



LSC Welcomes WSUM Radio

By Danielle Russell
LSC Junior

This fall, the Life Sciences Communication (LSC) department welcomed WSUM, UW-Madison's student-run radio station into the department. While the station will still operate from its location on State Street, its new administrative home is LSC.

Dave Black, General Manager at WSUM, approached the department after Professors James Hoyt and Jack Mitchell, the station's faculty advisors in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication, retired. LSC's Emeritus Professor and Public Radio Host Larry

Meiller has been active at WSUM since its inception. Then, LSC's Associate Professor Patty Loew took over the role of station advisor and currently chairs its governance board.

"WSUM approached our department because we're still teaching broadcast technique classes," Meiller said. "Because we teach those classes and because the liaison role went to Patty, it made sense for our department to take over and be the home department for the station."

Meiller, who teaches an informational radio course with the help of doctoral student and Magic 98 on-air host Juli Hinds, hopes to develop a stronger curriculum through this new relationship. Already, 120 stu-



Dave Black, Lori Berquam and Patty Loew
- At the December WSUM governance meeting

dents in CALS complete LSC's radio course each year.

"I'm finding that students from all areas of study are developing an interest in communication, and specifically in radio," Meiller said. "The relationship with WSUM will give those students an additional opportunity to go beyond what we currently offer in the classroom."

Meiller and Hinds intend to develop programming in their course for on-air use at the station. Additionally, students working at WSUM can enroll in the radio course to hone their skills.

Although much of the effort at WSUM goes into on-

hope that WSUM sees us as a resource to help build their audience," she said. The station focuses on community outreach by working with middle and high school students, hosting an annual "Party in the Park" concert, and even sponsors a little league baseball team called the Radiators.

"Our academic mission fits with WSUM's outreach mission," Loew said, adding, "That outreach mission is very important to us."

The energy is tireless behind the 150 student volunteers, programming that runs almost non-stop, and an executive management team of ten students mentored by Dave

life. He started working on the project in 1993.

"Without Dave Black, there wouldn't be a radio station," Meiller said. "He's done a wonderful job of organizing students and helping to create a welcoming climate. It was Dave's mentoring that got the station organized to be able to achieve that goal."

"We've got a really dedicated staff," Black said. "Everyone is very passionate about what they do and really goes above and beyond."

The station itself has an eclectic personality that reflects its members. With rock posters plastered on the walls, retro sofas and music magazines and CD's scattered throughout, the State Street studio is everything you'd expect of a college radio station. Broadcasting at 91.7FM, the station aims to provide alternative programming and follows the motto, "innovative radio for independent minds."

While the move to LSC brings exciting possibilities to both the department and the station, Loew said that the most important thing is not to mess with success.

"This is an organization run by students for students," she said. "We want to create an environment for them that is positive and nurturing for them to be who they are."



Danielle Russell
- Working at WSUM

air production, Loew said that students interested in marketing and promotions stay busy at the station as well.

"We have students trained in marketing, and we

Black. After working for several commercial stations on the West Coast, Black came to the university to work towards his Ph.D., but said that the radio station soon became his

“WSUM approached our department because we're still teaching broadcast technique classes.”

Larry Meiller
LSC Emeritus Professor
Public Radio Host

“This is an organization run by students for students.”

Patty Loew
LSC Associate Professor
WSUM Radio Station Advisor

from the chair...



Jacqueline Hitchon McSweeney

For many people in Dane county who are trying to sell an old-- and then buy a new -- home, the real estate market is frustratingly paralyzed. Against this backdrop, we are particularly aware in LSC how fortunate we are to be moving into our new home in January 2008, the newly renovated Hiram Smith Hall. We have none of the anguish of private homeowners who are similarly bursting out of their

current residences as their families grow, but whom market forces are preventing from achieving their goals. While it is hard to face leaving the Agricultural Journalism Building, we are nevertheless excited about our new location. As professor Shiela Reaves researches our departmental history for our centennial, she is discovering a surprisingly gratifying fit between

LSC and Regent Hiram Smith. Known as "a sledge-hammer in debate," he was a dynamic public speaker. Moreover, he recruited Professor William Arnon Henry as UW's first real professor of agriculture. A botanist, Henry nevertheless wrote press articles, newspaper columns and bulletins throughout his tenure. Science communication thus played an important role in the history of our university and the legacy incorporated in Hiram Smith Hall, one which Shiela will continue to explore. Meanwhile, in the present day, we are working constantly with architect Jim Brown of Engberg Anderson to redesign

the interior of this historic building. It appears that we will be able to maintain the number and enhance the quality of our classrooms and computer laboratories in house, while also increasing the number of radio laboratories. There will be communal spaces for students and meeting rooms for faculty and staff.. Professor Patty Loew eagerly anticipates the availability of cable and satellite television for teaching documentary production. The trade off? Because of our growing field and family, faculty and staff offices will need to be far smaller. We deeply value our sense of

community. Now, that is going to be put to the test as we work physically more closely together, and not just intellectually adjacent! For those of you who are as strongly attached to the Ag Journalism building as we are, please consider visiting us during 2007, when we will be delighted to show you both homes, the "old" and the "new."

Jacque

Professor and Chair
Jacqueline Hitchon McSweeney

Communicating Overseas

By Tara Tierney
LSC Senior

What do you think of when you hear the word scientist?

"White...old...male...lab coats..."

These descriptions are all too familiar to Laurel Norris, and this summer she had the opportunity to broaden those raw perspectives - in South Africa.

"I started each class by asking the students what they thought of when they heard the word scientist," explained Norris.

"Since the media have a strong influence, I asked them to think about scientists they saw on TV and in magazines. It was my goal to deconstruct the myth that all scientists are white men in lab coats and I wanted the students to know they can be scientists too," she



Laurel Norris
- Extracting wheat germ DNA

said. Norris, a Life Sciences Communication graduate student, traveled to Cape Town to teach biotechnology to high school students and teachers, and to observe the different classroom conditions.

Despite the 1994 termination of the apartheid rule, many of the inequalities created and maintained by the former government are still prevalent in South Africa. "Since the end of legalized racial divides, a lot of improvements have been made, but there still are a lot of differences in the schools and the education that kids are getting," she said. In white schools you could tell there was a lot more money," Norris explains, "The quality of the buildings, the sports fields, and the classrooms themselves made it obvious."

In spite of the economic disparities that were evident to Norris among schools, they seemed to possess one commonality: "The students there are used to the teachers lecturing. The biggest challenge was



South African Students
learning about DNA

getting students to talk to me." Norris' lesson plans were consistent with a very different communication strategy from the norm in the classrooms she visited. She focused on "helping students find the answer, instead of just giving them the answer," she said. Her lesson plans were very interactive and hands on. "I taught the students how to extract DNA from wheat germ, reviewed genetically modified foods, and led discussions about the ethics of genetic modification and stem cell use." This opportunity was created for Norris as part of her role in an ongoing relationship between the University of Wisconsin, the University of the Western Cape, and The Western Cape Education Department. This

collaboration, along with the Medical Genetics Department on campus and South African faculty here at the University of Wisconsin, helped organize and fund the initiative. While in Cape Town, Norris lived with friends she met through the Madison teacher enhancement program and taught at six different schools. Norris said she thoroughly enjoyed her experience in Cape Town. In fact, she recently applied for a Fulbright grant that would allow her to return to South Africa on a photojournalism project. The project would be an opportunity for Norris to profile the African scientist. "It would be a series of pictures and interviews that show who the African scientist is - both in the Western sense and in the indigenous sense," she said.

I taught the students how to extract DNA from wheat germ, reviewed genetically modified foods and led discussions about the ethics of genetic modification and stem cell use.

Laurel Norris
LSC Graduate Student



By Jodi Minzlaff
LSC Graduate Student

Professor and Graduate Studies Chair Dietram Scheufele received the 2006 Vilas Associate Award for his proposed research on how the public integrates interpersonal communication of scientific issues with information received via the media. The Vilas Associate Award recognizes excellence

in research and offers flexible financial support to its recipients. Every department on campus is able to nominate one person for the award each year. Scheufele, flattered by the nomination, said "it was especially important to me since my LSC colleagues nominated me for the award during my first year in the department." Scheufele's proposed research explores the processes by which public understanding

Scheufele's First Year in LSC Yields Award

of science is enhanced by discussion -- and merely the anticipation of discussion. If members of the public simply envisage sharing information and opinions, it appears that they may pay better attention to media messages. In particular, he will be studying online public meetings and forums, two of the most common forms of public engagement.

Scheufele's particular interest is public opinion of nanotechnology and he is concerned that nanotechnology forums will widen the knowledge gap. "What we are finding is the information rich get richer and the information poor get poorer. It is my goal to try and find out how these forums work and how they

can potentially have beneficial effects on a broader public," he said.

Scheufele will conduct the research over a two-year period while mentoring graduate students with similar interests.

"The nature of science is changing and LSC has a crucial role to play in that change. This award allows me to do certain types of research that I would not have been able to do otherwise," Scheufele said.

“It was especially important to me since my LSC colleagues nominated me for the award during my first year in the department.”

Dietram Scheufele
LSC Professor

LSC's Giroux Leads UW's Communications

By Peggy Dierickx
LSC Senior

The UW System's recent appointment as executive director of communications and external relations is LSC's David Giroux. Among a long list of experiences and accomplishments is a Master of Science degree in Family and Consumer Journalism, the joint program that LSC runs with the School of Human Ecology. Giroux said the coursework helped him devise ways to bridge the gap between the research process and the beneficiaries of scientific advancements. "We've got to learn to explain what we do to a non-scientific audience in a way that is sensible and compelling." Giroux officially stepped up to the challenge of this system-wide position as of November 20, 2006. The creation of the post was part of an effort by President Kevin

Reilly to reposition the UW System to be more effective with regard to public relations and lobbying efforts at the state Capital. Prior to this appointment, Giroux served as the UW-Extension's director of public information. He also has an extensive background in the for-profit and non-for-profit sectors that includes media-related, public relations and management positions at Alliant Energy Corporation and the American Red Cross. As he takes on the challenge of communicating the university's mission to diverse publics, Giroux credits his experience in LSC as helping him prepare him for the job. While earning his master's, he said "I focused on science communication and how science is communicated from the University to media. I took the theory that I learned in UW coursework, along with my public relations experience and developed a training program to help scientists work

more effectively with journalists." Looking back, he appreciates the first-class advising he received. Giroux said, "I'm struck by the character of our faculty -- mass communications scholars who are second to none, who focus on things that have a real impact on Wisconsin." This attribute is especially important as Giroux predicts, "We are going to need highly specialized communicators who will be great assets for communicating science to the public." In his new role, Giroux is set to put his education to work for the betterment of the state of Wisconsin and its people. "The entire UW System is a research enterprise. There's research at all 26 UW campuses and 72 extension offices that takes on many forms - biotechnology, arts, humanities and more. Good, applied research is felt in homes, factories, living rooms and communities." he said, pointing out that the UW



is a "big part of the state's economic engine" and it must "transfer technology into the private sector to create economic growth." "LSC grads are prepared to take on new challenges and the communication needs of a changing world," Giroux said. In a knowledge-based economy, our public university will prepare people in many increasingly specialized fields, to help our state not only survive, but thrive.

“LSC grads are prepared to take on new challenges and the communication needs of a changing world.”

David Giroux
UW Executive Director of Communications & External Relations

I hear, and I forget. I see, and I remember. I do, and I understand.

- Confucius

By Pamela Nevar
LSC Graduate Student

Yogi Berra once said "You can observe a lot by just looking around," but what he should have added is that learning takes practice. UW-Madison

students benefit from a great education exemplified by passionate professional teaching, an abundance of libraries, and more technology than we can ever make use of --- but nothing compares to learning through hands-on experience. It is from this

philosophy that the Life Sciences Communication (LSC) Department's Bio-Talk Research Group (BTRG) evolved.

The BTRG, as it is known by its members, first met in the fall of 2005 with the ambitious goal, as Assistant Professor Hernando Rojas describes, "To provide opportunities for LSC grad students to conduct top-quality research in collaboration with faculty members." Rojas and fellow LSC Assistant Professor Xiaoli Nan serve as leaders and expert guides for the group as it progresses from conception to completion of research within the communication field.

Rojas explained his and Professor Nan's motivation for forming the group and said, "Xiaoli and I, being right out of grad school, really appreciated the research opportunities in our own programs and



Jodi Minzlaff, Hernando Rojas and Pam Nevar
- Discussing the BTRG's recent experiment on framing

wanted to provide an exemplary experience for LSC students."

According to Rojas and Nan, the basic principles of the BTRG include collaborative research between students and faculty, horizontal interactive structure, "brain" and "sweat" equity as the most important sources of energy and creativity for the group, and learning through practice. Nan and Rojas's interests range from persuasion due to exposure to marketing and entertainment communication to how mass media and politi-

methodology [because] you actually get to do what you're hoping to do in the future."

Currently, the group has around 10 regular student members, but new graduate students interested in collaborative research are welcome and encouraged to join. The Department's Chair, Jacqueline Hitchon McSweeney and the Graduate Studies Director Dietram Scheufele, and several other faculty members occasionally join the group discussions and visibly support the group.

As Binder said, "The col-

effects of a PSA produced by the One campaign about poverty which the group edited so that the message was framed in terms of either gains or losses.

One of the first challenges was to identify a topic of importance with scientific and health implications that everyone felt passionately about. Poverty emerged in discussion as the right kind of topic and it lent itself to framing.

The group distilled the experiment and results into two papers submitted and accepted to the Midwest Association for Public Opinion Research (MAPOR). The students then presented their research findings at the Mapor conference in Chicago on November 17. For several members this was their first communication conference - but they quickly decided that it would not be their last.

The group has already refined and extended its analysis of the data and submitted subsequent papers to the International Communication Association (ICA) meeting to be held in San Francisco in 2007.

Rojas noted that he and professor Nan, "feel that this group will enhance the research orientation of our students, stimulating an environment of productive creativity that will ultimate benefit all involved. We are sure that we will learn from our students as much as they learn from us." Adding, "We hope that this group consolidates and is strengthened by incoming students every year, resulting in its being nationally recognized as a leader in life sciences communication research."



Andrew Binder
- Presenting experimental results

cal conversations jointly shape attitudes and behaviors.

Andrew Binder, a relatively new grad student in the department joined the BTRG because, "it offers a tremendous opportunity for graduate students like me who are new to the communication field. I've always learned better in a hands-on way, and working side-by-side with faculty and advanced grad students on survey construction, data analysis, and other basics of research has allowed me to really dive in and participate. Being involved in a research group is so much better than just reading about theory or

laborative process for conducting research is another aspect of this group I appreciate. A lot of academic life is based on collaboration - taking advantage of colleagues' strengths to make up for your weaknesses - and so everyone has something to bring to the table, even if they're just starting graduate studies.

Mentoring is a big part of that, too, which is made easier through regular weekly meetings as well as discussion outside of the group context."

The group's first project involved an experimental design embedded in an online survey that compared the

“Being involved in a research group is so much better than just reading about theory or methodology because you actually get to do what you're hoping to do in the future.”

Andrew Binder
LSC Graduate Student

“We hope that this group consolidates and is strengthened by incoming students every year, resulting in its being nationally recognized as a leader in life sciences communication research.”

Hernando Rojas
LSC Assistant Professor

The **LifeSciencesCommunicator**, a biannual alumni newsletter of the Department of Life Sciences Communication at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, would like to recognize the following contributors:

Editor - Jodi Minzlaff, Graduate Student

Assistant Editor - Jacqueline Hitchon, Professor & Department Chair