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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

University of Minnesota Professor Targets Student Stress Reduction

MINNEAPOLIS, MN (December 7, 2009) – Associate Professor of Landscape Architecture Rebecca Krinke has created a unique table designed for student stress reduction. This “Table for Contemplation and Action” is located in the interior public courtyard of Rapson Hall on the East Bank and is in virtually continuous use by students. The table employs changing elements of nature and provides students with the opportunity to write about stress and to deposit these writings into the table itself. “College students are often a highly stressed population,” says Krinke, “and with this table I’m exploring how designed objects and spaces can help with stress reduction”.

Some of the many positive responses written in the comment book at the table include: “A wonderful place to sit and study. Sight, texture, smell, lovely. The opportunity to write something down and let it go is very freeing and I am thankful for it” and “Thanks for the opportunity to jettison extra thought baggage.” The comment book also explains the table’s purpose and invites students to try the writing component of the table. Krinke explains, “Research indicates that contact with nature is calming and that writing about stressors is beneficial; this table contains both of these approaches to reducing stress.”

The six foot square wooden table has a central copper box containing a single unusual element from the outdoors – to date, these have included pine needles, tree bark, leaves, and moss. A large hand-blown glass vessel attached to the table is the repository for the student writings.

While stress reduction inspired the table, students are invited to use the table for studying, meeting, and eating. Rapson Hall is home to architecture and landscape architecture students - who are typically in the building every day - and some have made the table into their favorite setting. Recently someone was inspired to leave a small vase of flowers at the table. A visitor to the table wrote, “We do not take time out of our days to try and help ourselves calm down and a reminder to do that is soothing.”

Krinke’s research and design practice is focused on contemplative and healing spaces. She is the editor of the book *Contemporary Landscapes of Contemplation* (Routledge, 2005) and has designed memorial and contemplative spaces, both indoors and outdoors, including the Dr. Martha Ripley Memorial in Minneapolis.

The “Table for Action and Contemplation” was funded by a grant from the University of Minnesota’s Institute for Advanced Study. Krinke worked closely with Kevin Groenke and Justin Kindlespire of College of Design Woodshop to create the table. As stress builds as finals time approaches, more students may wish to try out this unique table designed for stress reduction on campus.

Contact Prof. Rebecca Krinke at rjkrinke@umn.edu for more information, a tour of the table, or for additional photos. (Photo credit: Warren Bruland)

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