

## Dean's comments

Most of us at the College of Biological Sciences learned biology the old-fashioned way: we earned the right to take the fun stuff by fulfilling sometimes dry and tedious prerequisites.

If you happened to read the Aug. 31 issue of *Science*, you may know there's a new approach that's gaining popularity at colleges and universities around the United States. Called active learning, it allows students to jump right into science, learning the basics as they address "big" questions through hands-on projects.

The series of articles, called Trends in Undergraduate Science Education, sparked a lively discussion at a recent retreat for the College's department heads and directors. The purpose of the retreat was to talk about how the dean's office can better serve the needs of students and faculty. The discussion focused on how to best structure the two associate dean positions. We compared our current structure with models at other universities. For instance, the University of Washington School of Engineering now has an associate dean for new initiatives and one for infrastructure. The *Science* articles provided some inspiration about what shape our position might take.

Our reflex is to teach the way we were taught, assuming that a firm foundation in math, chemistry, and physics is the best way to learn biology. But clearly we need to make a transition from emphasizing facts to emphasizing concepts. And as the *Science* articles pointed out, it might make more sense for students to acquire at least some prerequisites by going right to the subject of interest.

An example, recently proposed by Jon Ross, would be to ask students to compare the genomes of sunfish on different sides of the Itasca watershed. Isolated since the ice age, these sunfish haven't interbred for 10,000 years. Imagine the amazing things students could learn from answering that one question - enough to fill several textbooks.

By the end of the retreat, we all agreed that we need to launch a national search for an associate dean who can help us strengthen our undergraduate program and address important educational issues. I anticipate forming a search committee and announcing the position within the next several days.

I urge all of you to read these articles online at [www.sciencemag.org](http://www.sciencemag.org) and join in the discussion that began at the retreat. I'd especially like to call your attention to "Undergraduate Research, Graduate Mentoring, and the University's Mission," by Cristina Gonzalez.

As Norman Fortenberry, NSF director for undergraduate education, said in the introduction to the series, "The key lever for change is the faculty." I welcome your comments.

Bob Elde

## College and University news

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### **CBS Homecoming Picnic**

Defend your department in the tug-of-war! Schmooze with your colleagues while touring Biodale! Warm-up at the raging bonfire with the rest of the University! The CBS Homecoming Picnic will be held Friday, October 19 on the front lawn of Snyder Hall. Tours of Biodale will begin at 4 p.m.; tug-of-war at 4:45 p.m.; food will be served beginning at 5:15 p.m.; and the bonfire begins at 7 p.m. Other activities include a hayride around the St. Paul campus, a visit from the U of M Marching Band, a Biology Quiz, face painting, games and drawings for door prizes. Meal tickets are available in 123 Snyder Hall until Friday, October 12 (\$10 for adults, \$8 for children, special CBS student price of \$5). Not hungry? Please join in the festivities anyway - activities are FREE! This event is hosted by the Biological Sciences Alumni Society and CBS. For further information contact Paul Germscheid at pgermsch@cbs.umn.edu or 624-3752.

**Tickets for the Homecoming football game** against Michigan State are still available. Call Nan at 624-4770.

**Claudia Schmidt-Dannert**, BMBB, is the recipient of a 2001 David and Lucile Packard Fellowship for Science and Engineering. This highly selective program was established in 1988 to allow the nation's most promising young university professors to pursue science and engineering research with few funding restrictions and limited paperwork. Ivan Marusic, assistant professor of aerospace engineering and mechanics, also received an award. The Packard Foundation invites the presidents of 50 universities to nominate two young professors for the awards. Nominations are reviewed by a panel of distinguished scientists who recommend 24 fellows to receive individual grants of \$625,000 over five years. The foundation was created by David Packard, co-founder of Hewlett-Packard, and his wife, Lucile Salter Packard, in 1964.

**Julie Etterson**, former CBS graduate student, published a study in the October 5 issue of *Science* showing that the partridge pea, a common prairie plant, will be threatened if Minnesota's climate becomes drier and warmer over the next 25 to 35 years as predicted. Etterson, now at the University of Virginia, was a graduate student under **Ruth Shaw**, EEB, when she conducted the study, which Shaw co-authored. Etterson said the findings suggest plant populations may not evolve quickly enough to keep up with climate changes, and that alternative management strategies may be needed. The story was carried by the *Star Tribune*.

**Total giving to Campaign Minnesota through August 2001 is \$1.18 billion.** This is 91 percent of the total goal of \$1.3 billion. The total raised for endowment is \$523 million, or 97 percent of the endowment goal of \$540 million; the total raised for ongoing program support is

\$656 million, or 86 percent of the total goal of \$760 million. Total gift amount through August for this fiscal year is \$27 million. This compares with \$25 million for the same time last year and includes new gifts and future commitments to all U of M campuses, colleges, programs, and Minnesota Medical Foundation. For more information go to [www.campaign.umn.edu](http://www.campaign.umn.edu).

**"Get Hooked on Giving,"** the U of M's 2001 Community Fund Drive, is underway. All CBS employees should have received information and pledge forms. For more information, contact Leah Clark at [leah@cbs.umn.edu](mailto:leah@cbs.umn.edu) or 624-9717.

**People in small CBS labs on the St. Paul campus** who have had difficulty getting their hazardous waste picked up may now bring it to 135A BioSci and give it to any CBS teaching lab staff member (e.g. room 121 BioSci, or 198 BioSci). The waste must be packaged, sealed, and labeled with a waste manifest form. If the waste is liquid, please bring an additional container. If labeled, these containers will be returned. This service can only be offered to small labs because of limited space.

**The Department of Environmental Health and Safety's Laboratory Employee Training** has been CHANGED from November 15 to November 13 in Seminar Room 280, Veterinary Diagnostics Laboratory building, St. Paul Campus. For more information and other training times, go to [www.dehs.umn.edu/training/labtraining.html](http://www.dehs.umn.edu/training/labtraining.html).

**The Fall 2001 Teaching Enrichment Series** workshops address topics of interest to a range of teachers, from new instructors to experienced teachers across the campus. For descriptions of the workshops and to register, go to [www1.umn.edu/ohr/teachlearn/fallworkshops](http://www1.umn.edu/ohr/teachlearn/fallworkshops).

### **Kudos**

**Neil Olszewski**, Plant Biology, has been awarded \$390,000 from the National Science Foundation for "Function of the SPY-OGlcNAc Transferase in Gibberellin Signal Transduction."

**Kate VandenBosch**, Plant Biology, received an award of \$131,000 from the U.S. Department of Energy for "Mutants of the Legume *Medicago truncatula* Defective in Root Hair Development and Nodulation."

**Karen Oberhauser**, EEB, has received an award of \$10,032 from the University of Kansas for "Monarch Population Dynamics Meeting and Data Synthesis."

**Kathie Peterson**, director of Student Services, will receive the National Academic Advising Association's Outstanding Advising Award on Saturday, October 13. The *Star Tribune* featured a brief story on Kathie and her award on Monday, October 8.

## Events, seminars, and conferences

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- October 17 Mary Lynn Cowan Seminar in Science Education, "Bt Corn, Monarchs and Citizen Science: Involving Volunteers in Research and Public Policy," Karen Oberhauser, 335 Borlaug, 4 p.m. Refreshments in Ecology Building lobby at 3:30. Contact EEB at 625-5700 for further information. Complete EEB seminar list at [www.cbs.umn.edu/eeb/DeptSeminars0102.html](http://www.cbs.umn.edu/eeb/DeptSeminars0102.html).
- October 17-19 CBS Imaging Center workshop "Techniques in microwave specimen processing for light and electron microscopy," 35 Snyder Hall. Contact Mark Sanders at [msanders@biosci.umn.edu](mailto:msanders@biosci.umn.edu), 624-3454, or go to [www.cbs.umn.edu/ic/workshop](http://www.cbs.umn.edu/ic/workshop) for further information.
- October 19 CBS first annual Homecoming Picnic, 4 p.m., Snyder/Gortner entrance.
- October 22 "From the Andes to Bacterial Cell Biology: A Trip Through Time and Space," hosted by the Department of Microbiology, 12 p.m., Mayo Auditorium. A reception will follow. For more information contact Colleen O'Neill at [colleen@mail.ahc.umn.edu](mailto:colleen@mail.ahc.umn.edu).
- November 7 Writing-Intensive workshop luncheon, St. Paul Student Center, Minnesota Commons, 12-1:30p.m. Lunch provided for the first 35 people who register. RSVP to Terri Klegin at [klegin@umn.edu](mailto:klegin@umn.edu), 626-7579 by November 2.
- November 15 "Biotech to the Future: How Biotech Will Change our Lives," Hotel Sofitel, Bloomington, MNBIO: 651-265-7840 or MedicalSuds: 952-934-5424. Speakers from the U of M and biotech industry.

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Send your items for *CBS News* to Kristen Murphy, 220 BioSci, or [kmurphy@cbs.umn.edu](mailto:kmurphy@cbs.umn.edu).

Visit the CBS Web site at [www.cbs.umn.edu](http://www.cbs.umn.edu).

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