



Universitas



May 1, 2016

"...ONLINE NEWSLETTER FROM THE PITTSBURG STATE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF ARTS & SCIENCES"

IN THIS ISSUE

From the Dean



By Mary Carol Pomatto

On behalf of the students, faculty, staff, and alumni of the College of Arts and Sciences, welcome to this edition of *Universitas*. This is a good opportunity to update you on occurrences in the college. Of significance is the news from the college that our dean, Dr. Karl Kunkel, accepted the position of Provost at Southeast Missouri State University, located in Cape Girardeau, Missouri. It was a homecoming of sorts for Dr. Kunkel as he grew up not far from his new academic home. Karl, Sarah, and their two children will be missed as they

New Interim Dean

In January, Provost Lynette Olson announced the appointment of Mary Carol Pomatto, director of PSU's Irene Ransom Bradley School of Nursing, as interim dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. Karl Kunkel, who served as dean of the college since 2011, has accepted a position as provost at Southeast Missouri State University. "I am very pleased that Dr. Pomatto so willingly agreed to provide leadership for the College of Arts and Sciences during the next 18 months as we search for the next dean of the college," Olson said. "Pittsburg State University is fortunate to have the depth of leadership that allows this shift of responsibilities while not putting our exceptional Irene Ransom Bradley School of Nursing in jeopardy. Interim leadership for the IRB School of Nursing will be announced before long."

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Planetarium, as well as accomplishments of students, faculty, and alumni in the college: including student acceptance into various schools of law and one student's experience in study abroad; a mathematics faculty member's election to office in the national statistics honorary society, Mu Sigma Rho; biology alumnus Craig Corpstein's prestigious award for his manuscript published in *Great Plains Research: A Journal of Natural and Social Sciences*; and, a large-scale mural painted by art students in Pittsburg's downtown.

had quickly integrated into the fabric of the College of Arts and Sciences, Pittsburg State University, Pittsburg, and the surrounding communities. With good spirit, we wish them the very best as they begin this new chapter of their lives. Though Dean Kunkel left very large shoes to fill, it is my honor to serve as interim dean over the course of the next year. With certainty, I can assure you that the dynamic and important work of the college will continue and will continue to focus on student success first and foremost. Strides in excellence in teaching, research, scholarly and creative endeavors, and service will continue.

Select features in this *Universitas* include a partnership between professors at PSU and KU as part of an educational outreach initiative funded by a National Science Foundation EPSCoR grant entitled "Collaborative Research: Imaging and Nanostructures." This study provides an important opportunity for collaboration between two Kansas Regents universities and is also a rich opportunity for student involvement in faculty-directed research. Students are also participating in a research opportunity in the Irene Ransom Bradley School of Nursing studying health effects of sit-stand desks. This issue also highlights exciting new events in the renovated L. Russell Kelce

As you enjoy your *Universitas*, please remember that this edition contains only a brief summary of recent news from the College of Arts and Sciences. Our eleven departments and one school are the academic home to roughly half of the faculty and students at PSU. We could fill volumes with noteworthy accomplishments and activities in the college. As an alternative, please make it a priority to visit our campus; tour our departments and school; attend a play, recital, featured lecture or other event; or simply make a virtual visit to our webpages or social media sites. Whether you are a prospective or current student, parent, graduate, prospective employee, or interested patron, please know that the office of the College of Arts and Sciences is always here for you. Please contact us if we can be of assistance.

With true Gorilla Pride,

Mary Carol Pomatto

Interim Dean, College of Arts and Sciences



Charlotte's Web



THE CHILDREN'S CLASSIC "CHARLOTTE'S WEB" came to life last fall thanks to a large and talented cast, a flexible and changing set and lighting, and fanciful costumes.

The production, under the direction of Megan Westhoff, played to full houses for five performances in the Bicknell Center's Miller Theater.

Linden Little, who was in charge of set and lighting design, said one of the key factors he took into consideration in designing the set was the need for quick transformations.

"We actually had three barns," Little said. "They turned, spun, and flipped. Everything had to be quick."

The sets took the audience from Zukerman's farm to the county fair, with stops in a child's bedroom in between.

Turning the cast of 20 humans into barnyard animals, including Wilbur the pig and Charlotte the spider, depended on the talents of Lisa Quinteros, who was in charge of costume and makeup design.

Risky Business

The Department of Communication at PSU hosted an expert panel entitled "Risky Business: The Art and Science of Risk and Crisis Communication" on Thursday, November 5, from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. in the Miller Theater of the Bicknell Family Center for the Arts on the campus of PSU.

The goal of this event was to provide both PSU students and community members with an opportunity to learn from a variety of experts regarding current issues facing the four-state region. The event focused on how effective risk and crisis communication can help to address these issues.

Featured speakers, representing media, environmental, business, and government/policy sectors, included Doug Heady of KOAM-TV; Darrell Townsend, director of Ecosystems Management at Oklahoma Grand River Dam Authority (GDRA); Jeff Poe, former president of Pitt Plastics; and Richard Davidson, mayor of Neosho, MO.

"We live in challenging times. Our hope is that this event will shed light on the critical role that communication plays in helping our local communities mitigate future risks and also improve the quality of our response efforts during crisis situations," said Alicia Mason, associate professor of communication.

An audience Q&A session followed the presentations, and a reception with the featured speakers was held in the lobby of the Bicknell Family Center for the Arts following the event.



Learning to Make a Sustainable Impact

Twelve students from the PSU Students 4 Sustainability student organization, including ten students from PSU's Integrated Studies: Sustainability, Society and Resource Management (SSRM) degree program, attended the 8th Annual Growing Sustainability Communities National Conference held Oct. 6-7 in Dubuque, IA.

The conference offered two days of education and collaboration on specialized sustainability-related topics including economic prosperity, ecological integrity, and social-cultural vibrancy in community design and development.

"Private, public, and individual participation is what really gets projects done. Individualism is dominate in our culture, but in order to achieve community goals it takes a collective approach," said Lucas Tuckel (Sr, SSRM, Bonner Springs, KS).

Tuckel said that it was nice to see that communities are beginning to realize this type of approach.

Derrick Decker (Jr, SSRM, Rose Hill, KS) echoed this, stating the conference was "awesome; [It] broadens your horizons."

The trip was led by Professor Emeritus Jim Triplett from the PSU Biology department.

"Interdisciplinary degree programs like ours don't have a fixed department location," said Triplett. "It is important that we provide these professional development opportunities for our students to learn and work together, so they see the range of possibilities this degree offers."

"Being surrounded by industry professionals at the conference was a highlight because it showed me how many different career opportunities there are in the field of urban sustainability," said Rachel Magathan (Jr, Olathe, KS).

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Letter Press Revival

Senior art major Cat Jepson is living proof that those who wrote the obituary for letterpress printing in the 1980s were dead wrong. Thanks to people like Jepson, this early form of printing, developed by Johannes Gutenberg in the mid-15th century, is enjoying a worldwide renaissance.

In December, the Department of Art dedicated the Cat Jepson Fine Art Printmaking Letterpress Studio. The studio bears Jepson's name because she personally restored three old letterpress machines that will be used in the department's printmaking courses.

Jepson's love affair with letterpress printing began with an art class.

"I took Portico Bowman's printmaking and paper arts class in 2012, and I really fell in love with it," Jepson said. "That's when I became an art major."

In a corner of the studio where the printmaking class was taught, Jepson noticed an old, unused Vandercook No. 2 proof press. The press, delivered to the campus in 1928, was covered in bright blue paint and was in disrepair. Jepson got permission to attempt to restore the old press as an independent study project.

"As a kid, I was always reverse engineering things," Jepson said, "so this was something I was interested in doing."

Jepson completed the restoration of the press and, in the summer of 2014, landed an internship with Skylab Letterpress in Kansas City. There, she soaked up everything she could learn about commercial letterpress operations.

In 2015, Jepson's boyfriend stumbled upon two more unused letterpresses in Axe Library.

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MidWest Quarterly



In May, Casie Hermansson became the fourth Editor-in-Chief of *The Midwest Quarterly*, PSU's academic journal. Since 1959, the journal has published four issues a year, one for each season. "It's one of the university's best-kept secrets," Hermansson said. "We're held at Harvard, Notre Dame, Stanford, and the University of London... Just to name a few. And the journal is available through databases like EBSCO. And we do it all from Russ Hall! This summer we ran an ad in the *Chronicle Review*, an insert of the *Chronicle of Higher Education*. That has a readership of 318,000, so I don't think we'll be a well-kept secret much longer." The journal publishes articles on all subjects for general scholarly readers. For more information see:

www.pittstate.edu/midwestq.

Students' Mural now on Broadway



The students in Jamie Oliver's Mural and Large-Scale Painting class this past fall learned a lot about painting on a grand scale and also about life.

The class created a large mural in downtown Pittsburg just in time for Art Walk on Oct. 30. Oliver, a professor in the Art Department, said the students learned not only about the techniques used to create murals, but also about the skills needed to work with clients, schedules, deadlines, and other aspects of the work world.

The students were commissioned to create the work, which was installed on the south wall of the Beck and Hill Meat Market on Broadway, by Pittsburg's Downtown District Committee. Funding for the art came from a grant from the SEK Art Fest.

Each of the 12 students in the class submitted a design, based on a set of criteria developed by the Downtown District Committee. The committee selected one design from that group.

Planetarium Makeover

The newly renovated L. Russell Kelce Planetarium debuted a series of new shows during the fall semester. David Kuehn, interim chair of the PSU Department of Physics, said the planetarium underwent a makeover last summer, including the replacement of its old analog projector.

In addition to the new technology, the planetarium also received new paint, carpeting, and upholstery.

Kuehn said the planetarium is a valuable teaching tool for hundreds of students in classes like Descriptive Astronomy and Physical Science each year. It is also an important outreach to the community, hosting tens of thousands of area students and community members since it first opened.

For more information, call the Department of Physics at 620-235-4391.

Take a Stand!

Sitting for long periods of time at work can be a killer, but are office workers ready to accept technology that gets them out of their chairs?

Christian Bedore, a graduate student in the Irene Ransom Bradley School of Nursing, is testing ergonomically designed desks that allow users to work standing up or sitting down as part of her graduate research project. Bedore, with the help of three other PSU students, installed 16 of the sit-stand desks (SSDs) in offices across campus. After eight weeks, users of the desks were surveyed to assess the users' acceptance of the new technology, their perceptions of the desks, and how the desks affected their physical comfort while working.

Cheryl Giefer, a professor in the School of Nursing, is overseeing the students' research and conducted a smaller pilot study upon which this research is based.

First Time down the Highway

This is the first year for the Doctor of Nursing practice at PSU. It encompasses many “firsts.” It is the first practice-based doctoral program at PSU. “Graduates of this program,” says Cheryl Giefer, the Associate Director of the Irene Ransom Bradley School of Nursing, “will be known as DNPs, which is in contrast to graduates of research-focused doctoral programs known as PhDs or EdDs”. This distinction is new to the health care community serving the geographical region surrounding PSU, another first.

The students in the program are the first to go through it. It has been an illuminating experience to them.

“It has been challenging or frustrating at times,” says Benjamin Cochran, from Altamont, KS. He says that it is like “driving down a highway as they build it. Because the curriculum is literally being built around us, sometimes week by week. We live in a perpetual construction zone.”

Others have noted some of the challenges of being the first class through the program.

“Sometimes,” says Sonja Albright, a Family Nurse Practitioner, “the class has not been ready and posted on Canvas when the semester begins. The syllabus will often lack specificity. But I am quite happy to be part of the DNP program, and it certainly helps that the faculty is top-notch.”

This last sentiment is echoed by Cindy Noble, APRN-CNP.

“The program has been very eye opening for me as a student,” Cindy says. “I have enjoyed most of the classes offered and I believe they have helped me grow personally as well as a professionally. [They] have been geared to stretch our knowledge and to help prepare us for a world that is continually changing. I believe [this] will further open doors of opportunity for me that I may not have experienced in the past. I will also be proud to call PSU my alma mater.”

For some students, being part of such a program is a dream come true. “I wanted to be a part of this program for many years,” says Jama Bogart, Nevada, MO. . In particular, this was because it fits

her needs. “It is a clinical degree, not a research degree. I have no interest in writing for publication, producing great research, or speaking to audiences. My goal is exceptional clinical care by my colleagues and myself.”

According to Bogart, the curriculum is helping her to achieve this goal: “... I have learned some things that will assist in becoming an exceptional clinician.” Dr. Giefer says that designing this curriculum has been a challenge.

“To complicate matters,” she says, “the majority of the doctoral-prepared faculty are not DNPs. Thus our tried and true method of teaching which is to ‘do what was done with us’ just doesn’t apply to this program. The daily mantra is, ‘remember, it is a practice-based program!’”

Cochran sums up the feelings of most when he says, “The highway is going to be amazing, but for us it has definitely been a journey.”

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New Interim Dean

Pomatto said she is honored to represent the College of Arts and Sciences and the university as a whole during the interim period.

“The college has a strong history of excellence in each of its academic programs,” Pomatto said. “I look forward to working more closely with all of the highly qualified, caring, and dedicated faculty, department chairs, and staff of the college as we continue to meet student needs, engage in research and scholarship, and partner to serve our broader communities.”

Olson said foundational work for the search for the next College of Arts & Sciences dean will begin this spring with the appointment of a committee. The position will be advertised during the late summer and early fall of 2016, anticipating an appointment by the end of the 2017 academic year.

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Letter Press Revival



Jepson got permission from Randy Roberts, Dean of Library Resources, to restore the two presses, a Vandercook Universal I and a Potter Proof Press, which had sat unused in the library for a couple of decades. A research grant from Dr. Pawan Kahol and the Office of Graduate and Continuing Studies made the work possible.

“The whole process has been so fulfilling,” Jepson said. “I’m happy we’ve been able to reintroduce the letterpress into the curriculum and to pass along the knowledge I’ve gained through the restoration.”

(Continued from page 4)
Learning to Make a Sustainable Impact

Pitt State students in the Bachelor of Integrated Studies SSRM degree program study in three departments: biology, geography, and communication. The program remains the only degree of its kind available in the State of Kansas Regents system.

The SSRM degree prepares students to work in the green sector and has attracted students from a wide variety of backgrounds.

“The trip to Dubuque brought us all a lot closer and it was great to share all the different things we learned at the conference with each other,” said Magathan.

Magathan said she learned that “greenwashing” is very common and sometimes dangerous phenomenon in marketing. “People who mean well might purchase a certain product because of eco-friendly ‘buzz words’ used on the packaging,” said Magathan. “Labeling laws can be flaky, so there are often other products out there that are less harmful to the planet.”

SSRM students encouraged other PSU students to get involved in their degrees.

Tuckel said he encourages other students to stay up-to-date on what is going on in their career fields.

“Go to as many professional conferences or programs as you can. Course books and class information is outdated since everything in our social world is basically instant now,” said Tuckel.

“Be professional and be open to learning about a variety of concepts, in order to get the most out of a conference experience,” urged Magathan.

For more information about the SSRM degree program email ssrm@pittstate.edu.

Tayo Takes Part in Initiative



A unique partnership has formed between, Dr. Benjamin O. Tayo Assistant Professor of Physics at Pittsburg State University and Dr. Hui Zhao, Associate Professor of Physics and Astronomy at the University of Kansas as part of the educational outreach initiatives funded by the NSF EPSCoR grant titled "Collaborative Research: Imaging and Controlling Ultrafast Dynamics of Atoms, Molecules, and Nanostructures", #1430519. This educational initiative provides funding support for a small college physics faculty member to work closely with one of the key researchers on the grant project. Their educational plan involves collaborating on research, co-authoring any publications that may result from their research and developing related curriculum to enhance Pittsburg State's physics curriculum.

Their research focuses on the theoretical studies of the electronic and optical properties of two-dimensional crystals. In particular, Tayo has been working on modeling the properties of the $W_{1-x}Mo_xS_2$ alloy as a function of the composition x . He surmised "that being able to characterize the electronic properties of this alloy for composition x could possibly lead to advanced functional materials with properties superior to that of the individual materials MoS_2 and WS_2 ." Zhao added, "We are performing experiments to be compared with the model. This will help understand electronic states in these alloys. Such knowledge contributes to the goal of controlling electrons in these materials with light." Furthermore, he emphasized "this collaborative research clearly aligns with the emphasis for the Thrust 2 research effort of the grant directed at two-dimensional materials." Zhao will perform experimental studies as part of their

proposed research activities. Tayo will provide theoretical and numerical capabilities to improve the understanding of these properties that will enhance the impact of the collaborative work. They both hope "to find new ways of controlling the electronic and optical properties of 2D materials" using theoretical calculations to explain and complement the experimental findings. From this collaborative research project, they hope to use their data tested theories in future studies and experiments.

Students have also benefited from this collaborative initiative. Each professor has had the opportunity to involve a graduate student in the project. Tayo's graduate student worked with him throughout the summer, and although his graduate student found the research a little challenging, it has sparked his interest in the field. As a result, Tayo's graduate student enrolled in a topics class titled "Density Functional Theory" to improve his understanding of electronic and optical physics. With this enhancement of his knowledge base, he can then start performing some calculations for the experiments. Zhao is also supporting a graduate student who is performing the related experiments.

Tayo summarized the experience so far by saying:

I am grateful that by means of this collaboration, I was really busy last summer carrying out research. The knowledge gain so far has helped me a lot and it's very useful for the students as I incorporate some of the knowledge into my teaching. I would strongly recommend the program to my colleagues because being active in research really enhances the depth of your knowledge and makes you to become a better teacher.

And Zhao added:

The goals were to involve faculty members from small colleges in cutting edge research that would eventually transfer benefits to their students. The theory-experimental collaboration model is a perfect way to accomplish this since it doesn't require facilities from the small college partner.

Tayo and Zhao will continue their collaboration throughout the remainder of the academic school year.

(This story was taken from <http://kansas-nsf-epscor.blogspot.com/2015/10/the-kansas-nebraska-collaborative.html>.)

Telegrams from Faculty

Ananda Jayawardhana, a professor in Pittsburg State University's Department of Mathematics, was recently elected vice president of Mu Sigma Rho, the National Statistics Honorary society. His three-year term began on July 1.

Telegrams from Alumni

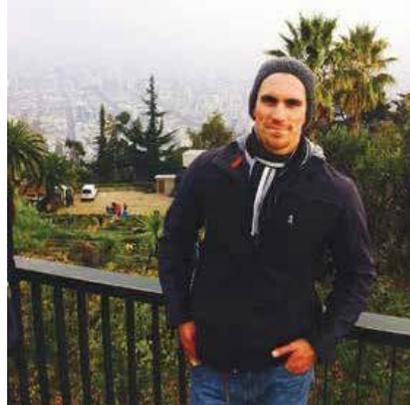
Craig Corpstein, who received a MS in Biology from PSU, had the manuscript version of his thesis accepted in the widely respected journal, *Great Plains Research*. In May, he was notified that the paper, "An Assessment of Prairie Restoration at Fort Scott National Historic Site," had won the Charles E. Bessey Award for best natural sciences paper. The award includes a cash prize of \$250. Craig traveled to Lincoln, Nebraska to receive the award at the Annual Fellows Luncheon hosted by the Center for Great Plains Studies.

The study described and assessed the current condition of the restored prairie at Fort Scott National Historic Site and compared it a tallgrass prairie remnant.

[2014. Corpstein, C., Arruda, J., Ford, C., and Jayawardhana, A. 2014. An Assessment of Prairie Restoration at Fort Scott National Historic Site. *Great Plains Research*. 24:79-99.]

Telegrams from Students

Jake Hackney, Modern Languages, spent the summer of 2015 as part of a life-changing study abroad in Santiago, Chile. This experience included 5 weeks of intensive, immersive Spanish courses spent with two professors. While there, Jake explored various Chilean cities, sampled Chilean cuisine and the famed "pisco sour," and cheered on "La Selecccion Chilena" in the soccer tournament *La Copa America*. He highly recommends this trip to any student!



Katherine Bland, Justice Studies, has been accepted at the University of Mississippi School of Law on the Dean's Full Tuition Scholarship.

Tyler Conklin, International Studies, has been accepted to the Syracuse University School of Law with a 50% scholarship.

Genile Dennison's paper on the Forgotten Middle Class of Picher, Oklahoma, was accepted for the Phi Alpha Theta Conference.

Therese O'Brian, Political Science, was accepted into Emory Law School with a very impressive scholarship.