Keeping Our Promise

The Provost, Dr. James South, held a meeting of the Academic Council on 21 July. Attending were chairs, associate deans, deans, and directors of academic support offices such as the library and distance learning.

One of the subjects discussed was our Quality Initiative Project (QIP) for the Higher Learning Commission, our accrediting agency. This project is entitled, “Three Pillars of Undergraduate Learning: Preparing Students for the 21st Century.” The three pillars are:
- deep learning of academic content
- demonstration of intellectual development and acquisition of professional skills.

The goal will be to apply these pillars to the GE Core Curriculum with the hope that they will be used in other courses as well.

This is where the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (formerly the Center for Distance and eLearning) comes in. The Center is in the process of hiring a Teaching and Learning Coordinator who will assist faculty in “exploring and evaluating new student-centered pedagogies, technologies, materials, and learning strategies for the advancement of student success and achievement.”

There are many high-impact practices available for use in the classroom. The challenge for faculty sometimes is to find one that would work in a particular situation, learn how to incorporate it, and then assess its effectiveness. The coordinator will be able to assist with that.

Our advertising slogan is “The focus is you.” It’s more than a slogan - it’s a promise. While we will be the ones integrating new strategies into our classes, the ultimate goal is to improve student learning, performance, and ultimately, retention.

Enjoy your break!

Pete Grant
Dean of Arts and Sciences

CAS News

Kristin Weylcoff (Language and Literature alumna) was named campus teacher of the year at Mustang North Middle School.

John Hayden (Social Sciences) took a course entitled “Latin Paleography, 800-1500” in the Rare Books School at The University of Virginia.

SWOSU has formed a Wellness Committee to help employees lead a healthy lifestyle. We want to offer programs such as seminars and exercise classes that are of interest to you. This fall you will receive a short survey from the Committee so we can start offering activities. Please take a few moments to complete the survey when it arrives in your email.

Three biology majors presented their research at the OU Health Science Center Research Symposium - Carissa Bi, Mason Howe and Forrest Clark.

Four degree programs will be preparing their five-year reviews this year: Art (BFA), Biology (BS), English (BA) and Natural Science Education (BSE).

Pete Grant (CAS Dean) served as a reviewer for the Oklahoma Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy: A Strategic Conservation Plan for Oklahoma’s Rare and Declining Wildlife.

Mathematics News

Tyler Gorshing recently had his undergraduate research published. The title of his paper is “On the Center of Non-Relativistic Lie Algebra.” Guy Bryorgan was Tyler’s mentor on this research project.

Michael Dougherty (Chair) participated in a meeting at the Oklahoma State Department of Education, along with other members of the Oklahoma Council of Teachers of Mathematics, to review and suggest changes to the second draft of the new Oklahoma Math Standards. Mike was invited to bring a higher education mathematics perspective.

Mike was also interviewed at that meeting by Levi Patrick, the SDE Director Secondary Mathematics Education, for his weekly podcast.

Kathleen O’Neal was instrumental in handling much of the paperwork for the KESAM mathematics enhancement camp for teachers this summer.

Tom McNamara taught in the Summer Math and Science Academy and the KESAM Mathematics Camp for teachers this summer.

Funding Success

Two faculty received funding to conduct undergraduate summer research programs: Andrea Holgado (Biological Sciences) and Tim Huhin (Chemistry and Physics). Funds were provided by the National Institutes of Health through the University of Oklahoma Health Science Center.

Three faculty received financial assistance from the Office of Sponsored Programs to attend professional meetings: Tushia Seven (Language and Literature), Shelley Martinson (Music) and Andrea Holgado (Biological Sciences).
Biologists Attend Gulf Coast Summer Institute

Andrea Holgado and Rickey Cotran (Biological Sciences) recently attended the National Academy’s Gulf Coast Summer Institute (GCSI) at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge. The GCSI is one of six regional Summer Institutes on Undergraduate Education funded by the Howard Hughes Medical Institute. The Summer Institutes are designed to transform undergraduate science education using a method of course design that provides students with conceptual knowledge that “sticks” while playing to the strengths of university science educators.

During the five-day workshop, presenters and participants worked together to develop innovative instructional materials that incorporate current research and active learning, employ continuous assessment of student performance and instruction, and embraces diversity to provide an inclusive learning environment. Using knowledge attained during the workshop, participants worked in small groups to produce teachable units. These teachable units are available to all participants for use in their classrooms and can be shared with colleagues. Each teachable unit is designed to engage students and enrich their learning experience.

This year’s GCSI included 30 participants from 15 institutions in 8 states, 1 US territory, and 2 countries. Since 2004, the institute has reached over 1000 participants from colleges and university across the world. Andrea and Rickey are now recognized by the National Academies— which includes the National Academy of Sciences, National Academy of Engineering, and Institute of Medicine— as National Academies Education Fellows in the Sciences.

Seventeen students, who have been admitted to the first Honors Program at SWOSU, participated in a Summer Bridge Program. This program introduced students to college life. The photos was taken at the Stafford Pond and Space Museum in Weatherford.

Summer Undergraduate Experiences for Biology Students

Nine biology students conducted research or professional shadowing experiences this summer thanks to scholarships received by the students.

The students are Aaron Bushong, Shawnee; Forrest Clark, Weatherford; Jake Gregston, Duncan; Angie Hoover, Edmond; Jay Stinson, Weatherford; and Canisia Tatah, Oklahoma City (Capitol Hill).

Bushong attended the Mission to Planet Earth summer institute hosted by the Oklahoma Space Grant Consortium. Bushong is seeking a natural science education degree and plans to incorporate his reports on hands-on science, technology, engineering and math curriculum.

Clark conducted research through the SWOSU Department of Biological Sciences and Oklahoma IDEA Network of Biomedical Research Excellence (OK-INBRE) under the mentorship of Dr. Andrea Holgado (SWOSU Biology). Clark worked on a project titled “Analysis of Apoptosis in Prostate Cancer” this summer internship is awarded through a grant from the National Institutes of Health.

Gregston performed research at the Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation as part of the Fleming Scholar Program. Gregston worked under the mentorship of Dr. Holgado Van Rommen on a project titled “The Misshandled Underserved Population in an ALS Mouse Model.” The Fleming Scholar Program was founded in 1956 as a way to give Oklahoma’s high school and college students “hands-on” biomedical research experience.

Hoover completed her research at the Gulf Coast Research Laboratory (GCRL) at the University of Southern Mississippi. Hoover performed research under the mentorship of Dr. Richard Heard and studied marine invertebrates. Hoover has also been accepted at GCRL graduate program starting August 2015.

Howe conducted research through the Reynolds Oklahoma Center on Aging and Oklahoma IDEA Network of Biomedical Research Excellence (OK-INBRE) under the mentorship of Dr. Ferenc Deak. Howe worked on a project titled “Creation of a DNA Construct for the Study of VAMP Transcriptional Regulation.” This internship was awarded through a grant from the National Institutes of Health.

Maddox was awarded a Carl Albert internship sponsored by the Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality. Maddox worked under the mentorship of Jayne Jones and his work on nitrate and his drinking water was performed at the State Environmental Laboratory Services.

Station performed her research experience thanks to a program called Bridge to Research in Marine Science at Savannah State University. She worked at the Skidaway Institute of Oceanography at the University of Georgia under the mentorship of Dr. Allen St Inlet and Dr. Leanne Powers and Clifton Bock. The title of her research was “Dissolved Organic Carbon and Iron Flocculation in Estuaries.”

Stinson was involved in the Patient Care Assistant Program organized by St. Anthony Hospital. This program—led by Lisa Lewis, director of the Physician Development Unit at St. Anthony Hospital—allowed Stinson shadow professionals in Radiation Oncology, Nephrology, Emergency Care, Surgery, Behavioral Medicine and other areas.

Tatah conducted research as a fellow at the Summer Undergraduate Research Experience (SURE) at the University of Oklahoma Health Science Center Tatah worked under the mentorship of Dr. Sargos, Radiocardiology and investigated a novel therapeutic strategy in Friedreich Ataxia. The SURE program was established in 1999 through the support of the provost and the graduate school of the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center.
Oklahoma LSAMP

The Oklahoma Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation (OK-LSAMP) is a consortium of Oklahoma colleges and universities working together to develop programs aimed at increasing the number of students from under-represented populations who receive degrees in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) disciplines. Current goals and activities of OK-LSAMP focus on undergraduate research experiences, graduate school preparation, and international experiences (http://www.ok-lsamp.okstate.edu/). OK-LSAMP is funded by the National Science Foundation.

The recent issue of the OK-LSAMP newsletter reported on the accomplishments of current and former SWOSU students who were participants in this program: Alfa Abame, Megan Ayala, Dustin Davilla, Courtney Garcia, Michael-Joseph Gorbet, Ashley Rodriguez, Cammi Valdez and Ashlie Walker.

Tim Hubin (Chemistry and Physics) is our campus representative for OK-LSAMP.

Southwestern Oklahoma State University teamed up with Oklahoma Study Abroad to provide students with the opportunity to spend two weeks immersed in Irish history and culture this summer. Amanda Smith, assistant professor in the Department of Language and Literature, and Christian Alyea, Oklahoma Study Abroad coordinator, ensured that the trip was educational, fun, and affordable for everyone who participated (July 16-29, $2700 airfare and lodging included).

Professional tour guides led travelers on extensive walking tours through Dublin, Howth, Glendalough, Kilkenny, Cork, Killarney, Blarney, and Galway. The guides brought Irish history to life by pointing out key landmarks from Druid, Viking, and Norman ruins to medieval castles to 18th-19th century cathedrals and modern buildings that played key roles in the 1916 uprising and Ireland’s fight for independence. Students also toured Trinity College to get a sense of Ireland’s educational history and learned about the impact of literary figures such as James Joyce, William Butler Yeats, and Oscar Wilde on Ireland’s cultural revival.

In addition to the historical and cultural activities, travelers also experienced Ireland’s vast countryside and natural wonders such as the Wicklow Mountains, the Cliffs of Moher, and the Aran Islands while learning about the deeply-rooted mythology connected to these places. Our Study Abroad program includes some of the best-known sites in Ireland, but it also takes students off the beaten path and encourages them to truly interact with the locals and experience the culture.

In addition to instilling a deeper appreciation for the history, politics, art, and literature of the specific country, we provide students with the skills and confidence necessary to continue traveling and exploring other cultures. Study Abroad encourages students to think globally and to consider themselves citizens of the world. We look forward to upcoming trips to London (Spring Break) and Costa Rica (Summer 2016)!

In his book "Idol," Christopher Burke writes about his experience studying in Ireland and the influence it had on him. He says, "I have never heard Dante rhymed quite like that with ricochet before. Bravo Professor Firenze, you have moved our hearts!" (https://christopherburkecolombia.files.wordpress.com/2015/01/idol_jan2015.png)