DNA Equipment on Wheels Moving Science Forward

Biology students at Western now have better access to sophisticated analytical equipment that is essential for advanced molecular studies, thanks to a “MobiLab” that goes where the students need it.

With a combination of grants from the Chancellor’s Office and The University of North Carolina Office of the President, the biology department recently bought four new machines, called polymerase chain reaction (PCR) thermal cyclers, to supplement older ones already in use for DNA copying and analysis.

And, because students work in eight separate labs in the Stillwell and Natural Sciences buildings, the new thermal cyclers, supporting equipment and supplies are stored on a custom-made cart that rolls to wherever the students are working.

The equipment also can move to another room where a fixed digital imaging system lets students see their research results.

“Basically, we have a molecular biology research lab on wheels,” said the biology department’s Sean O’Connell, whose students are using the equipment to study the DNA of microorganisms in the Great Smoky Mountains and for other projects.

The equipment and cart were formally unveiled at a recent reception. During the event, Jim Costa of the biology department thanked Russ Lea, vice president for research and sponsored programs in the Office of the President, for his help in funding MobiLab, believed to be the first of its kind.

“This lets us take expensive equipment and maximize its use, and it has greatly enhanced educational opportunities of our students,” said Costa, who holds the H.F and Katherine P. Robinson Professorship of Biology at Western. The grant from the UNC Office of the President was part of a million-dollar legislative appropriation that is earmarked for biotechnological research, Lea said.

SoTL Faire to Highlight Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

More than 60 of Western’s faculty, students and staff will share their approaches, methods, research and results in creating, guiding and assessing learning during the inaugural Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) Faire.

The one-day conference, which will include 18 presentations and four poster displays, will be held Wednesday, Feb. 23, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., with concurrent sessions at the A.K. Hinds University Center and Room 406 of Belk Building.

A keynote session will begin with a reception at noon featuring remarks by Chancellor John Bardo; Kyle Carter, provost; and Newt Smith, chair of the faculty. Finalists for the Chancellor’s Distinguished Teaching Award will be present to speak about their philosophy of teaching.

Alison Morrison-Shetlar, director of the Karen L. Smith Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning at the University of Central Florida, will give the keynote address, “Engaging in the Teaching and Learning Process.”

The conference is free and open to the public. Local educators and members of the community are encouraged to attend, as well as university faculty, students, staff and administrators.

The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning at Western initiative aims to improve student learning, renew teaching, guide professional faculty development, deepen collegiality among all parts of the university community, and feature excellence in teaching and learning as the epitome of academic life at the university.

Western’s music department will present a concert by renowned flutist William Bennett at 8 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 20.

The free concert will take place in the recital hall of the Coulter Building. Western’s own Lillian Pearson, associate professor of piano, and Eldred Spell, professor of flute, will join Bennett in the grand finale, Doppler’s “Valse di Bravura.”

The program also will include pieces composed by Handel, Mozart, Ganne, Taktakishvili, Faurec, Roussel and Gaubert.

Bennett also will present a flute masterclass on Saturday, Feb. 19, from 7 to 10 p.m. The masterclass will feature Western flute students Jennifer Cloughly, Jaime Garner, Tiffany Lamb and Summer Schulte. Pearson will provide the accompaniment.

Bennett has recorded more than 300 separate musical solo and chamber works and a larger body of orchestral repertoire. His orchestral career includes principal positions with the London Symphony, Academy of St. Martin-in-the-Fields and the English Chamber Orchestra. In 1995, Bennett was recognized with the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire, and he recently earned the Lifetime Achievement Award of the National Flute Association.

“He is simply the most significant living flutist,” said Spell, Western’s flute professor. “In addition to stunning performances, his teaching has raised the standard of flute playing worldwide. He has also, in collaboration with flute-maker Albert Cooper, made improvements in the tuning of flutes that have influenced nearly every modern instrument maker.”

Organizers are encouraging local music teachers to have their students attend both events, Spell said. “Bennett’s performance here is a unique opportunity, particularly for area public school students. Hearing a master teacher like Bennett work with advanced college students will be both informative and inspiring. Anyone considering majoring in music or a career in the field should certainly be there,” he said.

For more information, call 227-3952.

**Student Affairs Offers $1,500 Learning Award**

The Division of Student Affairs is seeking nominations for its annual Integration of Learning Award, designed to encourage faculty to enhancing learning opportunities for students.

Western faculty members are welcome to propose a project that integrates teaching with activities in the Division of Student Affairs to achieve jointly identified student learning outcomes. One award of $1,500 will be granted to support the faculty member. Funds for the project will be available for the fiscal year beginning July 1.

Eligible proposals should include a concise description of the integrated activity with student affairs, including the student learning outcomes. Proposals developed jointly between faculty and student affairs professionals will receive priority.

The Committee on Student Learning, which includes students, student affairs administrators and faculty members, will make the award selection.

Deadline for proposals is March 18. For further information, contact Robert Caruso, vice chancellor for student affairs, at 227-7234.

**DNA MobiLab Equipment continued from page 1**

Cary resident Philip Drummond, a first-year graduate student in biology, is studying single-celled organisms called archaea. Drummond said he is grateful that the MobiLab gives him greater access to analytical equipment.

“You can do more work this way because each test takes about five hours, but now we have four new thermal cyclers that can go to various labs, so more students can test their samples,” he said. With an estimated 10,000 species and 10 billion cells per gram of soil in the Great Smokies biodiversity study, there’s a lot of work to be done.

Students at Western are doing much more than practicing research techniques on known samples, O’Connell said. Instead, they are identifying microorganisms that haven’t been found before, generating data that can be published, gaining experience with important results, and answering critical questions about biology at the molecular level.

“This kind of outcome is normally available only in more advanced laboratories, but our students are accomplishing it right here at Western,” O’Connell said.
February Calendar

Monday, February 14
Presentation—“The Show Runner: A Case Study of The Hunger,” one of several public talks about writing for television and motion pictures by Terry Curtis Fox, Hollywood screenwriter who has written for Hill Street Blues and Stargate SG-1. 7:30 p.m. Theater, A.K. Hinds University Center. (227-7264)

Tuesday, February 15—Thursday, February 17
American Red Cross Blood Drive—12:30–6 p.m. A.K. Hinds University Center. Go to http://www.membersforlife.org/cbsr/schedule to reserve appointment time; enter sponsor code 7836. (227-2206)

Tuesday, February 15—Thursday, February 17
Performance—The Vagina Monologues by Eve Ensler. All proceeds donated to REACH, Western’s Women’s Center anti-violence efforts, V-Day Foundation, and Spotlight on Western’s Women’s Center anti-violence Eve Ensler. All proceeds donated to REACH, Western’s Women’s Center anti-violence efforts, V-Day Foundation, and Spotlight on Western’s Women’s Center anti-violence (227-2627 or 227-7450)

Tuesday, February 15
Catamount Concert Series—faculty vocal recital featuring Mary Kay Bauer, soprano; William Martin, tenor; and Robert Holquist, bass-baritone, performing with Bradley Martin, piano. 8 p.m. Recital Hall, Couler Building. (227-7424)

Wednesday, February 16
Black History Month—Western Women on Wednesday. Noon. Rogers Room, A.K. Hinds University Center. (227-2276)

Thursday, February 17
Catamount basketball—vs. Wofford. 3 p.m. Asheville. (227-3952)

Movie—Ladder 49. Admission: $2 with student identification; $4 without student identification (includes small soda and popcorn). 9 p.m. Theater, A.K. Hinds University Center. (227-7206)

Friday, February 18
Jazz clinics—led by Hal Galper, Grammy Award-winning jazz pianist, composer, clinician, educator, and writer. Jazz ensemble clinic at 1 p.m. Band Hall (Room 173), Couler Building. Improvisation clinic at 3 p.m. Recital Hall, Couler Building. (227-3261)

Presentation—Chancellor Bardo will announce the Millennial Initiative, a significant expansion of Western’s campus. 1:30 p.m. Theatre, A.K. Hinds University Center. RSVP by Monday, Feb. 14. (227-2293)

Recital—music students. 2 p.m. Recital Hall, Couler Building. (227-7242)

Jazz —led by Hal Galper, Grammy Award-winning jazz pianist, composer, clinician, educator, and writer. (227-3261)

Speaker—Zhiyu Bo, renowned scholar of contemporary Chinese politics from Tarleton State University, will speak on “Chinese Political Elites in the 21st Century.” Visiting Scholar Series. 5 p.m. Auditorium, Mountain Heritage Center. (227-7475)

Saturday, February 19
Open House—for prospective students and their families. Registration 8:30 a.m. Ramsey Regional Activity Center. (227-7317)

Catamount tennis—vs. Presbyterian College. 1:30 p.m. Reid Gymnasium tennis courts. (227-7338)

Catamount baseball—vs. Wright State. Noon and 3:30 p.m. (doubleheader). Childress Field/Hennon Stadium. (227-7338)

Flute masterclass—with guest artist William Bennett, Britain’s leading flutist and former principal flutist of the London Symphony, Academy of St. Martin in-the-Fields, and English Chamber Orchestra. Class will feature four Western flute students. 7–10 p.m. Recital Hall, Couler Building. (293-7457)

Sunday, February 20
Catamount baseball—vs. Wright State. 1 p.m. Childress Field/Hennon Stadium. (227-7338)

Black History Month—African American JINGO game, spin-off of traditional BINGO game. 7 p.m. Cardinal Room, A.K. Hinds University Center. (227-2276)

Recital—music students. 2 p.m. Recital Hall, Couler Building. (227-7242)

Saturday, February 26—Sunday, March 6
Spring holiday.

Speaker—Ken Yarbrough, senior partner and account manager at WestWayne, will discuss Super Bowl ads past and present. 5:30 p.m. Theater, A.K. Hinds University Center. 227-7402

Catamount Concert Series—faculty recital featuring Lillian Buss Pearson, harpsichord and piano, performing selections by J.S. Bach, William Martin, tenor; and Robert Holquist, bass-baritone, performing with Bradley Martin, piano. 8 p.m. Recital Hall, Couler Building. (227-2206)

Tuesday, February 22
Workshop—“Coaching for Success,” Day one of two-day workshop: Day two scheduled for March 1. 2–4 p.m. Tom Young Room, Field House. Registration required. (www.wcu.edu/hr/training/professional.asp)

Black History Month—Films That Matter series: Stargate SG-1, 7:30 p.m. Theater, A.K. Hinds University Center. (227-2293)

Jazz night. 7:30 p.m. Club Illusions, A.K. Hinds University Center....

Monday, February 21
Lady Catamount basketball—vs. Wofford. Southern Conference game. Noon. Ramsey Regional Activity Center. (227-7338)

Submit items for the university’s online calendar to WCU Calendar, 1601 Ramsey Center, Western Carolina University, Cullowhee, North Carolina 28723 or e-mail to: Reporter@email.wcu.edu.

Please submit items for the university’s online calendar at least one week prior to the event.
Robert Caruso, vice chancellor for student affairs at Western, has joined the ranks of the American College Personnel Association’s Senior Student Affairs Practitioner Program.

Caruso was recently selected as one of three outstanding professionals in his field to be part of the program’s class of 2005-08. The American College Personnel Association (ACPA) is an international association serving approximately 8,000 student affairs administrators.

Caruso will accept his honor at the association’s annual convention in Nashville, Tennessee, in April.

“A treasure in our profession,” “always looking out for the needs of students,” “vital in opening up the lines of communication,” “a tireless advocate for equal opportunity and equal rights,” and “experienced, knowledgeable, and well respected throughout the country” — those are just a few of Caruso’s professional characteristics mentioned in letters of support for his nomination to the senior practitioners’ program.

The program was established in 2001 for individuals who exemplify good practice in student affairs and who have made outstanding contributions to their institutions and to the student affairs profession. Caruso will join other program participants in a range of ACPA activities, including advising the association president on issues, participating in research for the student affairs profession, consulting with the association’s media board on useful publications, mentoring younger professionals and networking with association constituencies.

“I am deeply honored by this award,” Caruso said in accepting the nomination to the senior practitioners program. “It gives me a chance to give back to my profession.”

Caruso, who has served as the head of Western’s student affairs office for seven years, says his greatest pleasure comes from watching members of his staff succeed in their work with students. He’s had plenty of experience in that area himself, having worked in various capacities with admissions, judicial affairs, enrollment management and student services throughout his career. Last year, the ACPA recognized Caruso as a “diamond honoree” for his outstanding contributions to the association and his profession.

Caruso holds a doctorate in counseling and personnel services from the University of Maryland, a master’s degree in counseling and guidance from Rutgers University and a bachelor’s degree in biology from Tufts University.