A guy named JOE

talks about math, history and WIU

ALSO

• African American Studies 50 years after the Montgomery Bus Boycott

• A writer's trek from studying Spanish to publishing poetry

Plus -- CSI: Macomb, WIU's Quad Cities campus and Jai Lee: "The journalist who came in from the cold"
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David Hein is shown at a Courier computer in the mid-90s. Inset: the WIU grad these days

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Fall 05

WESTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

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Western's CAS is made up of 15 departments whose disciplines span the areas of the social sciences, the humanities, mathematics and the natural sciences: African American Studies, Biological Sciences, Chemistry, English and Journalism, Foreign Languages and Literatures, Geography, Geology, History, Mathematics, Philosophy and Religious Studies, Physics, Political Science, Psychology, Sociology and Anthropology, and Women's Studies.

"FOCUS will inform college stakeholders about College of Arts and Sciences activities and encourage their involvement in the life of the college."
FROM THE DEAN

A group of very intense young men is loading a trebuchet with melons and milk jugs filled with water. These Western Illinois students are living through a time in medieval history. A small undergraduate research grant from the College of Arts and Sciences helped them build and assemble a functional, scale model of a trebuchet, a gravity-powered catapult used as a siege weapon in the Middle Ages.

To build, move and assemble its heavy parts, students need to work effectively as a group. The trebuchet in Macomb is not as effective as one may have thought: It is difficult to hit remote targets with the relatively light containers. So, what adjustments are needed to hit at a given distance?

Mathematical modeling of the physical process of "flinging" a jug or melon may save a lot of hard physical work and materials (the wooden parts of trebuchet quickly wear out). What does it take to assemble the weapon with very primitive tools? How do you figure out how to aim, what weight to use, what materials to use in the absence of web sites, data bases, or math experts?

The questions are not separate "humanities" or "science" or "mathematics" problems. Just like real life, undergraduate research projects often do not fit narrow disciplinary definitions.

Students involved in undergraduate research are better prepared for careers, or professional and graduate programs. Discovery-based learning experiences foster the development of well-organized, self-motivated, creative critical thinkers.

In a very general way, undergraduate research is work based on inquiry beyond class textbooks and well-defined homework assignments. It is a research, scholarly or creative project carried out by undergraduates under mentorship and often in close collaboration with faculty members, to advance the students' knowledge in the discipline, to provide new perceptions, and to expand the scope of knowledge in the field.

Learning to research a problem helps students to learn how to learn.

Many undergraduate research projects at WIU involve a partnership between students, faculty and members of the community. Our Western Survey Research Center involves graduate and undergraduate students in survey design, execution, data processing and analysis of results. Studentslearn first-hand about the challenges of conducting a meaningful, properly designed and administered survey. WIU undergraduates study environmentally important issues such as changes in ecological systems of the Mississippi River, lakes and wetland habitats in Western and Central Illinois. They develop methods to detect bacteria that can degrade the toxic pollutants in the environment and help farmers reduce pollution. Our undergraduate researchers conduct personal interviews and record the life stories of people in rural Illinois. If it were not for these students, many stories would have been lost forever; with this loss would come our diminished ability to understand our past.

It is our annual Undergraduate Research Day, and two very bright, well-organized psychology researchers tell about their study of issues related to divorce, parenting styles, and adjusting to college. Their focus is not on the immediate consequences of a divorce that have been well studied, but on long-term effects, if any. One focused, intense Women's Studies major tells about her study on evaluation of the effectiveness of an unusual prostitute rehabilitation program, helping prostitutes build lives away from the streets and drugs. She is very excited about the effectiveness of the program, as indicated by her preliminary data on life experiences, life styles, and needs of program participants. She hopes to use her study to better assist women involved in this program in the future. The 2005 Undergraduate Research Day showcased 60 poster and podium presentations by 82 CAS students. Our undergraduate researchers represented 11 of the 15 CAS departments, including African American Studies, Biology, Chemistry, English and Journalism, Geology, History, Mathematics, Physics, Psychology, Sociology and Anthropology, and Women's Studies.

These highly motivated students need some financial support: funds to build or buy equipment, software, materials, funds to travel to research and archival sites. The students need to be able to learn to present their results to their peers, so they need the funds for creating posters and traveling to conferences.

The College of Arts and Sciences at Western Illinois University is committed to the support and expansion of undergraduate research activities. A new undergraduate research grant program funded by the College provided support for 27 undergraduate research projects last year. We established a new scholarship fund, the "CAS Student/Faculty Research and Creative Activity Fund." It is a small fund to support student/faculty projects enhancing our region, and we appreciate your help in growing it. As the undergraduate research participation helps students develop and expand their problem solving, critical thinking, and organizational skills, the goal is to help every student engage in a meaningful undergraduate research project.

Alessa

Focus
Environmental Studies aims for area sustainability

By Mark Butzow

Western Illinois University’s commitment to environmental issues goes beyond the classroom or even generous fund raising for victims of hurricane disasters. This year, Western’s Institute for Environmental Studies (IES) was launched to promote environmental sustainability throughout the region.

Housed in the College of Arts and Sciences, the IES mandate is to reach beyond campus to other areas, according to Dr. William Doe, IES director.

“Addressing environmental concerns and solving environmental problems requires an interdisciplinary approach that draws from the physical sciences, but also social science and humanities perspectives,” Doe says. “The College of Arts and Sciences is uniquely positioned to do that.”

Rather than setting IES up in a single department, such as Biology or Geography, WIU has chosen a separate unit at the college level. Doe says that will allow IES to accomplish its three main purposes: to foster and develop an interdisciplinary curriculum; to export knowledge and expertise to private and government agencies outside the university; and to develop service opportunities, especially for students, that also benefit the community.

Doe wants more resources devoted to Western’s interdisciplinary minor in environmental studies, and he hopes to move toward offering other academic programs such as undergraduate and graduate certificates or a graduate degree.

He anticipates IES establishing better links with local, state and federal agencies - the state’s Department of Natural Resources and its Environmental Protection Agency, plus the Army Corps of Engineers - and with nonprofit, nongovernmental agencies such as the Nature Conservancy that are interested in enhancing environmental resources.

“A major focus will be on rural areas. We already have an outstanding reputation, thanks to IIRA (Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs) and its work on sustainable agriculture and wind energy,” Doe says. “The idea is to leverage the Western faculty’s expertise and also engage students in undergraduate research to help solve some of these environmental concerns.”

Doe says the complexity of the problems helps explain why an interdisciplinary approach makes sense. Attention is needed on erosion control, energy use, land management, and pollution control — especially relating to clean air and water.

The work of IES “will broaden Western’s visibility and contribution in solving these,” Doe says. And the solutions aren’t always technological, he adds.

“We can’t tell people to shut down the economic engine for the region, change their occupations, stop driving cars,” he says.

Instead, experts from the social sciences and the humanities can and will address the social, economic and political components of the issues.

Doe’s hope is that approach may help change social and cultural norms or, put another way, increase the “environmental literacy” for the local community and the area.

Doe says he was a military brat and then a career military officer, so he’s lived in about 20 places, ranging from Europe and the Deep South to the California coast and Rocky Mountains. And he’s visited the western Illinois area frequently for about 25 years because his wife hails from the Galesburg area.

His career preparation for this new position includes handling flood control projects and reservoir operations for the Army Corps of Engineers; teaching geography at West Point; earning a doctorate in water resources management at Colorado State; and managing forestry, water resources and biology research scientists involved in land management and conservation issues.

Mark Butzow is an Assistant Professor of Journalism at Western.
First-year approach comforts, challenges freshmen

By Rebecca Jania

The best-selling Fast Food Nation, field trips to movies and public lectures, and work on service learning projects are parts of a new approach to starting Western Illinois University. It's a package of services, mentoring and student-life programming dubbed the First Year Experience (FYE).

The beginning months of a student's move to college can be key to success, and more than 2,000 WIU freshmen are taking part in FYE. Organized to help freshmen adjust to campus life by providing help to develop academic skills and resources, gain leadership skills, and build healthy relationships with peers, FYE offers benefits similar to those of a small liberal arts college, like smaller classes and closer contact with professors.

"I hope that our freshmen will develop a strong connection to WIU through meeting faculty and fellow students in their small classes and freshman-only residence halls," says Judy Dallinger, Assistant Provost for Undergraduate Studies. "Beyond that initial goal, I hope that the FYE program will help them to see the integration between academic and co-curricular experiences, and will help them develop the skills they need to be successful.

"Unlike other schools, Western will be executing the FYE in combination with the general education classes," she adds.

As part of the FYE program, first-year students take one FYE course each semester to become familiar with various aspects of campus community life. These courses require students to attend extracurricular activities such as concerts and art exhibits. Each FYE class also has an upperclassman student mentor to assist students in adjusting to campus life. The FYE also offers seminars for freshmen on study skills and healthy lifestyles.

"I have noted some very positive effects of FYE," said Assistant Professor Peter Cole, who teaches an FYE introductory course in the History Department. "The most obvious is that a much smaller class with first-year students exclusively has resulted in a much tighter bond formed among the students. A number of them get along well together and presumably those connections would be harder to engender in a class of 45 mixed-class students instead of under 20 first-year students.

"More, the discussions are much easier to get going because there are far fewer students and, perhaps, students are more comfortable," he adds.

About halfway through the Fall semester, Cole plans to connect course material with Fast Food Nation. Eric Schlosser's nonfiction look at the production and consumption of fast food was assigned as summer reading to introduce incoming freshmen to various topics to be incorporated into campus discussions.

Schlosser himself is scheduled to visit campus November 8 and 9 to discuss issues with freshmen and other members of the campus community.

Rebecca Jania is a senior from Chicago majoring in Recreation, Park, & Tourism Administration.

Chemistry answers call for forensics major

By Elizabeth Dietrich

When the number of WIU students with a minor in forensic sciences tripled in two years and many students polled voiced support for a new forensic major, the Chemistry Department and the College of Arts and Sciences acted.

Western undergrads may soon have the opportunity to become working members of crime scene investigation teams if a new forensic chemistry major goes into effect this spring.

At pretime, the proposal was a possible topic of discussion at the Illinois Board of Higher Education's October 18 meeting.

If the board doesn't approve the new major in October, the IBHE could still consider it in December, according to associate provost Barbara Baily, who added that the university recently answered IBHE questions about the forensic science program.

The IBHE staff could have more questions about the program or the major, or the proposal will be considered by the IBHE for approval, she says.

After the IBHE approves the program, students will be able to claim forensic science as a major, Baily adds.

Law enforcement and justice administration students seem excited about majoring in forensic science. Brad Vaughn, junior LEJA major, says it could be a real break for him.

"I am excited about the new program because it will give us a hands-on opportunity to experience what it is like to be in a C.S.I.," he says. "I think it is highly inspired by C.S.I. television shows. Not too many people even know about the job until those shows came along.”

Only two other universities in Illinois have similar degree programs, according to the IBHE: Lewis University and the University of Illinois at Chicago, and UIC’s is a graduate program. So some advocates are optimistic.

Chemistry professor Lisa Wen, assistant department chair, says the department is confident that the proposal meets all the requirements.

“We are hopeful that the carefully prepared proposal meets the entire criteria and clearly projects the need for establishing a forensic major and thus
By Bill Knight

(MOLINE) — A $16 million expansion at the Western Quad Cities Riverfront Campus was approved by WIU’s Board of Trustees in September, when the Arts and Sciences curriculum began to take additional steps to better serve the 1,200 students enrolled here.

The College of Arts and Sciences is in the process of developing several graduate and undergraduate offerings for the Quad Cities.

The Board of Trustees also increased funding for faculty and staff positions at the Quad Cities campus, which will also get additional support for building operations and maintenance.

The Riverfront Campus will be along the Mississippi River on 20 acres donated by Deere & Co. two years ago. The architectural concept has a curved, glass-enclosed, two-story student center at the north end of what used to be Deere’s Engineering Technical Center, which after construction will house 15 of classrooms, a computer lab, meeting rooms and offices.

Within the campus and curriculum, the arts and sciences are vital, says Elementary Education major Karen Anderson.

“My Education courses teach me how to teach,” she says, “but the Arts and Sciences courses teach me what to teach.”

Already, the nine Bachelor’s degrees offered at WIU-QC include the popular, self-directed Board of Trustees B.A., plus Master’s degrees in Biology and English.

At Western’s current building on a wooded 10-acre site near the intersection of John Deere Road and 60th Street in Moline, offerings this fall include Religion in America and several courses from the Sociology and Anthropology Department.

“Social work and Psychology courses are popular,” says Luis Moreno, Director of Student Services and Financial Aid at WIU-QC.

“There’s a growing demand for the Arts and Sciences, I think.

“Some of that might be because we’re starting to serve more traditional students from several ‘feeder schools’ within 50 miles or so,” Moreno continues. “— Blackhawk, Eastern Iowa, and Sauk Valley. The students here are very diverse. They’re traditional and non-traditional — students 24 and older, divorced adults returning to school or people unhappy with their jobs or ambitious people trying for a promotion.

“What’s nice is that, overall, they perform well in the classroom — maybe they’re paying their own way — and they’re dedicated,” Moreno says.

“There’s a lot of life-learning.”

Student Kelly Nelson agrees.

“I want to earn a degree,” she says, headed inside from the parking lot one weekday morning. “I’ve had a husband and kids and the timing is better now. It’s an opportunity.”

Anderson, her classmate, nods her head and adds, “I decided I want to make a difference in kids’ lives.”

Western’s Quad Cities campus could serve 3,000 to 5,000 students, WIU President Al Goldfarb has said.

Bill Knight is an Associate Professor of Journalism at Western and editor of Focus.
Research Days showcase undergrads

By Sara Blair

Last April, more than 100 Western Illinois University undergraduates joined forces with WIU faculty to showcase their creative and intellectual skills during the third annual Undergraduate Research Day.

"Research skills are so important," says Dr. Thomas Helm, Director of the Illinois Centennial Honors College, which launched Undergraduate Research Day in 2003. "They are convertible skills and can be used in so many ways, whether it is in your academic field or place of employment."

Undergraduate Research Day provides a public, university-wide forum to display ingenuity and scholarship by students of various academic disciplines. Any WIU undergraduate is able to participate by submitting either an "In-Progress Project/Paper" or a "Completed Project/Paper," Helm says. The research project can either be a product of one student or a collaborative effort by several students, and must have a faculty research mentor.

Last spring's Undergraduate Research Day — co-sponsored by the College of Arts and Sciences and other WIU colleges — included dozens of research projects and high student participation level, Helm says. "Many of the Research Day project presentations are very sophisticated, representing the cumulative work of two, three, or even four semesters," he adds, "but freshmen and sophomores are encouraged to submit projects as well."

"While these freshman and sophomore projects may be only tentative beginnings," he continues, "they are important first steps — establishing good research habits, clarifying possible research interests, and positioning the students for future research opportunities. But whether the research is the fruit of advanced investigation leading to a senior honors thesis or the tentative, exploratory study of a beginner, an hour or so spent visiting the displays or attending the podium sessions will be an hour well spent. Not only are the projects interesting; the presenters' enthusiasm, passion and sophistication about their research is impressive."

Originally, students only completed poster-performance projects for Undergraduate Research Day. Last year, however, opportunities to exhibit presentations from the podium or through performances were made available.

Helm says he was particularly pleased with the performance presentations, noting that students used different elements in their appearances to accentuate their projects.

This year's Undergraduate Research Day is scheduled for April 17, but the College of Arts and Sciences in September invited students to submit proposals for CAS Undergraduate Research and Scholarly Activity Grants, so students are preparing now.

Helm says last spring's participation was impressive. About 80 percent of the projects were from ten departments in the College of Arts and Sciences, including, from the History Dept., David Campbell's "Rural Exodus Project" and Dan Guinn's "Denise of the Black Panther Party."

Still, Helm says, there's always room for improvement, and he'd like to see the podium sessions used more and even more energy and support from participants and other students on campus — especially freshmen and sophomores.

"Research Day was established with two purposes in mind," Helm says. "The event underscores the importance our university places on mentored undergraduate research, and it affords our undergraduates a public forum for presenting their research. As a university-wide event, Research Day promotes a learning culture that fosters both mentoring and research. This has been good for all of our students."

"As a public research forum, Research Day makes the connection for our students between what they do in the lab or library and what is required when they are publicly accountable for their research and scholarship," he continues. "This is of course excellent preparation for the day when our students will be expected to make presentations to their academic, professional or business peers. I might say as well that Research Day can be important for those students who want to be competition for major national scholarships while they are here and for scholarships and fellowships if they go on for graduate school."

Sara Blair is a senior Journalism major from East Moline, Ill.

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Honor Roll

Chemistry Associate Professor Thottunkara K. Vinod was issued a patent for user- and eco-friendly hyper-valent iodine reagent and method of synthesis in August, when it was assigned to WIU. Vinod also won a $64,000 grant from the National Science Foundation for research.

English and Journalism Assistant Professor Therese Trotochaud for the second consecutive spring had a writing class of students collaborate with residents of Macomb's Wesley Village in interviews, writing and polishing family stories. The class, English 482/Life Writing, also gave a reading to the public, including subjects' families, and published a collection of the conversations.

The Mathematics Department hosted the 54th annual Illinois Council of Teachers of mathematics Western Regional Conference.

Physics Dept. Chair Vivian Incera and Professor Efraim J. Ferrer co-authored a paper with a colleague from CSIC-University of Valencia, Spain. This is a study of magnetic fields and superconductivity, scheduled to be published in the October issue of Physical Review Letters.

Drs. William R. Faulkner and Richard A. Mathers, from the Sociology and Anthropology Dept., received a $256,108 grant from the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services for "Test Construction, Delivery, Scoring and Evaluation, FY06."

Daniel Ryan Davis, a Western Illinois University senior with a double major in African American Studies and Sociology, was among a select group of students nationwide chosen to participate in the 2005 Summer Research Opportunities Program (SROP) at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.


Drs. Paula Wise, Ruth Kelly, and Tracy Cruise, from Western's School
Speakers Bureau coming from CAS

By Bill Knight

A liberal-arts education prepares students for their whole lives as well as their post-graduate careers, and Arts and Sciences faculty at Western will share that perspective through a new Speakers Bureau.

“We represent a wealth of knowledge and expertise in the humanities, social sciences, natural sciences and mathematics,” says College of Arts and Sciences Dean Inessa Levi. “It is our moral responsibility as academics and intellectuals to share with the university and community at large our enthusiasm for enriching the mind through the liberal arts and sciences.”

Created as part of CAS’ outreach activities, the Speakers Bureau is designed to promote the liberal arts and sciences by showing how WIU’s curriculum benefits student and employer job aspirations, and also society.

“The purpose of the CAS Speakers’ Bureau is to offer presentations in our disciplines to a broad range of local constituents, such as high school students and their parents, the campus community, and to the local business community and general public,” says Dr. Susan A. Martinelli-Fernandez, CAS Associate Dean and Philosophy Professor.

“The bureau will also provide a forum for faculty to communicate the importance of a liberal arts and sciences education and how it can be a valuable tool in helping students, as well as employers, attain life objectives.”

In some ways the idea is an outgrowth of the CAS liberal arts awareness committee dubbed CLASS (for Celebrating Liberal Arts and Sciences). Formed last November by the CAS Faculty Council and the Dean’s office, CLASS helped organize a Campus/Community Dialogue on the Democratic Purposes of Public Education last April, when faculty joined with Macomb community school leaders to discuss shared responsibilities in educating youth about civic involvement and what it means to be well-educated.

This spring, a CAS Speakers’ Bureau website will be established listing faculty speakers, their areas of expertise, titles of presentations they are prepared to give, and instructions for scheduling a speaker.

Goedereis West Virginia University, Ronee LaRoche IUPUI, Rebecca Miller WIU, Gabe Schloemer the University of Arizona, Nicholas Simon Texas AdM, and Jessica Wildermuth UT/El Paso.


The Sociology Dept. had three students — grad students Dustin Detrick and Jesse Winget, and undergrad Adam Steil — intern with the Western Survey Research Center this summer, when they helped organize and manage various projects, including the 2005 Illinois Rural Life Poll.

Psychology Dept. Academic Adviser Kitty Miller is one of eight advisers nationwide honored in the National Academic Advising Association’s Academic Advising—Primary Role category at its annual conference this fall.

Assistant Professor Brian Peer of Biological Sciences this year published two papers and a monograph, and co-authored four papers — all about his specialty, cowbirds.


Political Science Assistant Professor Jongho Lee co-authored with USC’s Harry Pachon and presented the paper “Leading the Way: The Analysis of the Effect of Religion on the Latino Vote” at September’s annual meeting of the American Political Science Association in Washington.

Educational and Interdisciplinary Studies Professor J. Q. Adams and

Fall 05
Mathematics legend shares a lifetime of memories

By Amy Spelman

When Joseph Stipanowich first stepped onto the campus of what was then Western Illinois State Teachers College in 1940, little did he know his commitment and love for this university would continue for a lifetime.

More than 60 years later, Joe and Mary Forsythe Stipanowich took some time to look back on the last six decades to tell us about their lifetime of learning, living and working at Western. What follows is the story of a student, a soldier, a faculty member, a husband, a father, a community leader, a distinguished alumnus, a chairman, a professor emeritus and a great friend to Western Illinois University.

"After visiting a relative who played baseball at Western in 1939, my mind was made up — I was going to Western Illinois State Teachers College," says Stipanowich, who received a Teachers College Scholarship to help fund his education during the Great Depression.

"I believed that 'you work when you work and you study when you study,' and I knew the only way I would be able to devote my time to studying while at Western was to make some extra money," he says.

He worked for 15 months at his own gas station, which he'd leased before coming to school, and saved nearly $1,000. He enrolled as a history major in 1940, but at the urging of math professor Dr. Glen Ayre, who soon became Joe's mentor and lifelong friend, he realized he could combine his love of history and mathematics by changing his major.

"When Pearl Harbor was bombed in 1941, I knew I would soon be part of this war," remembers Joe. "I had been at Western for two years, had taken many weather forecasting courses through Dr. Tillman and fell in love with it, so I decided I might try to enter the Army Air Corps as a weather forecaster."

But he was drafted and began his career as "weather observer," traveling to Palm Beach, Fla., then to Puerto Rico, and eventually to Grand Rapids, Mich., for weather-forecaster training. No matter where he went, his Western ties came back to him. Shortly after arriving in Grand Rapids, Western Dean of Men Arthur TerKeurst called to tell him his sister lived there and he was to visit her for dinner. From Grand Rapids, he was sent to Chanute Field in Illinois for further training; on to Curacao near Venezuela; then to Jamaica, where he actually forecast a hurricane.

However, after the hurricane, many of the forecasters became ill. When nothing seemed to help, a new drug was given — penicillin — and it worked. When he recovered, he went on leave to visit family before he was sent on an assignment with 50 other weather forecasters to Havana, Cuba, followed by advanced training in Panama City, Panama.

He was told he'd be sent to invade Japan, but he never made it before the atomic bombs were dropped in 1945, leading to a surrender within days. His captain at the time recruited him back to Chanute Field, and he agreed to teach mathematics in weather school for a short time until he met the requirements for discharge that same year. Joe returned to Western and finished his bachelor's degree in 1946. One day while taking classes for his master's degree at the University of Illinois, he noticed Ayre and WIU President Frank Beu outside of his classroom. They offered him a teaching contract at Western for $300 per month. Joe and Mary decided to return to Western.

"Office space was limited then, so I set up shop in the hallway on the third floor of Sherman Hall," Joe says.

"Eventually, I was moved into the 'cloak room' on the third floor and it worked just fine."

He completed his master's in 1947 and earned an Ed.D. in 1956 from Northwestern University.

During the '50s, Western expanded tremendously. With Ayre's urging, Stipanowich began to attend professional meetings and gave speeches throughout the country. After teaching for 11 years, Joe was appointed "head" of the mathematics department in 1958 by Ayre and served in that capacity until he gave up the chairmanship to return to teaching full-time in 1968. Joe retired from teaching at Western in 1981. During his tenure, he received Western's Alumni Achievement Award and Distinguished Alumni Award from the WIU Alumni Association.
Western's 1970 Distinguished Teaching Award, and was President of the Illinois Council of Teachers of Mathematics and a member of its board. He received the Max Beberman Memorial Award in Mathematics for Outstanding Contributions to Mathematics Education from the council, served as president of the Elementary Mathematics Section and as a member of the board of the Central Association of Science and Mathematics Teachers, as book review editor, and on the executive committee of the board of directors of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics.

In 1987, Joe and Mary Stitanovich established an endowed scholarship in their name to support a mathematics major at Western each year. They continue to support Western Illinois University academics, athletics and the arts, with financial contributions and countless hours as volunteers.

What is it that makes Western so special that our students who become alumni have such a fond affinity?

In my day, my professors were also friends of mine. I thought of them not as an authority figure but more of a friend giving help. My favorite was Dr. Ayre, who recommended me as “head” of the mathematics department in 1958. I began teaching the history of mathematics, and Dr. Ayre encouraged me to attend professional meetings around the country. I was speaking to organizations about “The New Math,” and it became my passion. I continued to speak nationally even after my retirement. “No person, except my parents and my wife, had a greater influence on my life.” (from a letter written by Joe in 1996).

What changes took place at Western during your years here?

There are too many to count! When I joined the faculty in 1947, there were only two teachers in the mathematics department. When I retired, there were 19 full-time teachers. A major change came in 1958 with the formation of the College of Arts and Sciences and mathematics being one of the departments in the college. Dr. Ayre served as the first Dean, and he appointed me as “head of the department” with the title changing to “chair” in 1968.

What was your biggest challenge at Western?

There were two. The first was the advent of high-speed, electronic computers. We had to keep up with the times, so I received permission to set up an IBM computer lab and had graduate students run it. The second was when the university implemented a College of Arts and Sciences and I was appointed head of the department. I realized immediately we needed more teachers. I was asked if I could teach all the courses in the college, and of course, I could not teach foreign languages, etc. So,
we started hiring more faculty, even in my department.

What is your view of the difficulty faculty members now face in encouraging students to choose mathematics as a career?

There is no question it is the result of high-speed, electronic computers. Even when students decide they want to be teachers, they do not end up taking the mathematics courses, they take computer courses.

To what do you credit your success in teaching and mathematics?

When Dr. Edwin Schreiber passed away the year I began teaching at Western, I was forced to teach the history of math. Eventually, Dr. A. L. Knoebel gave me a joint teaching assignment in math and education, and I’ve been speaking about the history of mathematics around the country ever since. I also truly believe that as the head of a department, you are only as good as those who work in the department. I owe so much of my success to the faculty members in the mathematics department. In addition, I feel nothing compares to what I learn when I follow the successes of my former students. A few of them include:

• When a former student returns to teach at Western, it means so very much to me.

“I had to do it all over again, I’d choose Western,” Joe said. “I gave my life to Western.”

• One of my former students went on to attend West Point, finished first in his class in mathematics, second in his class overall and has been asked to speak to the faculty at U of I.

• I taught three brothers, and one went on to receive a Ph.D. from the University of Iowa, one taught weather forecasting at Chanute Field where I was stationed, and one went on to teach at the University of Maryland.

• One former student won a Fulbright Scholarship.

• Another former student went on to work for NASA.

What is your favorite student story?

The greatest mathematicians of all time were Newton, Archimedes and Gauss. I asked that question on a quiz, and one of my students answered: Newton, Archimedes and Stipanovich. Who was I to say he was wrong? (Joe laughs).

Are you still involved in mathematics since your retirement?

Oh, heavens yes. I continue to follow former students and keep up on their accomplishments. In addition, Mary and I have been traveling around the world visiting the homelands of the greatest mathematicians of all time.

Any parting words for students, faculty and staff, and alumni?

I’m thankful for the privilege of being associated with Western, for meeting my wife here and living a long life.

Amy Spelman is Associate Alumni Director at WIU.

Math: the next generation

Anisa Holmes of Naperville, left, and Erin Kohnke of Ottawa were two of the 12 participants in WIU’s Girls Plus Math Camp on campus and at Horn Field Campus south of Macomb in July.

Encouraging girls 12-14 to study math and science, the annual weeklong camp uses a hands-on approach to instruction, including group assignments, computer-lab exercises, Web page construction and recreational activities. The experience is part fun and games and part problem solving, Kohnke says.

“IT was fun, depending on how hard the problem was,” she says. “Some things were a pain in the neck, and there was a lot new to me, so I had to catch up some. But it was good.”

Young women and minority students aren’t encouraged enough to pursue scientific or technological careers, according to an August article in the journal Science, but Girls Plus Math speakers such as Math instructor Candace Roseane impressed campers with possibilities, Holmes adds.

“It was interesting,” she says. “We realized almost any career has some math and science in it: astronaut, scientist, journalist.”
African American Studies still marks bus boycott of 50 years ago

By Deckle McLean

Fifty years after the start of the Montgomery Bus Boycott, WIU’s African American Studies Department finds itself addressing that event in many of its courses. In addition, the spirit of the movement started by the boycott has recently worked its way into departmental program planning – namely the creation of a new course on the education of African Americans.

Nevertheless, the department still finds itself struggling in small ways against an obstacle the boycott has come to symbolize: invisibility reminiscent of that multitude of bus riders who in 1955 surprised everyone by having a lot to say.

The boycott, says department chair Dr. Abdul-Rasheed Na’Allah, spawned “a huge, huge movement” even though the people who began it were simply fed up with a problem and did not anticipate anything that big. Most scholars, he said, regard the boycott as the starting point for the Civil Rights movement, in large part because of its success.

It’s no surprise then, he suggests, that the boycott receives attention at many points in the African American Studies curriculum.

It appears in the program’s introductory course and in its course on famous African Americans – after all, both Martin Luther King and Rosa Parks were involved. It is discussed in a course titled Blacks as a Minority Group in America and in a course covering African Americans from 1865 to the present. In addition, Na’Allah noted, it gets attention in various literature courses that treat, for example, the collection of poems published in 1999 by Rita Dove, former U.S. poet laureate, and dedicated to the initiator of the boycott. That volume is titled On the Bus with Rosa Parks.

A new course, 445(G), Education of African Americans, is linked at least indirectly to the boycott, Na’Allah observes. If the boycott had any immediate inspiration itself, this might have been the Brown v. Board of Education Supreme Court ruling of the previous year, and the focus of Brown was education. In addition, once the Civil Rights movement was born out of the boycott, “the issue of education came right up,” Na’Allah says. The new course deals with this central ambition of the movement: access to education, schools and school facilities.

A challenge still facing the department, Na’Allah explains, is to overcome “the misinformation that you can’t do anything with an AA degree.” Plans are to take a proactive approach that includes building links into African American communities in Quad Cities, Peoria and the Chicago area, as well as Macomb. Department faculty are considering, he says, the possibilities of community centers, scholarships, grant support, and “making sure the curriculum is relevant to African American communities now.”

Work with black alumni is already underway.

“We’re a multi-disciplinary program that trains students to think critically, and to engage with and get to the root of issues,” he says. “We have to let people know that a degree in African American studies is just like one in any other arts and sciences field, like history,” providing a broad background for many employment areas and fields of graduate study.

Another immediate plan is to continue work on a new course in Black Men/Black Masculinity, an increasingly popular area of African American scholarship as measured by the birth of several journals devoted to the subject. Yet another is to design a graduate certificate program in Diaspora Studies that would be useful to teachers and to students from Africa or the Caribbean interested in credits that might later be applied to a graduate degree.

The department started with the offering of courses in 1969, became the Negro Studies Program in 1970, expanded into a department with a major by 1974, lost both department status and major in 1985, recovered department status in 1985, and recovered the major in 2003. It currently has about 20 majors and 50 minors, and has targeted 50 majors as its goal over the next few years.

Deckle McLean is Director of WIU’s Journalism Program in the Dept. of English and Journalism.

Year 2005 marks related anniversaries

The year 2005 is a benchmark for several events that sparked the Civil Rights movement:

• Chicago teen Emmett Till was brutally murdered 50 years ago in August.
• Rosa Parks refused to give up her bus seat to a white man 50 years ago in December.
• The Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. launched the Montgomery Bus Boycott 50 years ago this December.
• The Voting Rights Act was passed by Congress and signed by President Lyndon Johnson 40 years ago in August.
The Talented Mrs. Ripley Leo

By David Fitzgerald

Kathleen Ripley Leo’s poems are like her garden — wild, but still something cultivated.

The 1968 Western Illinois University graduate and prolific poet has published six compilations of work and achieved a notable teaching career.

“A poem is generally a work of observation and reflection,” says the Chicago native. “Poetry encourages people to notice the truth around them.”

Her poetry is a reflection of this philosophy, says Leo, who takes her life experiences and uses words to weave a tapestry of everyday observations with deeper meaning.

The Spanish literature major took her first art class as part of a general-education requirement at Western.

“I fell in love with art,” she said. But Leo’s creative impulse settled down into writing.

While at Western, Leo met her husband Vic, she a freshman and he a senior who had snuck into a freshman mixer. Her poem “Pole-Barn” comes out of her time in Macomb with Vic. The poem can resonate with one-time Western students remembering Macomb’s rural locale and setting personal limits and love:

I remember the barn in the fields
That autumn in 67, college hot in our blood,
The sweet man I knew who took me there
And the sun like pole vaults streaking
Through the ample cracks in the ceiling

After Western, Ripley was accepted to the University of Pittsburgh for graduate studies in Latin American and Spanish literature. The only student admitted to the program who was from North America, Leo studied with Nobel Prize winner Octavio Paz.

“I would have never gotten in there if it weren’t for Western,” she says. “I credit Western for a lot of what I accomplished.”

Following graduation Leo faced her first “mid-life crisis.”

A number of colleges and universities weakened their foreign language requirements by allowing those with high school language courses to opt out of their collegiate requirements.

“It pretty much drained up all of the jobs,” Leo recalls.

Leo teaches her students strategies of writing, helping them to expose their own voices. Some of her students have gone on to win awards for their work, she says.

In addition to teaching in the classroom, Leo is involved in other areas of poetry and writing education. She has edited books on teaching poetry at the elementary and university levels.

Waiting for the Apples is an anthology of poems written by young Michigan writers.

“Kids who write poems are learning critical thinking and problem solving,” she says.

With the Associated Writers Programs, Leo helped put together The Pedagogy Papers, a guide that looks at how to teach certain aspects of creative writing at the collegiate level.

Leo believes that people forget about the truth around them — the everyday tragedies and joys. She said recognition of the ups and downs of everyday life help people cope with larger-scale calamities, such as 9/11. And writing poetry that does this is hard work.

“Being a poet and observing is an intense life,” she says. “So many things are worthy of having a poem written about.

And Leo’s body of work proves this. Her works range from a reflection of her childhood in the book The Old Ways, an exploration between language and sculpture in The Circle is Assembled, to Town One South, a compilation she was commissioned to write about Northville, Mich., to help celebrate Michigan’s sesquicentennial.

She has also penned numerous single-image poems, poems that focus on
one, stunning image. Whether it is a scar on her arm, a starfish washing against the coast, a glass blower or a foot massage, Leo can tackle a single image, research it, and give it a new, deeper meaning. She captures the trivial information of an item to inform the metaphor.

To Leo, a poet has a duty to explore, develop and share the result with others.

“It’s a privilege to have a talent,” she says. “We live, we write. We read, we write. We talk to people, we write.”

In September, Leo returned from a Hawaiian vacation with Vic in celebration of their 35th wedding anniversary. The trip has inspired Leo to write about the islands, just as other stirring experiences move her to prose.

“Poets are not in an attic someplace, totally isolated,” she says. Instead, they are experiencing, she contends.

“Life is a joyful mystery,” Leo says. Poetry, especially hers, can remind us of that.

Kathleen Ripley Leo’s web site is http://northville.lib.mi.us/NAC/Krleo.htm.

David Fitzgerald is a 2005 graduate of WIU now in graduate school at the University of Illinois-Springfield’s Public Affairs Reporting program.

from “Honor Roll” pp. 9


Dept of Mathematics Chair Iraj Kalantari presented “Computable Analysis, Complexity and Randomness” at the School of Mathematics at the Institute for Studies in Theoretical Physics and Mathematics in Tehran, Iran.

Dr. David Voss, Mathematics, published “Using Mesh-free Approximation for Multi-Asset American Options,” in Journal of the Chinese Institute on Engineers (JCIE), special issue on methods.


Boris Petracovici, an Assistant Professor in Mathematics, was awarded the Project NexT fellowship by the Illinois Section of the mathematical Association of America.

Seventeen WIU students supervised by Biological Sciences Associate Professor Shawn Meagher and graduate student Kim LeCompte participated in the 5th annual Illinois River Sweep near Havana in September. The environmental community-service activity was part of Meagher’s Biology 103/Biological Principles course.

Tillman Hall has been renovated for Outreach Bases and activities of the Institute for Environmental Studies, the Western Survey Research Center, and the Teaching and Learning Technology Center.


Neil Shannon, a May graduate with a major in Geology and a minor in Zoology, was among 19 university students or recent graduates selected to be interns with the U.S.

Geological Survey. He worked in the hydrologic investigations section of the USGS Missouri Water Science Center in Rolla, Mo.

Dr. Polly Radosh, Women’s Studies Chair, presented “Imprisoned Mothers” at the National Women’s Studies Association in Orlando, Fla., in June, while Dr. Lori Baker-Sperry, also of Women’s Studies, presented “Missing Mother in Grimm’s Fairy Tales,” at the same conference.

The Illinois Deans’ Conference was sponsored in September by the CAS, showcasing Undergraduate Research, Outreach, and Advising initiatives of Western Illinois University and other Illinois state institutions of higher learning.

Nine high school students from across the nation participated in an Earthwatch Institute national program Western Illinois University’s Kibbe Life Sciences Station in Warsaw from July 29 to August 10, 2005. The mission of Earthwatch Institute is to promote the sustainable conservation of natural resources and cultural heritage by creating partnerships among scientists, the general public, educators and businesses. Summer Challenge Award recipients are nominated by their high school and have demonstrated talent in the arts and humanities and a promising interest in science.

The Department of Mathematics and WIU’s Non-Credit Programs co-sponsored Girls Plus Math, an enrichment camp for girls ages 11-13 that promotes interest in math, the willingness to take risks in analysis, and the self-confidence to persist in problem solving. Girls Plus Math also features female role models who meet with the girls to describe how they use math in their careers.

Dr. Karen B. Mann, English and Journalism, delivered the third annual College of Arts and Sciences John Hallwas Liberal Arts Lecture.

Mathematics Chair Iraj Kalantari gave a short-course presentation on “Computable Analysis, Complexity, and Randomness.”
Jai Lee: ‘The journalist who came in from the cold’

By Rachel Falcone Hatch

For every Western student who took a class from Jai Lee, a question eventually lingered about the man often seen standing in a black smock in the photo lab or sitting by a pile of papers and books in his Simpkins Hall office: What was Dr. Lee doing in Macomb?

The answer was simple: It was the middle of nowhere.

But for Lee — the former head of WIU’s journalism program, who died July 8 at the age of 79 — few things were as simple as they seemed. What really brought him to Macomb was nothing less than the rise of a dictator, espionage worthy of a bestseller, and an unwavering belief in democracy.

If he seemed quiet, it may have hidden decades of adventures and excitement, turmoil and even torture.

“Many people at the university knew he had been some kind of leader in his home country,” retired WIU archivist, historian and author John Hall was said, “but not many people knew the details. A remarkable guy, really.”

Lee was born in 1929 in southern Korea. Located between China and Japan, Korea has been unwitting host to many of Asia’s struggles. As a teen during World War II, Lee had his home seized by the Japanese, who forced Korean men to join their army. Lee refused and was repeatedly imprisoned and tortured.

“I was borderline (between life and death),” Lee said in 1987, “But I had to keep my spirit up. I didn’t yield. I didn’t give in.”

Perhaps the only thing as strong as his principles was his talent for writing and reporting. After World War II, Lee became a correspondent for a Korean newspaper. It was his writing that took him to great professional heights. (See box.)

Lee was a man who met U.S. President Dwight Eisenhower and French President Charles DeGaulle, dined with novelist Somerset Maugham and worked for the leader of his nation. Though years had passed, Lee in many ways was still the young man who stood defiantly against what he believed to be wrong.

In 1973, Park Chung Hee led a coup, seized control of the government, dissolved the constitution and installed himself as leader. Not wanting to work for a dictator, Lee and his assistant decided to quit their posts as Korean cultural attachés in Washington, D.C. When Lee’s assistant resigned first, the Korean government panicked and demanded that Lee get his assistant back — even if he had to falsely accuse the man of Communist sympathies. Lee refused and the Korean Central Intelligence Agency (KCIA) descended upon him with threats and interrogation.

Lee took his family into hiding. Using a media source at the Washington Post, Lee contacted a member of the U.S. State Department and requested political asylum. Though Korea was technically an ally, Lee was granted refuge.

What Lee didn’t know at the time was that Park was planning to bribe U.S. Congressmen using aid money from the U.S.

Slowly, Lee would piece together the pieces, like a patient person solving a complex jigsaw puzzle.

The KCIA attempted a smear campaign against Lee, but to no avail. In typical Lee fashion, he refused FBI protection.

“My old friends, why should I go into hiding when I am not wrong?” he recounted in 1978.

The State Department then recommended Lee and his family move somewhere out of the way — the KCIA was present in most major cities and would look for Lee. Sorting through job offers, Lee came across a teaching position in Macomb. In 1973, he officially resigned his post with the Korean government and became a professor of journalism at Western.

Still a muckraking journalist, Lee worked for years to gather evidence of Park’s crimes, including a plot to bribe U.S. Congressmen. In 1976, Lee was invited to speak at a Congressional subcommittee on international relations discussing human rights. Using the opportunity, Lee told the stunned group he had witnessed $100 bills being stuffed into envelopes earmarked for members of Congress. An investigation followed, resulting in the indictment of three Congressmen. In response, the Korean government banned Lee from returning to the country.

The uproar over the “Koreagate” landed Lee in the pages of newspapers and on television. He was interviewed on 60 Minutes and the The MacNeil-Lehrer Report. Yet Lee returned to Western. From his office in Simpkins,
The work of Jai Lee

1950s - Soldier in the South Korean Army
Reporter, covering the historic Geneva Conference
Ghostwriter for Korean president Syngman Rhee

1960 - Press secretary for Korean President Huh Chung

1965 - Doctoral recipient from Syracuse University in New York.

1967 - Korean correspondent in Paris

1968 - 1973
Director General of the International Broadcasting Service (the Voice of Free Korea)
Deputy Permanent Delegate of the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
Chief cultural and press attaché of the Korean embassy in Paris
Chief cultural and information attaché of the embassy in Washington, D.C.

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Fall 05
The Real Sequel
Fulbright Scholar seized opportunities at Western to go global

Whether studying German or journalism, undergraduates at Western sometimes see WIU and Macomb as remote from the World Series or the World Cup. That never bothered 1996 graduate David Hein.

It never slowed him down either. Earning a bachelor’s in journalism with a minor in German, Hein credits classroom experiences and extra-curricular activities with providing him a foundation from which to work throughout the world.

"Being at Western — granted not the journalism school Northwestern or the University of Missouri is — gave me a lot of opportunities I would not have had other places," says Hein, who’s built a career as an accomplished sportswriter in the United States and Europe.

"The Courier gave me a taste of everything the news world had to offer," he adds. "The WIU journalism professors helped me along the way."

Upon graduation from Western, Hein received his Master’s degree in public-affairs reporting at the University of Illinois-Springfield. He then received a Fulbright Scholarship, which led him to Germany to work for the General Anzeiger company in Bonn.

Despite working as a news reporter and features writer, Hein settled on sports writing as his main concentration.

"(Sports writing) gives me the biggest kick," Hein says. "I think I'm the best at doing that as opposed to news or features."

Hein, who was married in August, lists covering the 2002 Salt Lake City Winter Olympics, the 2002 World Cup and the 2002 World Basketball Championships among his most memorable assignments. Still, Hein says he’s not ready to put an end to that list just yet, as he’s planning to start his own sports news agency, Heinnews.

"I'm in the middle of becoming a full-time freelancer, and it's an enormous accomplishment that I've even made it this far," Hein said. "But I'm far from being done."

Jeff Bartl is a senior Journalism major from Bartlett, Ill., and sports editor at the Western Courier.

Since 1970s, states' funding drops for public universities

By Bill Knight

Taxpayer funding of the schools that educate almost 80 percent of U.S. college students has dropped drastically in recent years, as measured by per-student expenditures.

The average share of public universities' budgets that come from local and state taxes fell from 74 percent in 1991 to 64 percent in 2004, reported Sam Dillon in an October New York Times.

The share of Western Illinois University's annual budget that comes from the state of Illinois is 50 percent, according to WIU's Institutional Research and Planning office.

U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings in September conceded the risk, appointing a Commission on the Future of Higher Education to address the problem.

"We still have the finest system of education in the world," Spellings said, "but we're at a crossroads. The world is catching up."

Others point out that total funding has gone up slightly, but they acknowledge that when recent years' higher enrollments are included, per-student appropriations last year fell to $5,721 from $6,874 in 2001, according to Katharine C. Lyall of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning, who reported her findings in September.

Also, public universities' share of state revenues fell from 6.7 percent in 1977 to 4.5 percent in 2000, according to a study by the Urban Institute's Tax Policy Center.

Unlike states' flagship universities, such as the University of Illinois, hundreds of four-year public universities that don't offer doctoral programs or do significant research may be in real jeopardy, according to David Ward of the American Council on Education.

"Privatization may be a good description of what is going on at our flagship campuses, but not at our four-years," he told the Times. "They cannot survive without public funding."

Others temper concern with reassurance.

"The intellectual work of universities is still going on and has never been stronger. Great creative arts still occur, and discoveries are made," said James Twitchell in his article "Higher Ed, Inc." in Wilson Quarterly. "But the experience of higher education — all the accessories, the amenities, the aura, has been commercialized."
Students involved in undergraduate research are better prepared for careers, and for professional or graduate programs. Experiences in discovery-based learning help students become well-organized, self-motivated and creative critical thinkers.

Generally, undergraduate research is work based on inquiry beyond class textbooks and defined homework assignments.

It is a research, scholarly or creative project carried out by undergraduates mentored by faculty, often in close collaboration with them. Together, they advance students' knowledge in a discipline, provide new perceptions, and expand the scope of knowledge in a field.

Researching helps students learn how to learn.

Many of the undergraduate research projects in the College of Arts and Sciences involve partnerships between students, faculty and the community through organizations such as the Western Survey Research Center, the Institute for Environmental Studies, and the geographic Information Systems Center.

We'd like you to be a partner, too. If you can help the Undergraduate Research Projects or the CAS General Fund, please fill out the form below or the insert, and return it to us with your contribution.

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