President engages faculty members in research dialogue

By Jeffrey Douglas

Proclaiming ideas “the raw material of the information economy,” President Charles Steger at Virginia Tech has been on the hunt for faculty members to present an E-Learning Design Award in an international competition organized by the Center for Research on Learning and the Online Academy at the University of Kansas.

From a plethora of nominations received for the E-Learning Design Award for exceptional content-rich and innovative online courses, 20 courses were isolated as finalists,” says Anne Daughtery of the Online Academy at the University of Kansas.

With collaboration, four courses were finally selected to receive the awards. In Virginia Tech’s case, it was a suite of three courses that had been taught over the past year in the on-line M.A. in Political Science Program (OLMA/PSCI) that the department entered in the competition as outstanding examples of E-learning innovation.

OLMA/PSCI developed out of the College of Arts and Sciences’ CyberSchool. The course uses the capabilities of VTOnline and the Internet, the political-sciences department offers an M.A. program to working professionals in the military, state governments, corporations, K-14 schools, and non-profit sectors. Instructional materials are designed to fit the international nature of the program, which has students working on diverse degrees in Bosnia, Albania, Japan, South Korea, Germany and Abu Dhabi as well as all across the United States, including Virginia.

Students have been able to conduct their studies online since Fall 1997. Courses include such topics as research methods, contemporary political theory, and post-industrial democracies. All the classes provide content generated by the faculty and innovative use of course material for distance learners.

Each time a course is taught, it is revised to improve content and to address problems encountered. The faculty has an extensive assessment regime to gather and analyze material relating to on-line education. One area in particular is assessment of the level of technology.

In a fall 1999 survey, Virginia Tech’s students with disabilities identified those professors they found to be supportive and sensitive to their needs. Those professors were recognized by the Office of the Dean of Students during a reception at the close of the academic year.

“Sometimes people don’t know the difference they make in the lives of our students. Treating them with respect can make a world of difference in how students perceive their experience on our campus. These faculty members, perhaps, didn’t do anything special for these students with disabilities.”

(See FACULTY on 4)

Governor Grants Additional Holiday

Governor James Gilmore has authorized additional holiday time for all state employees in celebration of Independence Day. State offices will be closed on Monday, July 3, and Tuesday, July 4.

President Charles Steger has confirmed that classes will be held on July 3, but that it will be a holiday for all university employees who are not required to support classes or other essential university services. Employees who are eligible to earn compensatory leave for holidays worked will be granted leave time on request at a later date.

Students select supportive faculty members

By Chen B. Cox

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First Bliznakov Award presented in Switzerland

By Joann Elliott

By unanimous decision, the International Archive of Women in Architecture (IAWA) Milka Bliznakov prize jury has voted to present the first Bliznakov prize to Claire Bonney, Ph.D., of Basel, Switzerland.

Nominated in honor of Milka Bliznakov, founder of the IAWA and professor of architecture at Virginia Tech, the prize was established in 1999 by the IAWA Board of Advisors with a cash award of $1,000. The board appoints the three-person jury for the prize.

In the first selection stage, applicants were asked to outline a program of work that they would undertake for the prize. Three applicants, including Bonney, Cordelia Moh, and Kwok Quanshan, submitted proposals that possessed unusual merit. All three were asked to continue work to be submitted for the prize. All three applicants completed and submitted their work.

Bonney’s prize-winning work will become part of the permanent collection of the IAWA, and it is expected that she will contribute additional material on Gorska as her research continues. As a part of the IAWA collection, Bonney’s work on Gorska is available to other interested students and scholars under special collections at Newman Library.

The intent of the prize is to see material already in the IAWA files used as the basis for additional research, or to identify work on women in architecture that can then be added to the IAWA collection. It is expected that the prize will be awarded annually.

(See M.A. PROGRAM on 4)

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
http://www.univie.at/spectrum/
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See page 3 for new-compensation-program information.

SPECTRUM
Women’s Center announces annual award winners

The Women’s Center at Virginia Tech has announced the recipients of its annual women of the year awards. Six women were recognized for their leadership in supporting the center’s mission: to promote a Virginia Tech community that is safe, equitable, and supportive for women and celebrates their experiences, achievements, and diversity.

The winners are Sandra Birch, Faculty Woman of the Year; Phyllis Testerman, Staff Woman of the Year; Tanja Oliver, Community Woman of the Year; Jill Porcelli, Megan Meconi, and Katherine Templin, all Student Activists of the Year.

Birch has been working with the Department of Computer Science since 1985. Ten years ago, Birch organized the Association for Women in Computing, which is dedicated to providing a stronger sense of community for women in the department. This coalition has developed many projects for girls in elementary through high school.

Testerman is the crime-prevention coordinator for the Virginia Tech Police Department. Testerman is the victim witness coordinator, a member of the Sensitive Crime Unit, a member of the Women’s Center Advisory Committee, and serves on the Sexual Assault Task Force.

Oliver is the gifted coordinator for Blackburg schools.

Porcelli is a senior majoring in animal physiology. She has worked with the Women’s Studies Program, the Women’s Center, and the Women’s Resource Center in Radford. At the Women’s Center she serves as a team leader for the receptionist team. Porcelli is working as the leadership education for adolescents coordinator, bringing together middle-school girls with university women to recognize and share leadership skills.

Mecioni is a senior majoring in engineering. She has worked closely with Womanspace, the Women’s Undergraduate Network. She serves as the co-president and treasurer and was also the senior chair of the Take Back the Night committee. Mecioni is also a mentor to undergraduate women through the Office of Minority Engineering Programs.

Templin, a senior majoring in traditional math, also works closely with Womanspace where she serves as the co-president. She has been the volunteer coordinator for the Clothesline Project Workshops and Displays for the past two years. She has also been a member of the annual Women Run Down Violence planning committee for the last three years. She is one of the few student representatives on the Women’s Center Advisory Committee.

The next call for nominations will begin in February, 2001.

Women’s leadership program discusses empowerment

By Joan Elliott

In a gathering that mixed traditional lines of power, women administrators, faculty and staff members met at Donaldson Brown Hotel and Conference Center to discuss leadership in a summer workshop sponsored by the College of Human Resources and Education. The conference, entitled Women’s Web of Influence: Empowering Women Leaders as Faculty, Staff, and Administrators at Land/Grant Universities, was the second key event for the Women’s Leadership Initiative, which sponsored a forum called Glass Ceilings and Beyond earlier this spring.

The conference participants, who were selected by their deans, represented every college at Virginia Tech with delegates also in attendance from Virginia State University. Coordinated by Caroline Allen, a professor in human development, the two-day program featured prominent Peggy Mezzmo, Dean Janet Johnson and Kamus Singh from educational leadership and policy studies as guest speakers. The 38 participants also collectively shared their experiences and thoughts on leadership.

The workshop’s objectives included developing personal, interpersonal, and professional competencies; fostering productive working relationships among women of diverse backgrounds; enhancing understanding of women’s multiple roles in higher education and promoting constructive support systems among women. Noting that there are many styles of leadership, Allen said, “Our aim was to feature the talents of women in the College of Human Resources and Education. Our world view emphasizes the connections across the life course and among individuals, families, and communities. We place a premium on integrating the personal and professional, emotional and intellectual, and physical and spiritual.”

University Club celebrates 70 years

By David Nemes

The University Club is celebrating its 70th year of service to the university community. The club was built as a place for faculty and staff members to socialize and to provide living accommodations for the then-single-male faculty members. The club is located next to the Donaldson Brown Hotel and Conference Center.

This year, the University Club is celebrating with art and historic exhibits, performing artists, receptions, socials, brunches, and seasonal dinner dances.

University Club members, in addition to being invited to the above events, receive parking lot stickers for the adjacent lot, the ability to reserve University Club facilities for weddings, receptions, and faculty retreats. They also have reciprocal membership with the Association of University Clubs throughout the United States and Canada.

Officers for 2000 are Buddy Russell, president; Rosemary Goss, vice president; Dixon Hanna, treasurer, and Kitty Jensen, secretary. Board members are Donald Drapeau, Patsy Hosner, John Brown, Nancy Burke, and Bud Devens. Committee chairs are: facilities, Geza Hanna; membership, Franklin Moore; social, Jane Harrison; and visiting artists, Don Drapeau. Club manager is Leslie Whiting who may be called for information Monday through Friday between 8:30 a.m. and noon at 1-3801.
Compensation Plan Questions Answered

1. Who is covered?

2. What will the new plan be implemented?

3. Since the existing pay-for-performance plan (EIPP) was funded poorly, should we expect anything different with the new plan?

Compensation plan questions answered will provide the Governor and the General Assembly with more flexibilities in funding in order to be based on the revenues available each year. This is because the problem that limited the number on employees who could receive certain levels of increases was fixed.

4. Under the new system it looks like I have fewer opportunities for advancement because the ladder now has only nine rungs (pay bands) rather than the 23 pay grades in the current system. Is this true?

No, but increases will occur in different ways. In the new plan, the current system, employees could advance only by competitively applying for advertised promotions, or by seeing their positions re-allocated because of significant changes in job responsibilities. In the new plan, these will still occur, but pay increases will also be broader, an employee may receive an increase based on the revenues available each year.

Define the new plan and the current system. In the new plan, the current system, employees could advance only by competitively applying for advertised promotions, or by seeing their positions re-allocated because of significant changes in job responsibilities. In the new plan, the current system, employees could advance only by competitively applying for advertised promotions, or by seeing their positions re-allocated because of significant changes in job responsibilities. In the new plan, these will still occur, but pay increases will also be broader, an employee may receive an increase based on the revenues available each year.
Claus gets innovative-technology award

Nano-structured materials— In the form of an alloy such as a metal or ceramic— "are made of the same atom in its more common forms, but the atoms are arranged in nano-meter-size clusters which become the building blocks of the new materials," according to Richard Siegel, a materials engineer at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute who pioneered these substances in 1985. These new small particles "have remarkable electronic, optical, mechanical and other properties in comparison to larger bulk materials of the same molecular composition," Claus said.

But trick is in being able to collect very large numbers of the nano-clusters and then be able to form them into larger physical systems, with control at the molecular level.

"The idea is that we are making things from the ground up, not the top down. As we build up from the molecular level, we can make things that are smaller, cheaper, and with multiple functions."