



Chair announces retirement

Notes from the Chair

I have seen a complete turnover in faculty since my arrival at Ball State in 1975 as a young, naïve environmental microbiologist. I was taken under the wings of retired colleagues George Welker, Don Hendrickson and Tom McComish and each one instilled in me a passion for the sciences from both a teaching and research perspective. Their mentoring meant a lot to me then as it does now.

In regards to research, I fondly recall the many enthusiastic students who conducted research with me and spent time in the field sampling rivers, lakes, streams, and most recently potable water. We looked for and documented bacterial degraders of chitin, actinomycetes, fish pathogens, and bacteria in drinking water on the EPA Contaminant Candidate List (CCL). Seeing the excitement of both undergraduate and graduate students attending and presenting their research at a national conference still thrills me. I continue to follow the progress of students into careers and advanced degrees and this has given me immense pleasure to share in their development and advancement. I will always remember the many students I have had the pleasure to work with side by side tackling research projects.

As for teaching through the years, I recall the struggles in learning HOW to teach the sciences, incorporating new electronic technology into the classroom and how the explosion of biotechnology has pervaded every aspect of science. The teacher in each one of us knows



when it goes well and the light bulb goes on in a student's mind, we feel gratified knowing that we have reached these students and they are taking away important information and lessons to be used later in life. I will cherish those memories and moments for a lifetime.

When I think about my role as chair of the Department of Biology, I would say it was one that I grew into. My election and then appointment occurred fairly suddenly and caught not only me but many others by surprise. I accepted this role willingly and dove into new realms of academic responsibility. After serving over ten years as a faculty member, this change was good for my mental health. As I learned the job, I made mistakes but through the years I have been forgiven by my colleagues and administrators. As chair, I strived to uphold high standards for our department and faculty and I am proud of our many successes through the years. When I reflect back, the role of chair became a part of me and it remains a part of me as does teaching, research and service.

Getting back to my three mentors George, Don and Tom. George got me involved in academic service as director of the East Central Indiana Regional Science Fair and taught me the importance of the individual student (still a Ball State trademark). Don helped me grow as a responsible and responsive microbiologist and Tom cultivated and nurtured my interests in aquatic biology.

As of June 30, 2006, I will be joining these colleagues in retirement. My wife, Sarah, and I are looking forward to time for travel, for family and for promotion of a small business my wife has created. As I sign off, I have no doubt the wise faculty and administrators at Ball State University will select an outstanding new chair and teacher to take my place. Everyone can be replaced and it is now time for someone new to take the helm and guide our department into the exciting times that lie ahead. CW

Our efforts to extend and improve the educational programs in biology are ongoing. If you would like to help, your financial gifts to the Ball State Foundation can be designated for the

Department of Biology (General Fund account 901).

Donations may be made online at www.bsu.edu/giving/ or mailed to

Ball State University Foundation

P .O. Box 672

Muncie, IN 47308

Field Study this spring.

Carolyn Vann (cvann@bsu.edu) is currently recruiting participants for a trip to China, May 9-21, 2005: China In Transition: Resources & Sustainability (3 credits, Bio 420/520 as part of the Field Study of Distant Areas for students. Study will focus on how to sustain biological diversity and natural resources in China under pressure of societal development and will include cultural and historical perspectives. ■



Drs. Kamal Islam and Mark Pyron will co-lead a field course to Belize from 9-20 May, 2006. During this field course, students will have an

opportunity to explore biodiversity within tropical rain forests, investigate Mayan civilization and cultures of Belize, and get immersed into coral reef ecology. In addition, students will be exposed to issues of sustainable resource use and ecotourism. Questions may be sent to Mark Pyron at mpyron@bsu.edu or Kamal Islam at kislam@bsu.edu ■

In late October, both the Teaching and Research and the Wheeler Orchid Collection greenhouses were grateful

recipients of significant plant donations. The largest, from Merriman Orchids and Tropicals (Franklin, IN) was valued at \$5400. The donation, which filled the Christy Woods classroom (see photo), added over 80 orchids and 50 assorted tropical plants to the greenhouse collections. A second donation of tropical plants, from Mannix Greenhouse (Dunkirk, IN) was valued at \$1500. ■



Student Club News...

BSUASM Chapter Stays Active in 2nd year

As the only student chapter of the **American Society for Microbiology (ASM)** in Indiana, the Ball State branch is now in its second year, and is engaged in service activities and hosting speakers over a broad range of topics. During the Fall semester, chapter officers invited BSU president Jo Ann Gora to speak on the role and contribution of Ball State to the biotechnology economy in Indiana. An audience of 90 administrators, faculty, and students from various colleges were in attendance, and posters from several of the other Biology student organizations were on display.

Service and outreach within the local community has been a high priority for BSUASM, and as of this writing, the food drive has just come to a successful close, with approximately ten boxes of nonperishable food items collected for Muncie Mission. This effort has been a springboard of ideas for future service projects, including clothing drives, as well as taking an active part in education outreach opportunities such as 'Science on the Greenway' for the second year in a row.

Spring semester activities for BSUASM include increasing recruitment of new members by hosting more speakers that address topics of interest to students in multiple departments. For example, invitations have been accepted by Vanna Hanway in Criminal Justice & Criminology to present on 'Careers in forensic science,' as well as Dr. Mohommad Tahir, a leading forensic expert from Strand Analytical Labs, Indianapolis, who will discuss his work in the area of DNA typing while on several high-profile criminal cases over the last several years. These and other activities keep the chapter officers busy developing novel ways to recruit and retain new ASM members in our only regional chapter. For more information on the Ball State chapter of ASM, please visit: www.bsuasm.iweb.bsu.edu.



The Wildlife Society had a busy start to the fall semester. Their meetings have covered diverse topics from internships and wildlife law enforcement to Louisiana black bears. They mist netted, as well as, spent a day at Great Cats of Indiana volunteering, where they had the opportunity to interact with tiger cubs. Planned events included a camping trip to Jasper Pulaski Fish and Wildlife Area to observe the Sandhill Crane migration, owl calling with Dr. Islam, and aging deer, as well, as collecting various data at deer check stations on the opening day of hunting season. Please visit: www.bsu.edu/web/bsutws/