that of men, Douthitt took action, launching the Women Faculty Mentoring Program, plans for which she drew up with a group at her kitchen table.**

The Friends of Nancy Denney Committee raised funds, and in 1997 the Nancy Denney House opened at 303 Lathrop Street.

Three years later, while accepting an award for her work promoting and assisting women on campus, Douthitt told a reporter, "I admire the young women in the Denney House. I am so overwhelmed by their courage and their perseverance. Their sole motivation is to give their children a better life."

When she received the award in late fall 2022, Douthitt was interim dean of UW's School of Human Ecology (the name was adopted in 1996) and a few months from being named the permanent dean.

In one of her first newspaper interviews in her new role, in August 2001, Douthitt mentioned one of her top priorities: a new building for Human Ecology. Money was tight, many on campus scoffed. As the ensuing decade would demonstrate, that only strengthened Douthitt's resolve.

Around the same time Robin Douthitt arrived at UW–Madison — 1986 — Soyeon Shim was about to accept her first assistant professorship, at Colorado State University.

Although Shim grew up a world away from Douthitt, in Seoul, South Korea, there were similar expectations of what a girl could be professionally when she grew up.

"Teacher or nurse," Shim said. "I'd come home from school, gather all the kids in the neighborhood and play like we were at school, and I was the teacher."

She added, "But in the back of my mind, I always wanted to be an entrepreneur."

Early on, she was helped by a father who defied Korean custom with his belief that girls could soar as high as boys. It was customary to tip the hospital at the time of birth and especially if the child was male. Shim's father tipped the hospital the larger "boy amount" when Shim was born. As she grew, he insisted she do her best, make every day count, and he provided encouragement. "It instilled confidence in me," she said.

She attended the topflight Yonsei University, earned an undergraduate degree and a master's, then taught high school consumer science for a year. It had been her goal — Shim should have been happy — but something was lacking. She decided to pursue a doctorate and the research experience it would provide.

**Although Shim grew up a world away from Douthitt, in Seoul, South Korea, there were similar expectations of what a girl could be professionally when she grew up. "Teacher or nurse," Shim said. "But in the back of my mind, I always wanted to be an entrepreneur."**



*Soyeon Shim sits in front of the 100 Women Wall of Honor in Nancy Nicholas Hall, fall 2019 (Photo by C+N Photography Inc.).*

Shim was one of 20 or so South Korean students who came to the University of Tennessee–Knoxville in 1983 looking for post-secondary degrees. She had a tough first year, learning the language, feeling homesick. There were tears.

But another of those 20 South Korean students was Christopher Choi, who was studying engineering. They would eventually marry, and move together in 1986 to Colorado State University, where Shim was an assistant professor and Choi — who had returned for a time to South Korea to finish compulsory military service — completed his doctorate degree.

In 1990, while the couple was weighing the decision to return to South Korea or remain in the United States, the University of Arizona reached out to Shim. They decided to move to Tucson, and Shim became a professor in the merchandising division of the School of Family and Consumer Resources.

By 1992, the university was in a budget crunch, and Shim's dean asked her to take an administrative role as division chair. Administration wasn't her aim, but Shim saw — and seized — what she viewed as an entrepreneurial opportunity for growth in teaching retail.

"At the time it wasn't called retail," Shim said. "It was merchandising, and that was becoming too narrow, in terms of getting products to display and sell. Retailing was enterprise. That was the name we needed to build a program."

They would call it the Southwest Center for Retailing.

Shim recalled what naysayers said: "Retailing in Arizona? It's Tucson. Who'd want to be a retail major here?"

Shim's reply: "Why not? We have sunshine, we have an airport, and we have a great university. People will come."

In September 1992, with \$1,000 from her dean, Shim hosted a dinner for 10 recruiters from Neiman Marcus, Macy's West, and other big retail players. She told them about her plans for the retail center.

"You're interested in hiring top talents. I'm interested in building them. It's going to be a partnership."

Some half-dozen companies made an immediate financial commitment.

Two years later, at a national retail conference, Shim approached Terry Lundgren moments after the Federated president addressed the gathering. Federated had recently acquired Macy's. Also recently, Shim had read in the *Wall Street Journal* that Lundgren was an Arizona graduate.

After introducing herself, Shim said, "Would you be willing to come and speak to my students?"

**Shim recalled what naysayers said: "Retailing in Arizona? It's Tucson. Who'd want to be a retail major here?"**

**Shim's reply: "Why not? We have sunshine, we have an airport, and we have a great university. People will come."**

No one at Lundgren's alma mater had asked before. He was delighted to speak. He even brought his parents from California.

"He was an amazing speaker," Shim said.

Their collaboration eventually resulted in the Terry J. Lundgren Center for Retailing at the University of Arizona. Another key collaborator was J. R. Norton Company founder John Norton, for whom the John and Doris Norton School of Family and Consumer Sciences was named in 2004.

Both Lundgren and Norton — the latter referred to Shim as "The Rocket" and marveled at her enthusiasm — played roles in making Shim's most ambitious undertaking in Tucson a reality: a new building project that had to rely on 100 percent private support. To this end, Norton recruited his childhood friend Norman McClelland, who agreed to be a namesake of the building, and Lundgren recruited many of his colleagues in the world of fashion, such as Tommy Hilfiger, Calvin Klein, and Kenneth Cole, to support the building project, along with 2,000 other donors. McClelland Park, a \$25 million, four-story, 72,000-square-foot building was opened in 2008 as a new home for the Norton School of Family and Consumer Sciences.

John Norton told the *Tucson Citizen*, "This used to be the homely home ec program when we were in school. Soyeon came and built it into something powerful."

Halfway across the country, Shim's good friend in Madison was well on her way to seeing her own ambitious building goal realized.



John and Doris Norton (Photo provided by the University of Arizona).

**Shim's most ambitious undertaking in Tucson was a \$25 million building project that had to rely on 100 percent private support.**



Soyeon Shim (L) celebrates at the groundbreaking for McClelland Park, home of the Norton School of Family and Consumer Sciences, which opened in 2008 (Photo provided by the University of Arizona).

Unstoppable Comeback:

# Building Nancy Nicholas Hall

**R**obin Douthitt's vision for leading the School of Human Ecology at UW–Madison into the 21st century included new programming and centers focusing on retail excellence, financial security, nonprofit leadership, and design excellence. She didn't want these areas of study taught in a nearly 100-year-old facility her design studies students frankly called embarrassing.

It was in 2000, when Douthitt was still interim dean, that an unusual chain of events cast light on a path forward. She'd been asked to make a presentation to the campus planning department on Human Ecology's request for a new preschool building (its preschool lab being an important component of the school). Douthitt knew nothing about it — the previous dean had put in the request.

Rather than make a presentation for which she was not prepared, Douthitt suggested a review be made of all Human Ecology's facilities with a goal of developing a master plan for the future. It was a sensible idea, but the cost of producing those plans ran into six figures.

Early in 2000, unexpected help arrived.

"Completely out of the blue," Douthitt said.

Elizabeth Metz lived frugally in Marinette, Wisconsin — had for decades — and when she died in 1999, at age 97, people were surprised to learn her bank box held savings bonds from the 1950s and '60s worth nearly \$500,000.

Metz had earned a master's degree from UW's School of Home Economics in 1935. She had no living relatives. Her will instructed her assets should go to the school. It was a game changer, allowing Douthitt to hire a consultant to do a facilities master plan for Human Ecology.

Douthitt found an ally in Rose Barroilhet, director of the Space Management Office at UW–Madison, and drew on her own recent experience as a member of the UW Athletics Board as well. Douthitt was on the board when a new basketball and hockey facility was built, and she described how one of the campus leads on that project, Associate Vice Chancellor Alan Fish, had framed the right way to go about it: "We're not just going to build an arena. We have to talk about what we want, the objectives of this arena, and then build something that's going to fulfill the objectives of the people who are going to work here."

The final Human Ecology plan (it would eventually total \$52 million) called for a doubling of space for research and programs with both an addition to and remodeling of the main building, putting all the functions of the school within a single building for the first time. There was much more. The plan did not lack ambition.

**Robin Douthitt's vision for leading the School of Human Ecology at UW–Madison into the 21st century included new programming and centers focusing on retail excellence, financial security, nonprofit leadership, and design excellence. She didn't want these areas of study taught in a nearly 100-year-old facility that her design students frankly called embarrassing.**



When it was time to look for funding, Douthitt reached out to the UW Foundation for guidance and found them far from optimistic. Someone said, “There’s no way you are going to be able to raise money for a building.”

Undaunted, Douthitt had dinner with UW–Madison graduates Wade and Beverly Fetzer. Bev attended the School of Home Economics; Wade was an investment banker and a significant donor to Badger athletics. Douthitt and her development officer showed the couple the master plan for Human Ecology’s future.

“They asked a lot of questions,” Douthitt said. “It really went well.”

Nevertheless, she was stunned the next day to get a call from the UW Foundation saying that the Fetzers had just wired \$100,000 to the Human Ecology account.

“At that point,” Douthitt said, “I felt, ‘This can be done. I know this can be done.’”

Over the years Douthitt had become friendly with Ab and Nancy Nicholas, another husband and wife who shared deep feelings for — and had made generous financial gifts to — the University of Wisconsin–Madison.

Douthitt considered both friends, but she made a point of engaging with Nancy, who although she was a UW School of Home Economics graduate, had not really kept up with (nor been kept apprised of) new developments at the school.

“Nobody ever reached out to her,” Douthitt said. “So, I did, and we just became, and remain, great friends.”

During one visit to Madison during this time, Ab Nicholas took Douthitt aside and said, “I’m so pleased that you’re working with Nancy and cultivating her interest in the university.”

He continued: “It’s been a wonderful thing for me, personally, to give funds to areas of the university that mean so much to me. Nancy has supported everything I’ve wanted to do. I would like for her to have the opportunity to feel what I feel, making a gift.”

Not long after that conversation, Douthitt visited the Nicholases at their Florida home. Nancy made dinner. Afterward, Ab excused himself, and Douthitt shared with Nancy the plans for the new building and her hopes for the future of Human Ecology.

**The final building plan (eventually totaling \$52 million) called for a doubling of space for research and programs with both an addition to and remodeling of the main building, putting all the functions of the school within a single building for the first time.**



*UW–Madison alumni Albert “Ab” Nicholas and Nancy Johnson Nicholas ‘55 donated \$8 million as the lead gift for the new building for the School of Human Ecology (Photo by Bob Rashid).*



*Nancy Nicholas Hall, the \$52M home to the School of Human Ecology, opened in August 2012, making it the first academic building at UW–Madison named for a woman (Photo by Robert Benson).*

At that point, the private fundraising goal for the new building was \$18 million. Douthitt told Nancy about their plans for a “100 Women Wall of Honor” — suggested by Human Ecology Board of Visitors member Judith Pyle — that with a gift of \$100,000 would celebrate 100 women who had contributed to the quality of human life. The wall, if successful, would raise \$10 million. That left \$8 million still to be raised.

“Nancy was very excited about the materials,” Douthitt said, “and by the idea of the [new building].” (In her time in the School of Home Economics, Nancy had taken a class requiring residence at the school’s adjacent home management house, which few alumni remembered fondly.)

That night in Florida, Nancy said, “I’m going to discuss this with Ab.”

When Douthitt saw the couple the next morning, they said, “We would love to make this gift.”

A front-page article in the *Wisconsin State Journal* announcing the \$8 million gift appeared September 16, 2004. It was the largest single gift ever made to a human ecology program in the United States.

“This will literally rebuild the foundation of the school,” Douthitt told the newspaper. “It will transform every aspect at a time when demand is at an all-time high.”



*Ab Nicholas, Nancy Nicholas, and Dean Robin Douthitt (L–R) during the groundbreaking ceremony for Nancy Nicholas Hall, July 2010 (Photo by C+N Photography Inc.).*

Unstoppable Momentum:

# Power of the Collective

In spring 2012, Nancy Nicholas Hall was not yet open and still some months from welcoming its first students to classes in the fall. Staff were monitoring the construction which would become the first academic building on campus named in honor of a woman. One day they spotted a small, unfamiliar woman jogging through the halls and peeking into rooms.

There was a brief discussion about stopping her and perhaps escorting her out of the building, but by that time, she was gone. Someone mentioned the episode to outgoing School of Human Ecology Dean Robin Douthitt, who had an idea of the woman's identity.

"She may be your next boss," Douthitt said.

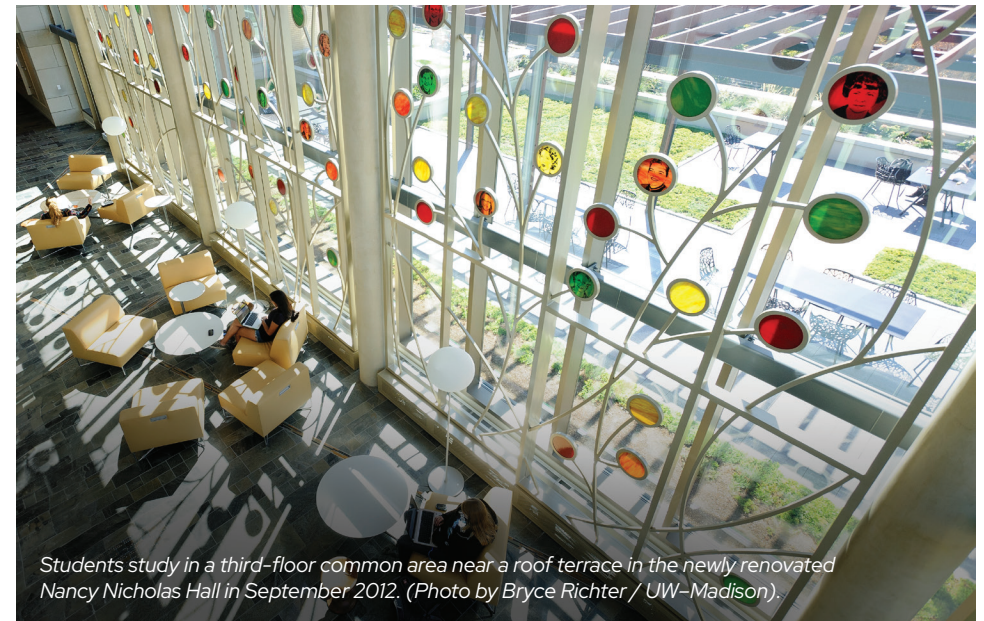
Soyeon Shim was in Madison for an interview as one of three finalists to replace Douthitt as dean. And if she was there in part as a favor to her friend — Shim's ties to Arizona ran deep — her foray into Nancy Nicholas Hall helped move the needle in Madison's direction.

Shim loved the building.

"The building allows for enhanced visibility, right off the bat," she told *The Capital Times* newspaper a few months after being named dean. "I've seen a lot of buildings. I built a building. I'm one of those rare people. I see a building very differently and this is one of the best ones I've ever seen in the nation and around the world.

**"I've seen a lot of buildings. I built a building. This is one of the best ones I've ever seen in the nation and around the world. There's nothing like it. The attention to detail, the user experience, that was a focal point whether it was a space for faculty and staff or a space for students."**

**Dean Soyeon Shim**



Students study in a third-floor common area near a roof terrace in the newly renovated Nancy Nicholas Hall in September 2012. (Photo by Bryce Richter / UW-Madison).



“I’ve gone to Harvard, MIT, Princeton, Yale,” Shim continued. “There’s nothing like this building. How they renovated the old building and added a new dimension, the integration between the old and new, they made it so aesthetically pleasing. The attention to detail, the user experience, that was a focal point whether it was a space for faculty and staff or a space for students.”

All agreed, the building was magnificent. But storm clouds remained on the horizon. Some people still didn’t get human ecology, and in tough budget times for state-funded public universities, small colleges and schools within universities found themselves at risk.

The College of Human Ecology at the University of Minnesota was widely regarded as one of the best in the country, a rival of the one at Cornell, and yet in 2006, restructuring at the university disbanded the College of Human Ecology and placed its four departments elsewhere.

Douthitt said that in her last year as dean of Human Ecology at UW–Madison, even as they were preparing to open Nancy Nicholas Hall, a campus study by the Arts Institute “basically called for dispersing the School of Human Ecology programs around campus” as part of creating a new College of the Arts.

That didn’t happen — some important UW–Madison alumni had become close to the school during the decade of making the new building a reality — but Human Ecology nevertheless faced the prospect of dwindling resources as new Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker and the Republican leadership in the state legislature began proposing University of Wisconsin budget cuts totaling in the tens of millions of dollars.

As she assumed her role as dean of UW’s School of Human Ecology, Soyeon Shim had an impressive new building but a serious lack of what she called “human capital.”

“The budget wasn’t there to support the program mission,” Shim said. “We had great programs and name value, great relevance, and physical assets. But we didn’t have enough students, and we didn’t have enough faculty members. The biggest challenge was how to grow the programs when you don’t have new money nor the people.”

At least Shim, from her time at the University of Arizona, had experience in dealing with funding issues.

“We had 15 budget cuts,” she recalled of her 13 years as the school director in Tucson.

**As she assumed her role as dean of the UW–Madison School of Human Ecology, Soyeon Shim had an impressive new building but a serious lack of what she called “human capital.”**

**“The budget wasn’t there to support the program mission,” Shim said. “We had great programs and name value, great relevance, and physical assets. But we didn’t have enough students, and we didn’t have enough faculty members. The biggest challenge was how to grow the programs when you don’t have new money nor the people.”**

Joyce Serido, a professor at the University of Minnesota, was a graduate student at Arizona and had a front-row seat to Shim’s strategy in Tucson.

“I watched her make some tough decisions about how we organized the department,” Serido said. “What we could do and couldn’t do.” At the same time, Serido noted, Shim was raising funds for the new building — McClelland Park — and finding a way to invest in the future even in difficult times.

It’s never easy, but Shim said she tried to frame any cuts at Human Ecology in Madison as an opportunity to pull people together as a team and work cohesively to meet the challenge.

“Make it clear we’re in it together,” she said. “I used it as an opportunity to bring people together and set a goal. We’re going to have to do it in a very effective and economical way and look at it as an opportunity to grow. My first agenda was to bring people together.”

One way the new dean accomplished this was to make certain that the six majors within Human Ecology when she took over would not be siloed but would work together. It was part of an initiative Shim called OneSoHE 21: One School of Human Ecology for the 21st Century.

“In the past we haven’t worked together,” Shim told *The Capital Times* shortly after arriving in Madison. “Each major goes their own way. The faculty got very excited about creating a freshman course with six majors working together. Now we’re working on a senior capstone class, again with all our majors coming together, addressing big questions.”

Along with offering a doctorate degree and two master’s degrees, Human Ecology currently has seven undergraduate majors: community & organizational development; consumer behavior & marketplace studies; design, innovation & society; human development & family studies; interior architecture; personal finance; and textiles & fashion design; as well as three certificates: design strategy, material culture studies, and textiles & design. While distinct in their curricula, there are numerous intersections that offer abundant opportunity for collaboration.

Shim would soon enlarge her interdisciplinary approach by reaching out to other schools and colleges on campus. Not long after arriving in Madison, she wrote what she called a “big idea” on a board in her campus office. It read, “Design thinking,” and it referenced utilizing that interdisciplinary approach to problem solving.

**It’s never easy, but Shim tried to frame funding cuts as an opportunity to work together as a team to meet the challenge. “We’re going to have to do this in a very effective and economical way and look at it as an opportunity to grow. My first agenda was to bring people together,” she said.**



Soyeon Shim (L) discusses infant brain development with Jim Nelson (C) and Leola Culver (R) during the Prenatal to Five Summit, June 2017 (Photo by Andy Manis).





A young student in the Child Development Lab enjoys outdoor playtime, summer 2022 (Photo by Rosie Yang).

In a 2014 interview with *The Capital Times*, Shim offered an example of design thinking: “How do we address childhood obesity?” the dean said. “There isn’t one single department that can solve this problem. It’s very simple, but a very large question. We’re just going to ask our students to try to figure that out. That can’t just be done by studying one area — nutrition or physical activity or the home environment. It has to be much more global, looking at the childhood obesity issue from every single angle with everybody bringing their own expertise. Through that process, you’re learning about not just how you can contribute but how you can work with students from other areas. That’s design thinking.”

Meanwhile, early on, Shim streamlined Human Ecology’s administration, centralizing business services and targeting the savings toward instruction. She set a goal of attracting more freshmen and sophomore students and making sure they graduated on time.

In 2012, at the time of Shim’s arrival, undergraduate enrollment at Human Ecology was primarily populated by juniors and seniors. Freshmen and sophomores in Human Ecology degree programs totaled 117 — a little more than 20 percent of the Human Ecology undergraduates. A set of strategies to improve those numbers was put in place, including developing introduc-

**“How do we address childhood obesity? There isn’t one single department. It has to be much more global, looking at the childhood obesity issue from every single angle with everybody bringing their own expertise. Through that process, you’re learning about not just how you can contribute but how you can work with students from other areas. That’s design thinking.”**

**Dean Soyeon Shim**

In uncertain times, Human Ecology successfully positioned itself as being the school that trains “second responders.” While first responders save lives during crises, human ecologists assess and implement sustainable solutions for individuals and communities.



Bright futures abound at Human Ecology. Students on the rooftop terrace of Nancy Nicholas Hall, 2021 (Photo by Sarah Maughan).



tory courses in every major and expanding the number of Human Ecology courses that fulfill general education requirements. By 2022, the number of freshmen and sophomore undergrads in the school had increased to 632 — nearly 33 percent of the total undergrad enrollment.

That growth is emblematic of Human Ecology's overall growth and performance in what was a challenging decade for higher education in Wisconsin and the entire United States. Amid shifting political winds, some even questioned the value of post-secondary degrees. Yet Human Ecology's partnerships with students, alumni, industry, and society at large continued to expand.

In uncertain times, Human Ecology successfully positioned itself as being the school that trains "second responders." While first responders save lives during crises, human ecologists assess and implement sustainable solutions for individuals and communities in multiple areas, including:

- Finances, by serving as the navigator and architect of programs that facilitate financial security.
- Family, by focusing on improving the health and well-being of adults and children.
- Community, by offering opportunities to engage students and community thought leaders to collaboratively chart the future of outreach programs, securing Human Ecology's position as a leading campus proponent of the Wisconsin Idea.
- Innovative design, by finding solutions through a human-centered approach to research, education, and outreach that leads to building better products, places, and infrastructures.

"We can talk about all the hot button issues," said J. Michael Collins, Professor of Consumer Science. "This [2023] is the first year, I think in the history of the United States, that we're going to have more people over 65 years old than under 18," Collins said. "Human ecology can adapt to that. We can deal with issues of caregiving and health care later in life. We can deal with estate planning and the intergenerational transfer of wealth."

Collins continued: "The focus on the family, on individuals in households and in neighborhoods, we're thinking of them in the context of where they live and work. It's the ecological model, and it gives us the ability to be nimble and address the big issues of the day."

Strategic planning during the past decade has led Human Ecology to excellence in five important categories: facilitating recruitment and retention of world class faculty; ensuring a rich, high impact student experience; introducing new programs with new interdisciplinary part-

ners across campus; committing to equity and justice, which enhances all of the above; and finally, self-evaluating and regularly reviewing performance with a goal of being best in class.

## Recruiting World-Class Faculty

If Human Ecology were to welcome increased enrollment of students, its human resource ranks, particularly its faculty and instructional staff, would also have to increase. The majors in the school were highly desirable to students, but there were too few faculty who could provide instruction and conduct research in the school.

Human Ecology's tenure-track faculty has increased by more than 50 percent in the past decade with a total of 50 tenure-track faculty expected in the school by 2025.

Since 2012, Human Ecology has added 22 endowed chairs, professorships, and faculty and graduate fellowships, aided by the success of the All Ways Forward fundraising campaign, which raised more than \$72 million for Human Ecology, exceeding the original \$50 million goal.

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**J. Michael Collins**

*Professor of Consumer Science*



Chancellor Jennifer Mnookin (foreground) visits with Dean Shim (C) and faculty members Jung-hye Shin (R) and Cliff Robb (L), as well as students and staff (not pictured) at the School of Human Ecology, August 2023 (Photo by Andy Manis).



Chancellor Rebecca M. Blank at the investiture of Soyeon Shim as the Elizabeth Holloway Schar Dean, April 2022 (Photo by Andy Manis).



**"Soyeon, I want to thank you for your extraordinary commitment to the School of Human Ecology – and for reaching out beyond the four walls of this school to advance the kinds of interdisciplinary initiatives that drive the university's reputation for excellence."**

**Rebecca M. Blank**

*Chancellor, UW–Madison (from 2013 to 2022)*

## Elizabeth Holloway Schar Deanship

Shim's philosophy is that investment follows vision, and she has proven to be a masterful fundraiser. Of her many significant achievements, none was more symbolic and transformative than to endow the deanship, which forever established the future of the School of Human Ecology as a separate and distinct entity within the university. Tapping into the power of the collective was a key strategy that created the first endowed deanship at UW–Madison named exclusively in honor of a woman, Elizabeth Holloway Schar ('75). The Elizabeth Holloway Schar deanship, one of the most significant investments ever in Human Ecology, was made possible by a group of eight visionary donor families and launched the school into its next quarter century.

### Propelled by Philanthropy

There is no question that endowed positions, funded by philanthropy, have aided Human Ecology's recruitment of world-class faculty.

Shim also has made a point of recruiting faculty who bring a focus on equity and diversity in their research fields under the initiative called Equity & Justice Network, which is discussed on page 49.

Notable, too, is the number of Human Ecology faculty who also hold appointments with UW–Madison Division of Extension. Regardless of their Extension appointment, Human Ecology faculty are committed to taking their research into the community to ensure that the application of what they are learning benefits people across Wisconsin and the world.

"That's the whole Wisconsin Idea, right?" said Jennifer Gaddis, Associate professor of civil society & community studies, in a 2023 *Madison Magazine* interview. "To do work that's really [community] engaged. The School of Human Ecology was looking for people who did that type of work."

Gaddis joined Human Ecology in 2014 as an assistant professor, and her research in the area of food served in public schools led to her acclaimed 2019 book, *The Labor of Lunch: Why We Need Real Food and Real Jobs in American Public Schools*.

Gaddis recently teamed with her Human Ecology colleague, Associate Professor Margaret Kerr, to study Madison parents of elementary school children and ascertain their feelings toward school meals — an example of the real-world, hot-button matters Collins said Human Ecology is perfectly positioned to address.



*Elizabeth Holloway Schar, October 2015  
(Photo by C&N Photography).*



Kerr, meanwhile, is also tackling the issue of how Wisconsin fathers can create more fulfilling relationships with their children. She's conducting focus group discussions with fathers in various parenting and custody situations and partnering with family service providers and other community stakeholders.

Examples of important and timely research abound within Human Ecology. Professor Rob Nix has looked at enhancing the school success of children from low-income families. Associate Professor Alvin Thomas studied 356 Black and Hispanic teens across the United States to see how social media and online discrimination affected their mental health. Professor Jung-hye Shin, Professor Kevin Ponto and Assistant Professor Beth Fields have developed an augmented reality tool to identify ways to modify homes to improve accessibility for people who are elderly or disabled.

"Dean Shim has been a tremendous advocate for us and really invested in the research infrastructure," said Lauren Papp, associate dean for research and a professor of human development & family studies.

Papp continued: "There couldn't be a more supportive environment. We're attracting more students, we're attracting higher-quality students, and we're attracting students who are ready to just jump in and take off with the research as well."

The Human Ecology departments hosting this groundbreaking research include:

**Consumer Science:** Where faculty are interdisciplinary colleagues performing research on areas such as social security, disability assistance, and retirement savings, including the ongoing impacts of COVID-19 on consumers involved in these programs; food security and nutrition assistance; financial capability and access; alternative financial services, including payday lending and military lending; consumer decision making and well-being; and family relationships and financial well-being.

Human Ecology's Department of Consumer Science is home to the nationally recognized Kohl's Center for Retailing, which guides the top-tier consumer behavior & marketplace studies major and connects UW students, faculty, and alumni with professionals in the retail world.

**Human Development & Family Studies:** Where research cores include infancy/early childhood development with a focus on family systems, risk/resilience and infant/early childhood mental health, relational health across the lifespan, and fathers and fatherhood, with a focus on

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### **Lauren Papp**

*Associate dean for research and a professor of human development & family studies*

reclaiming the narrative of fatherhood among men of color. For nearly a century, this department has hosted the UW Child Development Lab, a learning program for young children and a teaching and research laboratory for university students and faculty.

**Design Studies:** This department promotes a multidisciplinary and global approach to design, focusing on the production, process, and impact of design. Scholars include faculty from the arts and humanities, the social sciences, and the physical sciences. That diversity ties together their interest in relationships between humans and the objects and environments that they design and use. Research cores include environment-behavior studies with a focus on the psychological and behavioral impact of design, and technology and design innovation. This department hosts the Center for Design and Material Culture, which is home to two galleries: Ruth Davis Gallery and Lynn Mecklenburg Textile Gallery, which supports the Helen Louise Allen Textile Collection, one of the largest university-held textile collections in the nation, as well as the school's material culture studies program.

**Civil Society & Community Studies:** CSCS collaborates with communities, civil society organizations, and social movements to cocreate a just and sustainable future for all. The program aims to be among the top five in the nation in its research cores in creating social change systems that address the following: societal needs; youth engagement; food justice and food systems, with a focus on nutrition and wellness; and the criminal justice system in schools. Additionally, there is a strong focus on strengthening relationships with First Nations, locally, nationally, and globally, through collaborations on the well-being of children. This department has hosted the Center for Community and Nonprofit Studies since 2007.

## **The Student Experience**

In the decade following Dean Soyeon Shim's arrival in Madison, Human Ecology tripled undergraduate enrollment (to nearly 2,500) and more than doubled graduate student enrollment (to 100).

Human Ecology speaks to the desire of many of today's students to improve

**Human Ecology's Department of Consumer Science is home to the nationally recognized Kohl's Center for Retailing, which guides the top-tier consumer behavior & marketplace studies major and connects UW students, faculty, and alumni with professionals in the retail world.**



*Margaret Kerr (standing), associate professor of human development & family studies, guides graduate students in practicing new statistical software, March 2023 (Photo by Jeff Miller).*

**Design studies research includes environment-behavior studies with a focus on the psychological and behavioral impact of design, and technology and design innovation.**





*Rudy Dieudonne, doctoral candidate in design studies, presents his research on how classroom lighting and noise impact students with autism, spring 2024 (Photo by Todd Brown).*

lives and make a difference in the world.

“When they graduate,” Shim said, speaking of Human Ecology students, “they’re graduating not only with a degree but with an understanding of why they’re here. Your job isn’t just to design the best dress or the best home, but — because you are a human ecologist — you care about sustainability and all the consumption issues.”

“The thing I love most about Human Ecology is how everyone is committed to creating a better world through what they choose to study,” said Walker Rowe, a personal finance major. “Ranging from textile design to family psychology to finance, Human Ecology feels like a pantry full of innovation and positivity, and I’m just very fortunate to be on one of the shelves.”

To ensure high impact, real-world experiences, Human Ecology requires at least one internship before graduating and encourages students to pursue more internships throughout their undergraduate career.

“Corporate relations has always been a focus at Human Ecology,” Shim said. To that end, she launched a new Office of Strategic Partnerships in 2023, which will develop connections with external partners across sectors to further provide students and faculty with practical

**In the decade following Dean Soyeon Shim’s arrival in Madison, Human Ecology tripled undergraduate enrollment and more than doubled graduate student enrollment.**

**Human Ecology speaks to the desire of many of today’s students to improve lives and make a difference in the world.**



**“The thing I love most about Human Ecology is how everyone is committed to creating a better world through what they choose to study.”**

**Walker Rowe**

*Personal finance student*

One of Shim’s initiatives is to ensure that all interns are paid — preferably by the employers, and if not, via Human Ecology internship scholarships. The goal is to ensure that students are not economically compromised for seeking professional opportunities during the summer or their studies.



*Kallie Heisdorf '23 and her mentor Melissa Laatsch '17 at ERDMAN: Healthcare & Senior Living Architecture firm in Madison, August 2022 (Photo by Sarah Maughan).*



experience — while providing an ear to industry, helping Human Ecology recognize evolving needs.

One of Shim's new initiatives is to ensure that all interns are paid — preferably by the employers, and if not, via Human Ecology internship scholarships. This is especially important for interns studying the nonprofit and community sectors, as those employers often have less capacity to compensate interns. The goal is to ensure that students are not economically compromised for seeking professional opportunities during the summer or their studies.

One recent Human Ecology graduate, Mary Papageorge, accepted a role at Under Armour as part of the company's consumer intelligence and social strategy teams. Her position is perfectly aligned with the experience she had as a student engaging millions of viewers in social media campaigns associated with Irish dance. Papageorge is an Irish dancer herself and said landing the job at Under Armour was the result of the skills she acquired developing the campaigns while at Human Ecology.

It reflects the entrepreneurial mindset Shim has instilled since her arrival in Madison, which was further evidenced in 2020 when Human Ecology launched the first fully online undergraduate degree program at the University of Wisconsin–Madison — a bachelor of science degree in consumer finance and financial planning.

## New Programs and Interdisciplinary Partners

New programs and partners are regularly under development and being announced at Human Ecology, often building on existing work and ideas.

The field of design studies at Human Ecology has a distinguished past rooted in textiles and clothing design. Many school alumni have achieved exciting and influential careers in the design world. The future of design studies is even brighter.

The first new bachelor of science degree program for the school in more than 50 years — design, innovation & society — launched in fall 2024, offering students broad exposure to design and its role in all aspects of daily life. The major will help students apply design skills to find solutions for social, political, economic, environmental, and cultural challenges.

In addition to studying the intersections of design and technology and how innovative technologies influence the ways we communicate and experience the world, students will develop skills to create approaches to improve the health, well-being, and sustainability of people, communities, and the planet.

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In 2021, Human Ecology and the College of Engineering jointly launched a master of science in design and innovation degree, with three other interdisciplinary partners: the Wisconsin School of Business, the Information School, and the Department of Art. This accelerated 12-month master's program incubates new forms of design-driven problem-solving and leadership across fields including computer science, engineering, urban planning, health science, and art. The program has already received national acclaim, with graduates hired as project managers, strategists, and designers in computing, health systems, financial technology, and design and business strategy.

Lennon Rodgers, director of the Grainger Engineering Design Innovation Labs, said “Dean Shim and the broader Human Ecology community share the idea that the challenges society faces are not solvable with just one discipline.”

He continued: “I can't think of a department that wouldn't pair well with Human Ecology, with their focus on the human side of things. If you have a technical discipline, like engineering and science, they tend to be pointed and pride themselves on going deep. I think Human Ecology will open their minds to think more broadly, to social and specific human elements that are important.”

**“The Human Ecology community shares the idea that the challenges society is facing are not solvable with just one discipline. I can't think of a department that wouldn't pair well with Human Ecology.”**

### Lennon Rodgers

*Director of the Grainger Engineering Design Innovation Labs*



Students set up a computer numerical control (CNC) laser to fabricate a prototype during the Design Thinking for Transformation class, a joint venture between the College of Engineering and the School of Human Ecology, July 2018 (Photo by Jeff Miller).

Human Ecology serves as the hub of UW–Madison’s design ecosystem, connecting the work of artists, engineers, and computer scientists along with many other professionals. The new Dorothy O’Brien Innovation Lab in Nancy Nicholas Hall serves to support students pursuing studies in design and innovation or an undergraduate certificate in design strategy, which is open to students across campus.

Human Ecology’s major in community & organizational development provides another example of a program that has assessed current needs and acted to meet them. The major recently adopted social innovation and entrepreneurship as pillars of a program that hopes to mesh societal needs and business interests, with plans for a social innovation lab.

As labs go, the most enduring at Human Ecology is its Child Development Lab, which in 2026 will celebrate its centennial. This lab is known internationally as a leader in the ecology of child well-being and provides year-round, high-quality early education programs for children ages six weeks to five years.

Human Ecology practices innovation even in hiring, as shown by Shim’s coordination of a “cluster hire” — a group of three to four new faculty who are being recruited with the expectation they will focus on early relational health, which includes factors that promote safe, stable, and nurturing relationships from the prenatal period to age five, and the impacts of such relationships on children’s and families’ health and well-being across the lifespan.

## A Commitment to Equity and Justice

Human Ecology has a long history of being home to many BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) faculty, staff, and students. Currently around 20 percent of both undergraduate and graduate students in Human Ecology are non-white.

Of the Human Ecology faculty, 37 percent of tenured and tenure-track faculty are non-white along with 23 percent of academic and university staff.

Carolee Dodge Francis is the first Native woman to chair a department at UW–Madison: Human Ecology’s Department of Civil Society and Community Studies.

For more than a decade Dodge Francis has led a National Institutes of Health education program for high school students that provides encouragement and mentoring to students interested in the field of medicine.

“A father of one of these students,” Dodge Francis said, “told me that his daughter was applying to medical school with an emphasis on neuroscience because of this initial experience. I simply ask these students to keep the mentorship circle going.”

**Human Ecology has a long history of being home to many BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) faculty, staff, and students.**



Human Ecology faculty members Alvin Thomas (L) and Carolee Dodge Francis (C), along with Associate Dean Alicia Hazen, participate in a panel discussion during the Human Ecology Equity & Justice Network Summer Institute, June 2022 (Photo by Rosie Yang).

In 2022, Carolina Sarmiento, associate professor in Human Ecology’s Department of Civil Society and Community Studies, received the Outstanding Women of Color in Education Award, given annually by the Universities of Wisconsin, for her work advancing equity and inclusion for non-white people.

To create a platform for all people to work together toward shared goals, Human Ecology initiated its Equity & Justice Network, with two goals:

- Practicing well-being and social justice in shared commitment to a positive work environment.
- Collaborating for research, teaching, and outreach that advances equity and justice.

It was mentioned earlier in this narrative that Human Ecology asks all its undergraduate students to participate in an internship, and the school has campaigned to encourage that interns be paid, thus allowing all students to participate, especially in experiences that may require travel and lodging. This reflects Human Ecology’s support of workplace equity and access for all students to participate in important professional experiences.

While some might see a focus on equity and justice as controversial, Dean Shim is an unabashed advocate, calling the diversity and social divide in society “a wicked problem.”

“It isn’t going to go away,” Shim said. “It’s going to be here. Can we be a leader in that area? I’m challenging our faculty, staff, and students to think about 2050, and will you be the leader in, for instance, equitable early lifespan? We’re working on it right now, hiring top-quality faculty members whose work is going to focus on equity and diversity.”





## Unstoppable Future: Together We RISE

**W**hen Soyeon Shim came to Madison in 2012 and assumed her role as dean of Human Ecology, she wasn't thinking about the future. There was too much that needed her immediate attention.

When she did have a chance to look forward, she thought: "Ten years is a long time. I might step away after that."

It hasn't happened.

"About my ninth year," Shim said, "I realized, 'I'm not done yet. I still have so much more to do.'"

That includes setting a course for Human Ecology going forward, building on what she and her predecessor, Robin Douthitt, were able to accomplish across the past 25 years.

The landscape has changed, but because of their efforts, Human Ecology is ideally positioned to thrive in the next 25 years, which will mark the beginning of the second half of the 21st century, coinciding with UW–Madison's 200th anniversary.

"Higher education has changed," Shim said. "We don't have to argue about the decline in public funding. That's where we are now."

She continued: "What people are looking for is what difference you are making. That's number one. Here in Human Ecology, we are applying science to everyday life. Science that matters every day in life. When human ecologists come together to tackle pressing issues like food insecurity, community health, or early childhood development, we are unstoppable."

**"Here in Human Ecology, we are applying science to everyday life. Science that matters every day in life. When human ecologists come together to tackle pressing issues like food insecurity, community health, or early childhood development, we are unstoppable."**

**Dean Soyeon Shim**

Human Ecology's ability to be nimble and evolve was remarked on by Krista Berry '87, who had a distinguished executive retailing career including top jobs at Target and Kohl's.

Berry was back in Madison recently for the master's degree graduation of her son. She spoke about Human Ecology, then and now.

"I think one of the reasons I was able to achieve what I did was because of Human Ecology," Berry said. "It was a way to combine the art and science of business. It wasn't all finance and accounting, and it wasn't all design. It was a blend of the two. As I went through my career, I was able to combine those two, and it was very, very helpful."

During her campus visit, Berry was pleased to see how Human Ecology has built on that foundation.

"When I saw the size of the School of Human Ecology and how big it was, I was so proud of the dean, and all the faculty, and all that they had done because, wow, they got into consumer science at the right point," Berry

said. “They’ve really shifted the platform and the education to the future, and it’s exciting to see.”

UW–Madison Chancellor Jennifer L. Mnookin concurs.

“Soyeon is a true connector,” Mnookin said. “She links ideas, she links people, and I’ve seen firsthand how she creates and builds connections all across the university and among our alums. Human Ecology’s dynamic curriculum, and embrace of innovation, integrates internships, leadership development, and symposia across their fields of study, preparing Human Ecology graduates to enter high-impact careers and make their mark.”

No surprise, Shim boldly envisions a future in which Human Ecology is included in what’s best and most indispensable at UW–Madison.

Most top land-grant universities, competing for research dollars and reputational standing, tend to boast about three principal colleges: agriculture and life sciences; engineering; and medicine.

Shim talks about the “Wisconsin Four,” in which Human Ecology becomes the fourth pillar in that scenario.

“It’s where Wisconsin can shine,” Shim said. “Our building, our mission, our expansion of programs will make Wisconsin a better place to be.”

**“Soyeon is a true connector. She links ideas; she links people; and I’ve seen firsthand how she creates and builds connections all across the university and among our alums. Human Ecology’s dynamic curriculum, and embrace of innovation, integrates internships, leadership development, and symposia across their fields of study, preparing Human Ecology graduates to enter high-impact careers and make their mark.”**

**Jennifer L. Mnookin**

*Chancellor, UW–Madison*



Children from the Child Development Lab enjoy outdoor exploration with a Human Ecology student intern, August 2022 (Photo by Rosie Yang).

She calls it “three plus one”, or “Wisconsin Four.”

“Human Ecology is a hub of innovation,” Shim said, “indispensable as it is transformational. We are a school and discipline so essential to the process of solving problems that people should scarcely think of UW–Madison without thinking of Human Ecology.”

A case in point: In the fall of 2023, Chancellor Mnookin and Provost Charles Isbell announced that campus will invest in a strategic hiring initiative, Wisconsin RISE (Research, Innovation, Scholarly Excellence), to grow our faculty in a set of big themes that will see some tens of faculty positions being allocated to each. This is a paradigm shift in UW’s approach to hiring faculty and is designed to further build the scholarly excellence of UW–Madison in targeted areas. The aim is to hire up to 150 faculty through this initiative.

Never shying away from the next big challenge, Human Ecology is a key leader in addressing the unprecedented challenges of artificial intelligence (AI), which holds the potential for both great risk and great opportunity for humanity.

As the campus leader in human-centered design, Human Ecology is poised to lead in this important realm and is partnering with the Colleges of Engineering and Letters & Science to grow UW–Madison’s investment and capacity in AI innovation through Wisconsin RISE. Human Ecology’s involvement will ensure that the human implications of AI are top-of-mind in the university’s multi-disciplinary approach to one of the great challenges of our time.

Leading the way, the first faculty hires for Wisconsin RISE were in Human Ecology. Other priorities of this future-focused initiative include environmental sustainability, healthy aging, and democracy, all in which Human Ecology can play an important role as an essential science in improving the lives of people.

In the spring of 2023 Douthitt and Shim, along with friends and colleagues, sat together in a room in Nancy Nicholas Hall and talked about how far they have come and how far the field they’ve given their professional lives to might go.

Human Ecology. Tough to define, yet absolutely essential and becoming more so every day.

“We are here to understand how families work,” Douthitt said. “How they interact, how they communicate, every aspect. Families have resources

**“Human Ecology is a hub of innovation - indispensable as it is transformational. We are a school and discipline so essential to the process of solving problems that people should scarcely think of UW–Madison without thinking of Human Ecology.”**

**“The future of AI is here, and with it comes an urgency to deploy human-centered design to understand how people adapt to and leverage these technologies.”**

**Dean Soyeon Shim**



Human ecology. Tough to define,  
yet absolutely essential and  
becoming more so every day.

"We are here to understand how  
families work – how they interact,  
how they communicate, every aspect.  
Families have resources and they  
have demands, and how do they deal  
with those things? That's what we  
need to be about."

**Robin A. Douthitt**

*Dean Emerit*

Soyeon Shim and Robin Douthitt share their  
story during a video interview, February 2023  
(Photo by Hannah Tymorek).





and they have demands, and how do they deal with those things? That's what we need to be about."

Shim spoke about her goal of having all the school's majors rank in the top five programs nationally. She foresees all Human Ecology students graduating with ample opportunities to launch careers in business, health care, creative industries, and the nonprofit sector — wherever their dreams might take them. It's the Wisconsin Idea writ large: graduates carrying Human Ecology's research and expansive, interdisciplinary expertise into the world.

Consistent with the Wisconsin Idea is another Human Ecology initiative: Global Human Ecology. Currently and historically, the Human Ecology community includes a range of scholars and research efforts that are international, have local to global significance, or are framed in a global context. Given this context, where there is faculty interest, along with an interested and diverse student body, Shim appointed Lori DiPrete Brown, distinguished teaching faculty, as the inaugural director of Global Health and Human Ecology in 2022. Brown's preliminary selfstudy suggests that Global Human Ecology could form an umbrella for school-wide global activities and foster a more robust community in Human Ecology, enhanced research, education and outreach, and a structure for campus-wide collaboration with other globally oriented units. Plans are currently underway to ultimately create opportunities to develop relationships and gain cross-cultural insights as part of Human Ecology organizational culture.

"We have the momentum," Shim said. "So why not keep moving ahead with clarity of purpose? By doing so, we can change an important conversation about public higher education as being necessary for preserving and strengthening democracy in general and advancing equity and justice in particular."

### Positioning for Future Impact

During the 2023–24 academic year, Human Ecology underwent a major 10-year self-study to assess how well each academic program is preparing students. Instead of reviewing one program at a time, Shim decided to conduct all programs simultaneously. At this juncture of the school's rapid progress and future planning, she believed there was a unique

**It's the Wisconsin Idea writ large: graduates carrying Human Ecology's research and expansive, interdisciplinary expertise into the world.**

**"We have the momentum," Shim said. "So why not keep moving ahead with clarity of purpose?"**



*Master in fine arts student Veronica Pham in Prague while attending a conference on traditional papermaking, summer 2023 (Photo provided by Veronica Pham).*



*Nicholas Jackson, flagbearer for the School of Human Ecology, UW–Madison Commencement, May 2019 (Photo by Bryce Richter).*

opportunity to assess the degree to which the individual academic programs are working together in a coordinated and collaborative way to achieve unified goals. In addition to the interconnectedness among the degree programs, she believes that equally fundamental is the benefit of evaluating Human Ecology's work from the ecological perspective, one that informs all the school's work and that puts students front and center.

Shim said, "By looking with clear eyes at the ways we integrate our teaching, research, and outreach as well as administration, we can better understand how these components work together and do better at finding new and innovative ways to realize our full potential."

Shim also believes that this is an opportunity to reaffirm not only the purpose of higher education in the world but also Human Ecology's role and capacity to serve as a change agent, on the UW campus and beyond.

Shim concluded, "By committing to our purpose, I believe we can truly make the School of Human Ecology a compelling place:

- Where students can gain meaningful knowledge by exploring a range of diverse ideas, regardless of their race and other background, and can thrive as they discover how to make the world better.
- As a hub for exceptional educators, scholars, and staff whose work is meant to enhance the quality of life for all.
- That attracts inspiring donors and investors who want to support our efforts for a better tomorrow for all."

Looking ahead, the future of the School of Human Ecology is stunningly bright as a vibrant leader in the field of human ecology around the globe, thereby advancing the University of Wisconsin's mission and vision toward the second half of the 21st century.

On, Wisconsin!



## Epilogue:

# Leadership Lessons

In interviewing the deans, faculty, staff, students, alumni, donors, and industry and campus partners for this story, a few observations regarding the leadership assets of both Douthitt and Shim became clear. These traits are evident within their stories and in the experiences others shared in describing their work with them. The authors share these observations in hopes of providing insights and lessons to Douthitt and Shim's leadership tenets.

### Seize early-career opportunities.

Over the course of her career, each dean demonstrated a *fearlessness in saying yes* to new assignments and opportunities, not necessarily knowing all it would take to achieve successful outcomes but nevertheless committed to lead.

While it is common, especially for women, to want to check every box before agreeing to lead a project or even applying for a job, this tendency stunts progress. While anxieties were undoubtedly high for both Shim and Douthitt early and even throughout their leadership tenures, saying “yes” and figuring out the paths to success later was the answer.

The lesson is to *be open*, even if it requires moving across the country.

### Assess what worked and what required improvement, and then strategizing to adjust.

Each woman leaned on her academic training to *understand the environments* they were inheriting. Each was also unafraid of being direct about what required action and taking it. They knew this directness was in the best interest of the people they were serving — students, faculty, and staff.

Early in Douthitt's career as dean, assessing the school's strengths and weaknesses led to closing some programs. It also buoyed those that provided unique value and required fresh investment. Under Shim's leadership, the assessment is a continual process today, regularly checking the pulse of students, alumni, faculty, and staff as well as welcoming external reviewers.

Part of conducting assessment involves *listening to people*. While Dean Shim called this one of the most important lessons in her career, Douthitt concurs and both deans used dialogue and listening sessions with all their stakeholders to achieve clear direction.

Also important were the *mentors and friends* that each dean identified at various stages to accurately assess and fortify their ideas into successful strategies. Douthitt and Shim maintained connection with these mentors over decades. They also picked up more along the way, particularly as they grew the UW School of Human Ecology's engagement with prominent alumnae and thought leaders who would become the trusted advisers and support each dean knew she needed.

### Act boldly to redesign infrastructure.

Despite naysayers, each dean outlined strategic goals that involved multimillion dollar plans to improve facilities, programs, staffing, and opportunities for students. Failure was never an option for either dean, despite formidable institutional barriers presented along the way.

Throughout the deans' tenures, the need for *bold thinking, even dreaming of what was possible*, was required. Dreaming requires planning and resources. It also requires finding a team that is prepared to dream and plan with you. In each case, these women identified the professional friends and advocates who brought keen intelligence to projects. Such friends are needed to make dreams come true.

Early in her tenure, Douthitt provocatively asked the faculty and staff whether they should close the doors. Their response became a years-long exercise in building their greatest strengths and proudly claiming their seat as an exemplar at the university's table. It set the stage for Shim's team to continue to build on those competencies and has led to two Human Ecology majors being part of the university's top 10 most popular majors today.

### Check one's ego at the door.

Both Douthitt and Shim are *unafraid to raise their hand and ask others for help*. Their ability to seek information, counsel, or recommendations from other trusted colleagues, on and off campus, is innate.

Both Douthitt and Shim regularly recognized when *seeking counsel* was in the best interest of the project at hand. Especially in the early days managing a dangerously tenuous school, Douthitt recalls reaching out to people in other schools or administration, and even to her friends in the UW athletics department. She *sought best practices* that could help her rebuild the school, and she reports each person she called was very willing to help.

This trait includes *trusting in your staff* and not micromanaging. Leaders know what job needs to get done. Convening the team and asking them to report how they plan to accomplish that is far more *empowering* and leads to better results than instructing them.

Finally, each dean recommends *hiring people who are smarter than you* as a means to building a truly effective team. Hires should bring knowledge that complements yours, not duplicates it. Building such a team leads to energetic discourse and problem-solving among teams as well.

### Lead with both head and heart.

Learned, strategic, and bold are descriptors for Douthitt and Shim. Equally important, each holds high *emotional intelligence* which allows them to respect that the culture of the organization must be addressed if real results are to be realized and sustained.

So much is written today about culture and the need for leaders to understand what staff need to feel valued, included, and emotionally well in their work. Both Douthitt and Shim have known this from the start.

*Caring about the people they serve* — be it students, staff, or faculty — is their first call to action. With that as their guide, plans fall into place, and a healthy culture of progress can be maintained and sustained by all.

This trait manifested when Douthitt was forced to make very difficult decisions to eliminate programs and positions. Despite the sting, the work was done with *compassion and understanding* for those affected and those remaining.

The faculty, staff, and students of Human Ecology know they have had more than just a dean in both Douthitt and Shim. They have enjoyed leaders who are excited to know about their personal and professional triumphs and genuinely care to help when that is needed.

# Testimonials

“While I never had the pleasure of working with Dean Emerit Douthitt, I can attest that Dean Soyeon Shim is a true powerhouse, whose bold vision and steadfast determination propels UW–Madison’s School of Human Ecology forward. Guided by her entrepreneurial spirit, Human Ecology is thriving and now hosts two of the most popular majors on campus. Soyeon is a true ‘connector’ — she links ideas, she links people, and I’ve seen firsthand how she creates and builds connections all across the university and among our alums. Human Ecology’s dynamic curriculum and embrace of innovation integrates internships, leadership development, and symposia across their fields of study, preparing graduates to enter high-impact careers and leave their mark. The school’s leadership, faculty, staff, and students embody the Wisconsin Idea and promote the transformational power of a University of Wisconsin education.”

**Jennifer L. Mnookin**

*Chancellor, UW–Madison*

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“Dean Shim is an unbelievable driving force. I think she is there for the students, advocating every single day to make that school the best school possible for their education, and to be part of the university system around the country that’s really valued by employers. What she has put together I haven’t seen at a lot of schools. She really is driven and passionate, and I love that about her.”

**Krista Berry**

*School of Human Ecology alumna ’87; independent board director at Helen of Troy; board director at Amer Sports, Wilson Sporting Goods, Salomon*

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“The School of Human Ecology is critically important to our talent pipeline, no doubt about it. As an organization that’s focused on the customer, product, product development, and access to students with that same focus, their innovative thinking and passion is critical to our success.”

**Adrienne Bestul**

*Senior manager of talent development and IT talent development at Lands’ End; corporate partner of the Kohl’s Center for Retailing*



“Higher education needs to be looking at the whole person, and the School of Human Ecology does that. This school nurtures people. The pieces integrate into the common element of ‘humanifying’ and extend to other programs, including partners they work with. Human Ecology brings that human element.”

### Jane Boutelle

*School of Human Ecology Dean’s Advisory Board member; cofounder of technology firm Digsite*



“The School of Human Ecology is a school that punches above its weight, placing a great emphasis on developing strong cross-campus collaborations and significant industry partnerships. Always looking to the future, Human Ecology is developing exciting and relevant new majors and providing a pathway to meaningful internships for students and job opportunities for graduates. With a burgeoning number of new students, faculty, and staff drawn to Human Ecology, it is a shining leader of academic excellence, addressing the needs of today while anticipating those of tomorrow.”

### Bridget Brady Coffing

*School of Human Ecology alumna and Dean’s Advisory Board chair emerit; Chief Communications Officer emerit and former senior vice president, Corporate Relations, of McDonald’s Corporation*



“What’s unique about the School of Human Ecology — and I think a requirement, frankly, to be a dean of Human Ecology — is to recognize the real-world application, that we’re solving problems. We’re not a program teaching theory; we’re not a program trying to direct students or faculty towards a particular discipline. We’re trying to say there’s a problem, and we’re going to solve it with whatever tools we have at our disposal. I think there’s also a unique ability to recognize the value of contributions that can be made by faculty, regardless of their background or age or cultural discipline or whatever else. They can provide perspectives that are valued and help solve real-world problems.”

### J. Michael Collins

*Professor of consumer science and family economics specialist for the UW–Madison Division of Extension*

“The UW–Madison School of Human Ecology stands out as an innovative leader among peer programs. Like Cornell Human Ecology, the school focuses on improving lives and puts humans at the center of its programs. It prepares students to solve problems by bringing together expertise from multiple perspectives and disciplines. The UW–Madison School of Human Ecology stands out in the national landscape for its innovative undergraduate majors, which are among the most popular on campus, and its collaboration with others on campus in important areas such as design and in food security and policy. Human Ecology is very highly regarded both on the UW campus and beyond for the excellent training it provides to students and the expertise it brings to critical social issues.”

### Rachel Dunifon

*Rebecca Q. and James C. Morgan Dean at the Cornell College of Human Ecology*



“I have always appreciated the caliber of School of Human Ecology students and their preparedness. We always really enjoyed presenting and coming to meet the students. When [Dean Shim] came in, she allowed us to see the vision and she shared her strategy. She asked, ‘What does this feel like?’ That’s what partners do, right? She shared and asked, ‘What do you think about it?’ She wanted to attract the best students, best faculty, best partners in a beautiful building with great growth. So, I’m not surprised that they’ve grown, but it’s amazing how much they’ve grown. It’s a true partnership.”

### Jane Blain Gilbertson

*Executive board chair of Blain’s Farm & Fleet*



“Human ecology is the study of people, their finances, their buying patterns, their design choices. With how fast-paced the world is moving, the School of Human Ecology has the latest majors, the latest people coming on-site. It’s more important than ever in today’s environment.”

### Megan Knox

*School of Human Ecology alumna ’09; merchandising manager for Colony Brands*

“The Kohl’s Center for Retailing wants to know, ‘What do employers want? What do they need? How can I incorporate that into my curriculum so that my students are best positioned to get those jobs?’ School of Human Ecology students are very engaged and very knowledgeable. These students know more about the industry and have a better sense of the jobs and career paths that are available. They also have the skills to be successful in those roles.”

### **Adam Lukoskie**

*Executive director of the National Retail Federation Foundation*



“One of the reasons you go to college is to learn how to be a good citizen. Life revolves around people, and the School of Human Ecology programmatically supports students with majors that help people succeed in their work and in their personal lives. It’s really about putting the person first, finding human-centric solutions that promote well-being. I think that approach for students should produce a better graduate and a more capable individual, one who can contribute to society in a very good way.”

### **Lynn Mecklenburg**

*School of Human Ecology alumna MS ‘75; Dean’s Advisory Board chair emerit*



“We are now a destination on campus. People want to work in the School of Human Ecology. I think the impact that Dean Shim has had is bringing visibility and knowing key partnerships across campus and cross-disciplinary programs that she has led and introduced. We’re known as a destination now. We’re in a very wonderful place here.”

### **Lauren Papp**

*School of Human Ecology associate dean for research and professor of human development & family studies*

“Human ecology, as a field, is exactly where the future of higher education ought to be going. The main reason to partner with the School of Human Ecology is because something will get done. It’s very hard to turn the *Titanic*, but it’s not hard when Soyeon Shim puts her mind to something. That’s what leadership looks like to me. Human Ecology has always had a leading-edge commitment to community-focused scholarship education and research outcomes. That’s sort of in Human Ecology’s DNA. It arguably goes back to the 19th century.”

### **Paul Robbins**

*Dean of the UW–Madison Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies*



“I can’t see another department that the School of Human Ecology wouldn’t pair well with because it focuses on the human side of everything. For engineering, I think the empathy piece pairs really well, but I would think it would for any other school or college, too. Human ecologists open their minds to think about the broader social elements and also the specific human elements in order to understand and address needs.

### **Lennon Rodgers**

*Director of the Grainger Engineering Design Innovation Lab; associate teaching professor of mechanical engineering at the UW–Madison College of Engineering*



“We have very wicked problems to deal with and you don’t solve them except through a translational, transformational, transdisciplinary way of thinking. Nobody else has that holistic view, and that’s what a school of human ecology does. It takes a leader who is able to say, not only is this important, but how do I make it viable? That’s what’s unique about Wisconsin.”

### **Joyce Serido**

*Professor and extension specialist with the University of Minnesota–Twin Cities’ Department of Family Science in the College of Education and Human Development*

# All Ways Forward Campaign

## Named Endowed Positions, School of Human Ecology 2014–2023

### Named Deanship

Elizabeth Holloway Schar Deanship

### Named Distinguished Chairs

100 Women Distinguished Chair in Human Ecology

The Chipstone Foundation Design and Material Culture Distinguished Chair

Mary Sue and Mike Shannon Distinguished Chair for Thriving Children and Families

### Named Faculty Chairs

Dorothy A. O'Brien Chair in Human Ecology

Elizabeth C. Davies Chair in Child and Family Well-Being

Fetzer Family Chair in Consumer and Personal Finance

Kohl's Chair in Retail Innovation

Laura M. Secord Chair in Early Childhood Development

Lynn and Gary Mecklenburg Chair in Textiles, Material Culture, and Design

### Named Professorships and Faculty Fellowships

Ecology of Human Well-Being (EcoWell) Professorship

Jane Rafferty Thiele Faculty Fellowship

Jane Rafferty Thiele Professorship

Kay Vaughan Innovation Faculty Fellowship

Leola R. Culver Professorship in Nonprofits and Philanthropy

Liz Kramer Professorship of Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship

Lorna Jorgenson Wendt Professorship in Money, Relationships & Equality (MORE)

Meta Schroeder Beckner Outreach Professorship\*

### Named Graduate Fellowship Endowments

Diermeier 4W Social Transformations Graduate Fellowship

Jane Davies Holloway Graduate Fellowship in Child and Family Well-Being

Jane Hampton Ausman Teaching Assistantship\*

Leola Culver Graduate Fellowship in Early Childhood Development

Linda Ahlers Graduate Fellowship in Retailing, Design, and Innovation

Nelsrud Family Graduate Fellowship in Early Childhood Development

Robin A. Douthitt Graduate Teaching Fellowship\*

Shannon Graduate Fellowship in Early Childhood Development

Susan Bakke Graduate Fellowship in Retail Entrepreneurship and Design

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*\*Established prior to campaign*

# About the Authors



**Doug Moe** is the award-winning author of numerous critically acclaimed nonfiction books, as well as thousands of newspaper columns and magazine articles. In addition to his books and journalism, he writes corporate, foundation, and personal histories. Today he is regularly honored as Best Columnist and Best Local Author by the Best of Madison awards as well as by the Milwaukee Press Club. He is a UW alumnus, having earned his BA in English in 1979.



**Jeanan Yasiri Moe** is a change management strategist, community builder, and corporate communicator serving in executive roles advancing health care, higher education, and nonprofit and media interests. She is a proud alumna of the UW School of Human Ecology, having earned her MS in 1985. She taught in Human Ecology as a faculty associate for 26 years and helped found the UW Center for Nonprofits, serving as its first executive director.





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