IU South Bend Faculty Research Grant, 2009:
“Western Conceptions of Friendship and Relationships Online.”

Report submitted by: Louise Collins, Philosophy 6/2/10

1. Description of grant supported activity.

I am most grateful to the IU South Bend Research & Development Committee for a summer 2009 grant of $8,500 to pursue my research project: “Western Conceptions of Friendship and Relationships Online.”

In 2009, I completed a second draft of “Are Close Friendships Possible On-line?” which I presented at the refereed, biennial conference of the Society for Philosophy and Technology, held July 7-9, University of Twente, The Netherlands. (I was awarded a $500 travel grant by IU’s OVPIA to offset some of the travel costs).

To write this second draft over the course of the summer, I drew on my continued reading, as well as feedback from two research presentations I made in Australia in fall 2008 (at the Centre for Applied Philosophy and Public Ethics at the Australian National University, NSW on 10/15/08; and Murdoch University, Perth, WA 12/1/08, respectively).

In terms of Sections c & d “Project methods & activities” outlined in my initial grant proposal, I have completed steps i-iv. In terms of Section e “What outcomes do you expect? How will the results be disseminated?” I have completed i & ii.

2. Were you able to complete the project? Describe any difficulty you had.

3. Did, or will, the project result in a specific product -- a manuscript, composition, syllabus, etc? If so, please describe and indicate state of development.

I unexpectedly spent part of summer 2009 writing an essay for an anthology on “Fashion and Philosophy,” in the Wiley-Blackwell “Philosophy for Everyone” series (series editor, Fritz Allhoff). In August 2009, the co-editors, Dr. J. Kennett and Dr. J. Wolfendale, accepted my essay, “Fashion Dolls and Feminism: How do you solve a problem like Barbie?” for inclusion. This project changed my time-table for the summer, as the co-editors invited me to contribute in May, but wanted the paper by August.

This productive side-track notwithstanding, I made good progress on my major project on online friendship. The biggest obstacle to completion in 2009 was that I realized my two presentations in Australia might amount to enough material for two manuscripts, but could not figure out the best structure to contain my arguments. Writing the paper for Twente helped make that clearer and I look forward to submitting one final manuscript this summer (2010).