Student Success is Priority One

by Dr. Brenda S. Nichols, Dean

Welcome to the second edition of the College of Arts & Sciences Newsletter. I invite you to browse these pages and learn more about many events in the college that have and are taking place. As you read the pages I know you will see that one idea is clear. Lamar University is dedicated to the success of our students. In fact, it’s priority one.

Every department in the college has a student success story to share. When I hear about all the great things our students are accomplishing it makes me very proud to be a part of this great university.

In a college of over 4,700 enrolled students there are many standouts. Just to mention a few facts:

- Seven out of eight university Beck Fellowships were given to students in the college.
- Over 427 students were listed on the Dean’s list at the conclusion of the spring semester.
- Our online Master’s in Nursing program was ranked 19th in the nation by U.S. News & World Report, a ranking higher than many other Texas universities.
- Our Physics program graduation rate is in the top 11% of similar undergraduate programs nationwide.

We welcome your participation in our college. If you’re an alumni, a current student, a Lamar employee or just a member of the Southeast Texas community, you have a part to play. Helping our students succeed is where you come in. Feel free to contact me or my staff and we can direct you to the most appropriate place to make your unique contribution to Lamar. Go Cardinals!

Physics Student Wins Awards

Keeley Townley-Smith was awarded the 2013 Beck Fellowship and 2014 Goldwater scholarship. Townley-Smith has also been involved in the award-winning STAIRSTEP program (see page 3).

Student Wins Poster Competition

Chelsea Boling, a math and computer science major, achieved success at the March event.
Alumni Group Hosts Basketball Nights

Alumni are always welcome at many Lamar events including Basketball nights, sponsored by the Office of Alumni Affairs. On February 1, Lamar hosted Texas A&M Corpus Christi for two games. Lamar staff and students were on hand to welcome alumni to a special reception before the games, including Political Science major Maegan Collins and her friend Kayla Clifton, an Interdisciplinary Studies major (both pictured on Page 1).

The University Advancement Division at Lamar University is dedicated to building awareness, community, tradition, involvement, advocacy and contribution among Lamar constituents in order to strengthen the programs of Lamar University. They seek to help students, faculty, staff, alumni and friends of the university gain pride and satisfaction from vital connections to the university, today and for a lifetime.

Lamar Prepares Student for Success in Medical School

Like many recent Lamar graduates, Crissie Vandehoef is about to set off on a new adventure. The May 2014 graduate will join Texas A&M Health Science Center this fall. Crissie was accepted into the M.D./Ph.D. program, a 6-8 year program that Crissie says Lamar prepared her very well for. As a David J. Beck fellow, Crissie worked on a microbiome project at the National Institutes of Health under Dr. Robert Colbert. While pursuing her double major in Biology and Chemistry, Crissie also participated in undergraduate research with Lamar chemistry professor Dr. Christopher Martin. In addition to Dr. Martin, Crissie praises many Lamar faculty who helped her including Dr. Ashwini Kucknoor (Biology), Dr. Ana Christensen (Biology), Dr. Paul Nicoletto (Biology) and Dr. Richard Lumpkin (Chemistry).

“I would recommend Lamar to other prospective students because, despite of the size of our STEM science programs, we have some very intelligent, and fantastically talented faculty members,” said Vandehoef. “The teaching experience and one on one mentoring available here could never be matched by an ivy league or ‘big’ university.”

The College of Arts & Sciences pre-professional programs prepare students for post graduate work in medicine, dentistry and pharmacy studies. For more information about pre-professional programs, contact Dr. Joe Nordgren (joe.nordgren@lamar.edu).
STAIRSTEP Program Recognized for Excellence

STAIRSTEP has worked to recruit, retain, and transition students upon graduation to careers or advanced study in STEM. It focuses on five disciplines in the College: Chemistry, Computer Science, Earth and Space Sciences, Mathematics and Physics. Chemistry students perform research in computational chemistry and chemical education under the direction of Dr. Christopher Martin. Computer Science students research artificial intelligence, machine learning, and computer science education under the direction of Dr. Peggy Doerschuk. Earth & Space Science students research storm surges and ground subsidence under the direction Dr. Joseph Kruger. Math students research graph theory and applications under the direction of Dr. Jennifer Daniel. Physics students research optics and photonics under the direction of Dr. Cristian Bahrim. Students have presented their research at professional conferences and meetings. Several have won awards for their research presentations, and many have been McNair Scholars, ASCENT scholars, Beck Fellows, and Goldwater Scholarship recipients.

The program targets talented ‘at risk’ students who are low income, first generation, and/or underrepresented in STEM because they face social and economic challenges that can make it difficult for them to progress to graduation. Through their participation in STAIRSTEP, students become enthusiastic advocates and role models and a great force for attracting others to STEM. Participation in K-14 outreach activities helps them develop communication, teamwork and teaching skills. The STAIRSTEP teams pool their resources to participate in a wide variety of outreach activities, especially targeting local high schools and community colleges. They have shared their love of STEM with thousands of students, parents, educators and community leaders.

Goals

- Retain and develop talented, at risk undergraduates
- Inspire them to attract others to STEM
- Transition them to advanced study or careers in STEM

Strategies

- Early undergrad team research and outreach, mentoring, peer tutoring
- Conferences, Career Forums, Counseling, Research Seminars
- Competitive stipends
STAIRSTEP has also hosted research seminars and career forums to bring distinguished speakers to campus and expose students to current research and career opportunities in STEM. Many speakers have been females and underrepresented minorities who also serve as role models for the students. These events are open to all students and have exposed hundreds of students to research and careers in STEM. The program has also partnered with the Lamar Career Center to help prepare students for transition to the workforce.

As of spring 2013, 86 undergraduates had participated in the program. Over 89 percent have been retained in their STEM major. Participants have had much higher GPAs and much lower drop rates in their major classes than cohorts of students from prior years. Over 88 percent of STAIRSTEP students who have graduated have transitioned into either graduate study or STEM related employment within 6 months of graduation. As of fall 2013, majors in the five STAIRSTEP disciplines have increased 69 percent since the program started, and incoming first time in college freshmen in the STAIRSTEP disciplines have more than doubled, increasing by 131%. Several participants who graduated have gone on to teach math and physics in local high schools and community colleges, and several are pursuing graduate study in STEM.

These achievements result from the hard work and dedication of our team of STAIRSTEP faculty, staff and students. Dr. Daniel serves as Associate Director of STAIRSTEP and is in charge of community college outreach and budget issues. Dr. Bahrim is in charge of on-campus outreach activities. Dr. Kruger is in charge of off-campus outreach. Dr. Martin is in charge of advertising and the website. Dr. Mann serves as Director of STAIRSTEP assessment. Administrative Associate Harvilynne McNeel assists with administrative tasks. Dr. Doerschuk is the Director of STAIRSTEP.

Partial support for STAIRSTEP has been provided by the National Science Foundation’s Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics Talent Expansion Program (STEP).

Local Impact

- 77 of 86 participants retained (89%)
- Outreach events exposed 1000 students, teachers, and others each year to STEM.
- 33 participants have graduated thus far.
- 88% of graduated participants successfully transitioned into STEM advanced study or careers within 6 months of graduation.
- Participants have higher GPAs and lower drop rates in major courses than cohorts.
- Significant impact on professional growth, improved attainment of learning objectives
- Some of our students ...
  - won LU fellowships to do summer research at NIH and NIST
  - won 3rd place in the international undergrad student research competition at ACM SIGCSE 2013
  - won a scholarship from the Society of Independent Professional Earth Scientists (2nd undergrad ever to win)
  - represented LU at “Undergraduate Research Day at the Capitol”
  - entered LU’s Fast-Track Mathematics program and will complete a BS and MS in 5 years
  - teach physics, math, geology and science in high schools across Texas after graduation

STAIRSTEP is currently looking for new sponsors due to the expiration of the National Science Foundation grant. Interested parties may contact the College of Arts & Sciences for more information about giving or use the form on the last page of this newsletter.
Lamar University selected 16 students to serve as new Lamar Ambassadors this year, including 8 from the College of Arts & Sciences. They joined 22 returning Ambassadors in representing the student body at official university events during the 2014-2015 academic year.

“The success of the many strong academic programs at Lamar University is due, in large part, to our collaborations with our alumni and community leaders,” said Linda LeBlanc, director of alumni affairs. “Our Ambassadors allow the university to connect accomplished students with these important constituents, strengthening critical bonds and increasing opportunities for all students of our university.”

Lamar University Ambassadors are a select group of students who serve the university by assisting in recruiting qualified prospective students, building goodwill among alumni and community supporters at various public functions, and representing the student body to visiting dignitaries.

“Lamar Ambassadors have a high level of involvement on campus and are well informed about the university and what it has to offer students, alumni and the community,” LeBlanc said.

To serve as an Ambassador, an applicant must be a registered full-time student, be classified as a sophomore or junior in the fall and maintain a minimum cumulative grade point average of 3.0. Applicants must also submit a letter of interest, resume, faculty recommendation and have approval from their college dean.

The newly selected Lamar University Ambassadors from the College of Arts & Sciences are: Eric Hernandez (psychology/biology), Lauren Schuldt (English), Kara Timberlake (English/communication), Brian Curran (biology/pre-medicine), Matthew McAfee (mathematics), Dani Sanders (political science), Zach Defrancis (history/political science), and Tyler Sumrall (communication).

Dr. Brent Bost was honored as one of three 2014 Lamar University Distinguished Alumni Awards recipients at a February 21 reception. The Distinguished Alumni Awards are the highest awards presented by Lamar University to its alumni.

Award honorees are selected annually by a committee of the Lamar University Alumni Advisory Board. Eligible candidates must be graduates of Lamar University, distinguished in their chosen professions or life work, and persons of such integrity, stature and demonstrated ability that the university community will take pride in and be inspired by their recognition. They must also recognize the importance of their educations at Lamar and their interest and loyalty in the university must be evident.
five degrees from Lamar University; bachelor’s degrees in chemistry and biology in 1978, a bachelor of business administration in accounting in 1992, a master of business administration in economics in 1997. Bost is a graduate of the Baylor College of Medicine, where he was student body president, earning his M.D. in 1981. He received specialty training in obstetrics and gynecology at the Baylor University Medical Center in Dallas.

Named one of the Best Doctors in America by his colleagues, Bost has published papers in obstetrics, gynecologic surgery, health care financing and social security reform. He has presented his findings at national meetings of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. The author of two books, *The Hurried Woman* and *The Hurried Woman Syndrome*, he explains how women can overcome the physical and emotional fallout of living in a hurry-up world. Bost is also the founder and president of Pathfinder Management Systems, a company that offers management and personal financial planning.

“My decision to come to Lamar is what got me into medical school” Bost said. “And, after serving on the Admissions Committee at Baylor College of Medicine, I'm convinced that this is true. Lamar gave me the foundation I needed to succeed in Medicine and has provided an invaluable resource to continue my education -- in many fields -- through the years. If I had it to do all over again, I would choose Lamar University in a heartbeat.”

Currently the medical staff president at Christus St. Elizabeth Hospital, Bost is also an assistant clinical professor of Ob/Gyn at the University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston. A member of the board of directors of the Beaumont Community Players and CordTrack Corporation, he is a past president of the LU Alumni Advisory Board and served on the executive committee of the Lamar University Foundation. Bost currently sits on the Lamar University College of Business Advisory Board and is an adjunct instructor in the College of Business.

Bost’s oldest children are both physicians-in-training, while his two youngest sons are still college undergraduates. Amanda has a year left on a Neonatology Fellowship in Houston, Neal is in Los Angeles doing a radiology residency, Stephen is working on an allied health degree in Austin and Thomas is studying hospitality management at LU.

Study Abroad received a significant boost when Dr. Kenneth Evans was chosen as President of Lamar University, according to Joe Nordgren, Associate Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences. Early in fall 2013, Dr. Evans assembled a group of administrators and faculty and charged the committee with making recommendations to him about expanding opportunities for students to earn academic credit while traveling to other countries.

The result has been increased interest on the part of faculty and students. “We have more trips planned this summer than ever before,” said Nordgren. In summer 2014 Lamar faculty will take students on 10 trips to a variety of countries including Italy, China, Jordan, England, France, Ecuador and Spain.

Part of the renewed interest is due to multiple campus forums during the academic year. Forums provided both faculty and students the information they needed to weigh the decision to participate this summer. Longterm, Nordgren expects Study Abroad to become even more popular at Lamar. One of the committees recommendation was to hire a full-time study aboard coordinator, a recommendation that was approved by Dr. Evans. A search is currently in progress.

Students returning from Study Abroad trips last summer said that it was an experience that changed their lives and made them better students and people.

“Studying in Spain was an absolutely amazing opportunity and something that I will never forget,” said Amy Morgan, English and Modern Languages major. “Being able to immerse myself in the culture, and to learn about the history, language and people of Spain was definitely one of the best experiences of my life!”

For more information about the Study Abroad Program, visit www.lamar.edu/studyabroad or contact Norma Zarzosa at (409) 880-8593.
The new look of the College of Arts & Sciences websites was made possible by the university purchase of new content management software that manages all Lamar web pages. The year-long transition to the new system had been overseen by Dr. Joe Nordgren with implementation of the websites by Mrs. Eileen Burch and Dr. Timothy Roden. Department heads of each of the twelve departments in the college also participated in the design of each department website.
News from Biology

Dr. Richard Harrel retired after 48 years of teaching at Lamar. With unanimous support of the Biology faculty, he was also named Distinguished Emeritus Professor for his long and valued service to Lamar. Dr. Harrel’s research interests include ecology of freshwater and estuarine macro-invertebrates, the bio-monitoring of toxic substances in aquatic environments and the ecological succession of oxbow lakes. He was named the 2003 Distinguished Faculty Lecturer at Lamar. He also received the 2000-2001 University Scholar Award. During his time at Lamar, Harrel obtained 18 grants, authored 45 publications, produced 37 graduate students and served as Director of the Environmental Science program since 1992. In that time 126 students graduated in Environmental Science. In addition to teaching, Dr. Harrel has been a very active community member and leads Clean Air and Water, Inc. of Beaumont, a citizen’s environmental group. The group has been credited with improving the air and water quality in the Golden Triangle area.

Dr. Ian Lian joined the department in 2013 as Assistant Professor of Biology specializing in cell biology. A native of Taiwan, Dr. Lian attended high school in Canada and is a graduate of University of California at San Diego. Part of his research involves looking for new ways to change non-stem cells into stem cells.

To assist Dr. Lian in his research the department recently purchased a Quantitative Polymerase Chain Reaction (QPCR) device. The technology behind the device was created by Dr. Kary Mullis who won the Nobel Prize in 1993 for research. Some regard the process as one of the monumental scientific techniques of the twentieth century.

The device has many applications including use in crime labs. Dr. Lian will use the device to analyze gene expressions and profiles of cancer samples to extract DNA.

GET INVOLVED WITH BIOLOGY

The Biology department is home to many programs that train students for a variety of fascinating and rewarding careers including pre-professional programs in medicine.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT
Dr. Paul Nicoletto, 409-880-8256
(pfnicoletto@my.lamar.edu)
Dr. Christopher Martin's passion for home brewing has inspired the creation of a class entitled The Chemistry of Brewing, which became available in the spring 2014. The course is also offered in summer.

“I wanted to start the course, but I was not sure if there would be interest,” Martin said. “The courses that I teach, Organic Chemistry I and II, are traditionally some of the most difficult courses at the university, which a lot of times labels me as the difficult professor. I didn’t know how much of that was going to roll over into this class.”

“I am very sensitive to the concept of underage drinking and alcoholism, and I wanted to assert that the class would not be endorsing either. Instead, we would be concentrating on the chemistry that is involved in brewing,” Martin said. “Beer is a measuring stick of culture. In class, I try to make sure that people understand the history, the cultural significance, and the overall process of what it takes to brew a batch of beer.”

The course is offered to any student who needs an upper-level chemistry elective. For undergraduates, Organic Chemistry I is a prerequisite. Graduate students in a chemical science also can take the course.

This semester was the first time the Chemistry of Brewing has been taught at Lamar. A Fermentation Chemistry class previously was offered in 2007 by chemistry professor Richard Lumpkin, covering the process of brewing chocolate, coffee and beer.

A grant from the American Chemical Society Petroleum Research Fund will support the research of two Lamar University faculty members into new techniques to remove sulfur compounds from hydrocarbon fuels. The $100,000 New Directions Award for Fundamental Research will enhance the research of John Zhanhu Guo, Associate Professor of chemical engineering, and Suying Wei, Assistant Professor of analytical chemistry, into pervaporation of sulfur compounds using elastomeric polymer nanocomposite membranes. The research is important to the petroleum industry with the potential to advance the nanocomposite field by creating innovative polymer nanocomposites.

The researchers plan to modify commercially available membranes that are used in water treatment. By modifying the surface with nanoparticles and carbon nanotubes, they hope to be able to selectively remove sulfur compounds, leading to greater yields of cleaner fuels. The advantages over existing techniques include high selectivity, high separation efficiency and energy savings.

Graduate and undergraduate students from both the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry and the Dan F. Smith Department of Chemical Engineering will participate in the research.

Using orange and banana peels and several other waste materials, Dr. Shyam Shukla, Professor of analytical chemistry, has discovered a method to utilize several types of wastes in purifying contaminated drinking water, with the help of his research team. The team includes Dr. Kenneth Dorris from Lamar, Dr. Alka Shukla from Houston Community College, and Dr. Andrew Gomes, a Lamar research associate professor.

Dr. Shyam Shukla
At the 246th National Meeting & Exposition of the American Chemical Society (ACS) in Indianapolis, the world’s largest scientific society, Shukla and his research team’s most recent findings on using banana-peel powder to remove lead and other potentially toxic metals from water, were recognized.

“The recognition by the ACS is very encouraging that we have done something worthwhile,” Shukla said. “The greatest reward is saving lives potentially, and spreading this useful knowledge to others.”

Shukla and the team established a method they refer to as the “L-3 Solution”- low cost, low tech, and locally available.

For the past 23 years, Shukla and his research team have tested materials to employ as toxic metal ion filters, removing metals like lead, which has been demonstrated to cause kidney disease and lower the IQ of young children, and chromium, which can impair liver function and affect human reproduction.

“Through various forms of human activity, such as electronic waste, pesticides, pharmaceutical waste, and even the lead found in gasoline, toxic metals and organics infiltrate the water supply,” Shukla said. “The toxic metals then get absorbed to the water. These toxic metals, that are incredibly harmful at small levels, enter the human body, but they almost never leave. They continue to cause lasting damage, and are particularly harmful to children, who have a lower tolerance level.”

Considered two of the most heavily consumed fruits in the world, bananas and oranges have the potential to create a major agro-waste problem when peels are disposed in the trash. Studies have shown that banana peels, as well as orange peels, contain pectin polysaccharides that act as adsorbents, meaning toxic metal ions found in the water can adhere to the surface of another material. Therefore, banana peel powder, BPP, has the ability to sequester toxic metal ion such as barium, silver, cadmium, lead, and nickel, from aqueous solutions.

Shukla hopes to soon complete a prototype to perform all 3 stages of water treatment ready for the public use. As the main goal of his research, Shukla hopes that this new discovery will enhance the lives that are affected by lack of clean water supply.

Dr. Suying Wei received a Lamar Presidential Faculty Fellowship in Support of Teaching Innovation, along with Dr. Zhanhu Guo of Chemical Engineering, for “Polymer Nanocomposites Filled with Well-defined Hierarchical Nanofilters toward Electromagnetic Interference Absorption.”
Through a grant from NVIDIA Corporation, the department established the NVIDIA CUDA Teaching Center in the Maes building in fall 2013. The laboratory contains 12 PCs equipped with high-performance NVIDIA graphics cards. Students can program the machines using the Compute Unified Device Architecture (CUDA) programming language. The CUDA language is especially good at providing students the ability to experiment with parallel programming techniques. Dr. Lawrence Osborne is director of the new lab and is using the lab to teach a course in algorithms this spring. In the summer Osborne will use the facility to teach a course in parallel programming.

A team of peer evaluators from The Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology, Inc. (ABET) visited the department in October 2013 to assess the Bachelor of Science program. Based on the visit and documentation submitted by the department during summer 2013, the department received full reaccreditation in summer 2014. The department undergoes an accreditation visit every six years.

A new concentration in computer game development was approved starting fall 2014. The concentration is similar to the existing B.S. degree in computer science. Dr. Timothy Roden will teach many of the new game development courses in the concentration.

“The core CS classes remain the same,” Roden said. “The difference is the electives. Students in the game concentration will substitute their electives for five other courses—a course in C++ programming and four game development courses. We’re really excited about this new concentration because we know students are excited about it.”

Students in the concentration will begin by taking an introductory course that surveys the industry. Topics include the history of computer games, level design, character
creation, art, programming, and marketing. As part of the course, students learn to use a variety of tools useful in subsequent courses such as 3D modelling, audio and video editing software. The introductory course is open to all majors and does not require programming skills.

The department has recently published many papers in journals and conferences. Following are a few examples.

Dr. Peggy Doerschuk presented a paper at the 43rd ASEE/IEEE Frontiers in Education Conference in October 2013. The paper was titled “Introducing Programming Concepts through Video Game Creation.” Co-authors on the paper included Lamar students Kathlyn Doss, Daniel Vincent and Valerie Juarez. The three students are all undergraduates who worked on the project under the direction of Doerschuk and Dr. Jane Liu.

The paper presents adaptable materials that teach programming fundamentals via game programming with Greenfoot, a free Java based game development platform. The materials were used to teach computing concepts to high school students in two different venues in summer 2011 and 2012. Assessments found that the students experienced a significant increase in knowledge in computing and an increased interest in computing and likelihood of taking computing courses in the future. The paper describes how the materials can be used in various venues and provides a link to the materials so that others may use them. The research was possible through funding by the Collaborative Research Experience for Undergraduates program and a National Science Foundation Broadening Participation in Computing Grant.

Among many publications, Dr. Stefan Andrei co-authored a recent article for the 12th IEEE International New Circuits and Systems Conference (NEWCAS) entitled “An Efficient Scheduling Algorithm of Non-Preemptive Independent Tasks for Biomedical Systems” to be presented at the conference in June. The NEWCAS conference encompasses a wide range of special sessions and keynote talks given by prominent experts covering key areas of research in microsystems. This article is a joint effort between researchers from University of Houston and Cuza University of Iasi, Romania. The joint work describes a new scheduling algorithms for biomedical systems in a more efficient way than previous techniques.

After three years of research in creating a smart shoe insert for physical therapy and athletics, a paper by Dr. Roden and several co-authors was accepted to the 7th International Conference on Pervasive Technologies Related to Assistive Environments. The paper was presented at the conference in May 2014. The paper chronicles the design and product development of a newly patented medical device called StepRite that was developed in cooperation with several industry partners, physical therapy specialists and engineering faculty from the University of Texas at Arlington. The project involved creating cloud-based server software, mobile applications and custom algorithms to accelerometer data into information used to measure a patient or athlete's activity.

The department offered a summer computing workshop July 21-25. The workshop is designed to teach K-12 school teachers across Southeast Texas fundamental computing concepts. Sixteen teachers from Nederland, Evadale, Houston, Port Arthur, Kirbyville, and Beaumont participated in the 2013 workshop. Computer science associate professor, Dr. Jane Liu, organized the event again this year.

“The program lets students have something simple to understand which encourages their use,” said Elizabeth Hancock, K-5 teacher at Eliot Elementary School. “I can’t wait to incorporate the program into my curriculum.”
“This program lets students determine if this is a desired field they should pursue in the future,” said Katherine Whitney, 8th grade science teacher at Central Middle School, Nederland.

“In the workshop I learned different ways to do a lesson to attract kids’ interests,” said Alecia Boling, who has taught 5th grade math and science for 13 years at Martin Elementary in Beaumont.

Computer Science undergraduate students Josh Wilson and David Hemmenway helped develop the workshop last summer and also served as instructors. Other undergraduate tutors were Zebulun Barnett, Ethan Phillip Hasson, Yingbo Xu, Christopher Maddox, J.T. Copeland, Matthew Williamson, and Markus A. Schultz.

“I took a survey at the start of the summer class to determine student interest in 25 different topics in Android programming,” Roden said. “The top three things students said they were interested in were games, 3D graphics and social networking.”

The final project in the summer course was a 2D graphics “bug smasher” game. One of the students in the course, Bradley Williams, uploaded his application to the Internet and within a few days the app was generating revenue.

“Long-term, I want to work with faculty too”, said Roden. “I know there are faculty members at Lamar who have ideas for mobile apps as part of their research. I would love to help them.”

The newly established Game Design & Development Laboratory in the Maes building was used for the first time in fall 2013 to teach a course in game development. Dr. Roden taught the Handheld Game Development Course using the Android operating system. Both undergraduates and graduate students took the course.

“Mobile app development is something we need to teach more,” Roden said. “Right now the industry is heavily invested in mobile. As a result there are many jobs for new graduates with mobile skills.”
Two Lamar geology majors won first place at the 2013 Sigma Xi Student Research Conference in Research Triangle, North Carolina. The two were senior Christine Gartner and junior Erica Lassen. The students, both of Beaumont, competed in the undergraduate division of Ecology & Evolutionary Biology, Environmental Sciences, and Geological Sciences. The pair presented “Results of the 2012 field season excavations on the first Uinta C micro-mammal fossil locality from the Uinta Basin in northeastern Utah.”

Dr. James Westgate served as faculty advisor. Westgate, who holds a Ph.D. from the University of Texas, served as president of the Texas Academy of Sciences in 1999-2000 and received its outstanding services award in 2008.

The research into micro-mammal fossils provides a unique glimpse into the mammal community that inhabited the Uinta Basin near the end of deposition of the Eocene Uinta Formation. The Eocene epoch lasted from 56 million to 33.9 million years ago.

In 2012, LU field crews excavated five tons of bulk material from the first micro-mammal site discovered in the Uinta Formation in the Uinta Basin. After concentrating the sample by local screen washing, it was taken to the Lamar University Paleontology Lab. By soaking the concentrate in mineral spirits and then water and screen-washing again, it was further reduced then sorted by size using screens.

Researchers identified approximately 100 mammalian fossils by genus and or species, thus increasing the sample size of identifiable mammal specimens from the site by 45 percent. The sample now exceeds 300 mammal specimens. The Uinta Formation is the type locality for mammalian specimens that define the Uinta North American Land Mammal age.

The SIPES Foundation, administering the scientific, educational and charitable programs of the Society of Independent Professional Earth Scientists, recently announced the selection of 10 outstanding earth science students for scholarship awards.

Christine Gartner Lee, a senior geology major from Mauriceville, is one of only two undergraduates to receive this prestigious award. Honored students were given a $2,500 award.

“Christine is the first student in our department to receive the prestigious SIPES Scholarship,” said Jim Jordan, professor and chair of the Department of Earth and Science Sciences. “She deserves this award because of her excellent academic record, not only in grades, but also because of her contributions to the discipline through her leadership as president of the LU Geological Society. Her enthusiasm for the geosciences is contagious and she will be missed.”

Applications were accepted from currently-enrolled upper-division or graduate students who are U.S. Citizens studying any field of earth science or engineering, and who have a cumulative grade point average of 3.5 or higher.

Since its establishment in 1981, the SIPES Foundation has awarded scholarships to 200 promising earth science students. Funding for the 2013 awards was made possible through generous donations from SIPES members.

The SIPES Foundation also conducts and films educational seminars, contributes funding to earth science publications and continuing education programs, and also maintains an extensive library of earth science films.

The Society of Independent Professional Earth Scientists is a national organization of more than 1,300 self-employed geologists, geophysicists and engineers engaged primarily in domestic energy exploration and development.

Applications for the SIPES Foundation Earth Science Scholarships are available online annually after March 1.

For more information about SIPES Foundation, visit old.sipes.org or call (214) 363-1780.

Dr. James Westgate spent 10 days in April conducting paleontology and rock workshops for 5th and 6th grade students and science teachers in a trip funded by the A. M. Qattan Foundation. Westgate led workshops in Ramallah, Bethlehem and Jericho, and visited Old Jerusalem.

Westgate’s presentation materials and lectures were translated into Arabic.

The opportunity originated when Westgate participated in a 2012 Hands On Science International conference in Turkey as its keynote speaker. “From that I was invited to come be a part of the teachers exchange program sponsored by the Walid and Helen Science Education Project at the Qattan Center for Educational Research and Development a program of the A.M. Qattan Foundation.”
Dr. Jerry Bradley was named a 2014 Piper Professor in recognition of his dedication to the teaching profession and his outstanding academic and scholarly achievements. Bradley, professor of English and Modern Languages, was one of 10 faculty members in Texas to be honored this year by the Minnie Stevens Piper Foundation. Bradley is also the 13th Lamar faculty member to receive the honor since the program began in 1958.

Bradley’s record of professional activity includes membership in the American Academy of Poets, Texas Institute of Letters, Popular Culture Association, and about a dozen other professional organizations. He has received 43 grants, including four from the National Endowment for the Humanities, five from the Witter Bynner Poetry Foundation, and others from the Meadows Foundations and the Texas Commission on the Arts.

Bradley has delivered 89 scholarly conference presentations, given 188 readings of his creative work, and conducted 18 writing workshops. He has published six books, more than 200 poems, 100 book reviews, and numerous essays, encyclopedia entries, and short stories. His work is critically acclaimed, highly regarded, and widely cited.

The Piper Professor Award was established by the San Antonio–based Minnie Stevens Piper Foundation in 1958 to annually recognize outstanding college professors across Texas. Ten awards are made annually to professors for superior teaching at the college level.

Bradley has also recently published a collection of poetry, *Crownfeathers and Effigies*, through Lamar University Press. One reviewer described the collection this way: “Poems are poems because of craft, and Bradley’s poetic craft, throughout the entire collection, is nearly flawless. As I completed my reading of each poem, I felt as though I had worked a verbal Rubik’s Cube, so accomplished was the artistry of language which had just unfolded before my eyes.

“I feel wonderful,” Megnet said. “It is very encouraging to win against students from all over Texas.”

Williams’ entry consisted of four poems titled “Balloon at an Infant’s Funeral,” “Grandfather’s Boat (Wake of Colleen),” “Lover’s Quarrel,” and “Killer Deer Jerky,” all of which were inspired by actual events. Williams, who entered the contest for the first time, originally did not know he had been nominated until the end of the semester when Bradley contacted him about possible revisions.

“I feel honored. I had never really given poetry too much consideration prior to the course,” Williams said. “I committed myself to the course, made an A, and won a contest, so that’s pretty sweet.”

Dr. Jim Sanderson, professor and chair of the Department of English and Modern Languages, has recently published two new works. The first is a collection of short stories, *Trashy Behavior*, published through Lamar University Press. The book can be purchased online at Amazon.com.
Sanderson decided to produce the collection after winning the Texas Institute of Letters’ Kay Cattarulla Award for Short Fiction in 2012 for the short story, “Bankers.”

“With one 19th century story, concerning Comanches, Germans, and a Black Seminole, and picking up again in the 1960s and 1980s, these stories chronicle the trashy behavior of low-level cons, crooks, prostitutes, and gamblers,” said Sanderson.

The second work is a novel, Nothing to Lose, published by Texas Christian University Press. The book traces the account of fictional character Roger Jackson who Sanderson describes as a “grouch”. Jackson drinks too much and with the wrong sorts of people. He dislikes where he lives – Beaumont, Texas. He dislikes his job – taking photos of cheating spouses. His dislikes his past – he could have been a lawyer. Now he finds himself entangled in a crime which takes him, and the story, into the deep Piney Woods of Texas.

A prolific writer, Sanderson is currently at work on another novel, Hill Country Property, to be published by Livingston Press in 2014 or 2015. A Lamar faculty member for 25 years, Sanderson teaches fiction writing and serves as writing director in the department. A member of the prestigious Texas Institute of Letters, Sanderson is the author of 11 works total, including seven novels, a book of essays, a textbook and dozens of short stories and scholarly articles. Among Sanderson’s writing awards are the Kenneth Patchen Prize for fiction, the Frank Waters Prize, the Violet Crown Award, and finalist for the 2010 Texas Institute of Letters’ Jesse Jones Award. Lamar has honored Sanderson as Distinguished Faculty Lecturer in 2002 and University Scholar in 2006.

Dr. Pamela S. Saur retired from teaching in May. Among her scholarly achievements, Saur has produced more than 100 publications. The Texas State University System honored her as a 2010 Regents’ Professor, the system’s highest faculty award. Lamar has honored her as both university scholar and university professor. Saur plans to spend next year finishing her current project which is writing a book about Adalbert Stifter. The working title for the new book is Sublime Marble and Pure Linen: The Meaning of the Material in the Fiction of Adalbert Stifter.

Adalbert Stifter was an Austrian writer of the late nineteenth century. His signature novel, Indian Summer, is a major example of the German-language genre called the Bildungsroman or novel of individual development. Saur’s research specialty is Austrian literature which she began during her junior year abroad in Vienna. She has published and presented numerous papers on Stifter’s works. Research on Stifter was supported by a 2006 Research Enhancement Grant and a 2012 summer Development Leave funding work at the Stifter Haus archives in Linz, Austria. This book will analyze the ideas and values behind the descriptions of nature, homes and furnishings, and everyday culture for which Stifter is known. According to Saur, Stifter’s descriptions incorporate a unique iconography of clothing, objects, and materials, reflect on the uses, beauties, and best stewardship of things, and ultimately express his views on people’s relationships to the material world.

R.S. Gwynn published a new collection of poetry, Dogwatch, through Measure Press. According to one reviewer, “Gwynn writes of an America of malapropisms and bad taste and a literary past ripe for recycling.”

Dr. Gretchen Johnson published a new collection of poetry, A Trip Through Downer, Minnesota, through Lamar University Press. According to one reviewer, “Gretchen Johnson’s poems reeled me in immediately, captivating my attention until the last page.”

Dr. Amy Smith published a translation of Korean short stories with co-author Ally H. Hwang, A Good Family, through Dalkey Archive Press.

Dr. Catalina Castillon and Dr. T.J. Geiger were recipients of a Lamar Presidential Faculty Fellowship for Teaching Innovation for their project “Modular Writing: Hispanic Literature in the U.S.”
Over one hundred and fifty students, teachers and parents filled the Setzer Center February 13 for the Lamar University History Department’s annual History Day competition. The day-long event is a regional scholastic competition that qualifies entries from Southeast Texas for the Texas History Day State competition held in Austin in May. The Lamar History Day regional competition, as well as the Texas History day event, is in conjunction with the National History Day competition held each summer in Maryland. The regional and state events are overseen by the Texas State Historical Commission.

Thirty entries from the Lamar competition qualified for state competition. Heading the list was the Individual Paper by Penelope Miller from Livingston Junior High. Her work entitled “Religious Freedom in Public Schools” not only won first place in the Junior Division but was also judged to be the best paper submitted overall in both the Junior and Senior divisions. Ms. Miller received a Barnes and Noble gift card, presented by College of Arts and Sciences Dean Brenda Nichols in recognition of her achievement. In all, Dean Nichols handed out awards to more than fifty entries in all categories of the competition. In addition to presentation of the winner’s medals and ribbons and announcement of the state qualifiers, the Lamar History department also honored History Department chair, Dr. Mary Scheer, for her contributions to the continuing success of the History Day program, which began under her auspices five years ago.

Mr. Ken Poston’s American History Honors class attended the 2013 Sesquicentennial observance of the Battle of Sabine Pass, which occurred on September 8, 1863. The historic battle site, which was largely destroyed by Hurricanes Rita and Ike, has been completely restored thanks to local efforts and the Texas Historical Commission. More than 300 re-enactors participated in the 150th anniversary celebration. The Civil War battle was one of the few battles fought in Texas and resulted in a Union defeat at the hands of Texas defenders.


Texas A&M University Press published an essay collection edited by Dr. Jimmy Bryan titled “The Martial Imagination: Cultural Aspects of American Warfare”. The anthology collected the latest research from 11 scholars from across the country and from different disciplines, including Dr. Bryan’s article, “Agents of Destiny: The Texas Rangers and the Dilemma of the Conquest Narrative.”

The Texas Social Studies Supervisors Association selected Emily Kosh, senior history major who is currently student teaching, as the 2014 recipient of the Ann Rogers Scholarship. Named in honor of Ann Rogers, a champion of social studies in Texas, the annual award is given to support a student completing the student teacher requirement in social studies. Emily is a member of the Honors program, Phi Kappa Phi national honors society and Phi Alpha Theta national history honor society. She plans to teach overseas after her May 2014 graduation.

Tim Knight, part-time instructor in the department, published “Poor Hobo”, a biography of local music icon Harry Choates who had a Billboard top 10 hit in 1946 entitled “Jole Blon.”
Dr. Mark A. Mengerink participated in the inaugural Cardinal Conversations, an initiative of Nancy and President Kenneth Evans, in October. The goal of the new lecture series is to bring together two professors with overlapping research interests from different departments to foster an interdisciplinary intellectual dialogue. Dr. Mengerink spoke about the rise of fascism in Europe in the 1920s and 1930s to provide historical context for Dr. Amy Smith’s (Department of English and Modern Languages) exploration of Virginia Woolf’s use of myth in her feminist and anti-fascist novels of the interwar period.

Pickering & Chatto Publishers published Dr. Rebecca Boone’s latest book, *Mercurino di Gattinara and the Creation of the Spanish Empire*, in March 2014. As Grand Chancellor to the Holy Roman Emperor, Mercurino di Gattinara (1465–1530) shaped the administration and aims of the Spanish Empire. Focused on world domination, Gattinara used a combination of contemporary political thought and psychology to influence policy over the conquest of Mexico, the Lutheran Revolt and the Spanish domination of Italy. As part of the book, Boone provides the first full English translation of Gattinara’s autobiography.

Dr. Yasuko Sato and Dr. Mark Mengerink were named Lamar ACES fellows for the 2013-2014 academic year. As part of Lamar’s Quality Enhancement Plan to improve student learning at Lamar, the university implemented ACES five years ago. The Active and Collaborative Engagement for Students (ACES) program trains faculty to develop student-centered learning environments that rely heavily on collaborative and active learning for courses in the core curriculum.

“Thanks to the ACES program, I am more passionate about teaching than ever before,” Dr. Sato said when asked to reflect on how ACES has impacted her teaching. Dr. Sato said she has used in-class group quizzes to help students “consolidate each other’s knowledge.” At the same time, she constructs class discussion questions that encourage students to examine “how the past resonates with real world issues in the present.” For example, her classes have discussed the parallels between the murder of Emmet Till and the recent trial of Michael Dunn, the man at the center of the “loud music” trial in Florida. Students in Dr. Sato’s introductory American history survey courses hear only one short lecture each week and spend the rest of the week engaged in activities to reinforce and extend key concepts from the lecture. Dr. Sato encourages students to think about how studying history can help to build a better tomorrow.

The ACES experience has also rekindled a passion for teaching in Dr. Mengerink. No longer bound by the more traditional lecture format, Mengerink has started challenging his students to explore history through short, low-stakes writing assignments. Students in Dr. Mengerink’s class examine a major question in each class session that encourages them to make connections among important concepts encountered in the readings. For example, a class session on the Gilded Age saw students analyzing the links among capitalism, Social Darwinism, and “The Gospel of Wealth.” A lively debate ensued about wealth, poverty, and unregulated capitalism during the late 19th century. Students attempted to trace parallels between the Gilded Age and American society today, examining through primary sources the rhetoric used to describe poverty and the working poor.

Mengerink says there were growing pains during the implementation in his classes. “Students at times are skeptical about the methodology because it differs from how they have learned history in their earlier academic careers,” he said. “However, once students experience the benefits of active and collaborative learning, they embrace it.”

Dr. Mary L. Scheer, chair of the department, received the Leadership in Education award from the Texas State Historical Association at the 2014 state meeting held in San Antonio in March. The award recognizes outstanding “enthusiasm for Texas and its history, leadership among your peers, and use of innovative teaching methods to generate student involvement.”
Chelsea Boling, a math and computer science major, won best undergraduate poster award at the Conference of Texas Statisticians at the University of Texas at Dallas on March 21.

Named as one of the 2014 grant recipients by the Office of Undergraduate Research, Boling plans to conduct her undergraduate research on the same topic she presented at the conference.

“Dr. Kumer Das, who is my mentor, encouraged me to understand more about nonnegative matrix factorization, which led me to read several articles on latent semantic analysis (LSA),” Boling said. “I have a growing interest in ongoing developing methods of data extraction, which can be used to understand constructive information of high dimensional data.

Boling is also an ASCENT scholar, a program where selected math and computer science students are awarded scholarships for up to four semesters at Lamar. During the first summer, students take a class, engage in a research project with mathematics and computer science faculty, and participate in an orientation to the Lamar University campus and community.

“I think this award will be inspirational to all other students in the department,” said Das. “For the grant winners, it is very encouraging as well. Chelsea’s success increases their confidence level significantly.”

For more information regarding the Office of Undergraduate Research grant recipients or the ASCENT program, contact Kumer Das at kumer.das@lamar.edu.

A new endowed scholarship for undergraduate students majoring in mathematics has been established in the Lamar University Foundation. The Juanita Brownlee Memorial Scholarship for Mathematics Teachers was funded by Karen and Glenn Smith, Brownlee’s daughter and son-in-law, in her memory.

“The faculty and staff in the Department of Mathematics are grateful for this endowed scholarship and hope that it will help an able mathematics student who dreams of becoming a high school mathematics teacher,” said MaryE Wilkinson, interim chair of the Department of Mathematics. “This scholarship could provide financial support to help make that dream come true for a student who is academically strong, but financially vulnerable.”

Brownlee was born in Florien, Louisiana. After graduating from Florien High School, she moved to Beaumont and married Maurice Brownlee. Mrs. Brownlee attended Lamar and graduated cum laude in 1963 with a Bachelor of Science in home economics. She returned and received her Master of Education in secondary education in 1973.

Mrs. Brownlee was a math teacher for much of her career in education, continuing to work in the field of education throughout her life. She was the director of Food Services for the Beaumont Independent School District upon retirement. The Brownlees later resided in Florien until Mr. Brownlee’s death, after which she returned to Beaumont. Mrs. Brownlee was a member of Delta Kappa Gamma, an international society for women in the field of education. In addition, she was active with the Texas Retired Teachers Association. She also published two books: Tangram Geometry in Metric and a history and genealogy called Our Westbrook Family. Mrs. Brownlee passed away in 2012.

“Juanita Brownlee’s story is inspiring, and we are proud that her family has honored her memory and our students with this scholarship,” Wilkinson said.

In addition to offering students rigorous mathematics coursework, the Department of Mathematics is actively involved with the STAIRSTEP Program and the National Science Foundation ASCENT Scholarship Program.

For more information about establishing an endowed scholarship, contact the Lamar University Foundation at (409) 880-2117.
The master of nursing online program in the Lamar University JoAnne Gay Dishman Department of Nursing has been ranked 19th in the nation for excellence by U.S. News & World Report. The rankings were made public recently in the magazine's 2014 edition of Top Online Education Programs.

“The ranking demonstrates to current and prospective students that our nursing faculty members have excellent preparation in online teaching and learning,” said Eileen Curl, chair and professor in the nursing department. “The ranking exemplifies the quality of education provided by the faculty in graduate courses on nursing education and nursing administration.”

Online nursing programs nationwide were ranked in five categories including faculty credentials and training, student engagement, student services and technology, admissions selectivity and peer reputation.

Overall, Lamar’s online master’s program in nursing ranked higher than several Texas universities including Texas Tech Health Sciences Center, Texas Christian University, Angelo State University and the University of Texas at Brownsville. Johns Hopkins University, Yale University, Duke University, Arizona State University and the University of Florida were a few leading schools that fell behind Lamar in the national rankings.

The 4th Annual Nursing Awards banquet for the JoAnne Gay Dishman Department of Nursing was held March 18. Baptist Hospital co-sponsored the event and paid for student honorees dinner and provided cash awards for nine outstanding students. The undergraduate nursing awards are named for historical leaders in nursing. The Mary Mahoney Personal Growth Award went to Raylyn Bear. The Lillian Wald Community Service Award was given to Paige Miller. Keri Reeves received the Virginia Henderson Professional Development Award. The Linda Richards Academic Excellence Award went to Jessica Pospisil. The Florence Nightingale Leadership Award was given to Allison Carl. The top undergraduate award called The Spirit of Caring, Vision of Excellence award was bestowed on Anisha Chakkacheril. Three graduate awards were given to MSN students. The Graduate Student Research Award went to Brenda Munoz. The Nursing Administration Student Award was given to Stacy Mancuso and the Nursing Education Student Award recipient was Julie Stamey.

At the 4th Annual Nursing Awards banquet, nurse faculty members nominated for the DAISY Teaching Excellence Award were recognized. The DAISY Faculty Award winner for 2014 is Cindy Pipkins. One student said “Ms. Pipkins teaches how to optimize the act of caring in relation to direct patient care”. Ms. Pipkins teaches first semester junior nursing students. Her favorite quote inspires students: “Don’t be a pigeon. Be an eagle.” The DAISY Foundation sponsors the DAISY award to honor the life of J. Patrick Barnes, who died of complications from an immune disorder. The American Association of Colleges of Nursing supports the DAISY Award as a way to recognize and make visible the contributions and value of nurses, including nurse educators. DAISY nominees included: Dr. Eileen Curl, Gina Hale, Dr. Carol Hammonds, Dr. Elizabeth Long, Stacie McCall, Patti Moss, Dr. Dianna Rivers, Dr. Sheila Smith, Dr. Cindy Stinson, and Kelli White.

Five nurse faculty members retired in May. Four full-time faculty members retiring are Dr. Nancy Blume, Dr. Barbara May, Dr. Sheila Smith and Dr. Faith Wallace. Becky Hunter also retired from part-time teaching.

Dr. Blume served as Director of Graduate Nursing Studies since 2004 and taught many courses at the graduate level. Dr. Barbara May taught undergraduate mental and behavioral health courses since 2004 as well as graduate nursing education courses. Dr. Sheila Smith served as Director of the Edna Horn Gay Learning Center since 1996 in addition to teaching skills courses at the undergraduate level and nursing education courses at the graduate level. Dr. Faith Wallace taught at Lamar for over 21 years. She taught a wide array of undergraduate nursing courses in addition to graduate nursing courses. Becky Hunter, who has been with the department since 1994, taught skills courses.

The top undergraduate award called The Spirit of Caring, Vision of Excellence award was bestowed on Anisha Chakkacheril. Three graduate awards were given to MSN students. The Graduate Student Research Award went to Brenda Munoz. The Nursing Administration Student Award was given to Stacy Mancuso and the Nursing Education Student Award recipient was Julie Stamey.

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The JoAnne Gay Dishman Department of Nursing celebrated the 40th Anniversary of the Associate Degree Nursing (ADN) program on May 3rd with a reception and dinner on the Lamar campus.

ADN graduates, friends, family and faculty were invited. The founding Director of the ADN program, Doris Price Nealy was the keynote speaker.

Awards were presented to Denise Sanders Boutte (RN, BSN, FCN), Dr. Cynthia Stinson (Ph.D., APRN-BC), Linda Key Norwood (RN) and Prudence Danso-Dapaah (RN).

Denise Sanders Boutte (top-left), Dr. Cynthia Stinson (top-right), Linda Kay Norwood (bottom-left), Prudence Danso-Dapaah (bottom-right)

“Memories” table

Doris Price Nealy, founder of the ADN program

(From left) Dr. Judy Smith, Mary Walker, Patti Moss, Dr. Cynthia Stinson, Dr. Eileen Curl, Helen Moss (former ADN faculty member), Doris Price Nealy, Mary Ford, Dr. Iva Hall, Leslie Little, Dr. Carol Hammonds, Donna Wilsker, Cindy Pipkins, Stacey McCall, and Rose Harding

Photos courtesy of René Sheppard Photography
News from Physics

Dr. Richard Lumpkin has assumed the role of Interim Chair of the department in spring 2014. The Physics Department also welcomes our new Administrative Associate, Ms. Calen Brice.

Keeley Townley-Smith of Lumberton and Kollin Kahler of Waco were chosen as 2014 recipients of the David J. Beck Fellowships, a highly competitive and generous award for Lamar University undergraduate students. President Evans presented the awards at the University Reception Center in November 2013.

Summer projects are proposed as part of the fellowship’s rigorous application process and are funded by the fellowship. The Beck Fellowship also covers all academic expenses for one calendar year, including tuition, fees, books and on-campus room and board.

First awarded in 2009, the fellowships are made possible by a generous gift from Lamar distinguished alumnus and prominent attorney David J. Beck, founding partner of Beck Redden LLP in Houston.

Keely Townley-Smith, a senior Physics and Electrical Engineering major, will complete a three month internship at the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) in Gaithersburg, Maryland, in Dr. Yuri Ralchenko’s Atomic Spectroscopy Group, which is part of the Physical Measurement Laboratory Division. Her supervisor is Dr. Gillian Nave. Her project aims to determine the hyperfine structure coefficients for various energy levels of the Mn II ions using spectral line data obtained in experiments realized at the Imperial College in London. The interest in this topic comes from the presence of Mn II ions in the cosmic background radiation and aims to reduce the uncertainty in the wavelengths of atomic transitions. It could also lead to the identification of new spectral lines. Before leaving for NIST, Keely said, “It’s amazing just to be able to go and do this type of research with scientists of such high caliber.”

Lamar University’s Society of Physics Students has been named “Distinguished SPS Chapter” for 2013.

“This is an outstanding accomplishment for Lamar’s physics students,” said Cristian Bahrim, associate professor of the Department of Physics. Bahrim is also the SPS advisor at Lamar.

Numerous accomplishments led to the chapter’s recognition according to Bahrim.

Chapter members participated in several conferences during the 2012-13 academic year, Bahrim said, including two American Physics Society conferences, the Quadrennial Physics Congress, and presented student research papers on spectroscopy projects at two other conferences during the year.

One SPS member, Sara-jeanne Vogler, represented undergraduate research at Lamar, at the Texas Undergraduate Research Day in Austin in April 2013.

Lamar’s SPS chapter was one of the four 2013 UG Research Award winners for undergraduate research on “Solar and Stellar Measurements Using Accurate Spectroscopic Techniques.”

“In Spring 2013, our physics students participated in numerous educational presentations such as at West Brook High School, Memorial High School in Port Arthur, Lee College, Bob Hope School, and Thomas Jefferson Middle School in Port Arthur,” Bahrim said.

Student members were also active in many on-campus outreach activities from the Open House and New Student Orientation to Discover Engineering at the Spindletop-Gladys Boomtown Museum and the ExxonMobil Bernard Harris Summer Science Camp, only to name a few.

Students who participated in multiple events during the academic year 2012-13 are: Sara-jeanne Vogler, former chapter president; Keeley Townley-Smith, secretary; Jacob James, chapter president; Bryan Neal, Jose Castro, Susan Salazar, Aaron Weatherford, Jessica Plaia, Jason Dark, Danielle Dark, and Jamie Fairchild.

Keeley Townley-Smith, a physics and electrical engineering major, has been selected as the second Lamar student to receive the prestigious Barry M. Goldwater Scholarship. The Barry M. Goldwater Scholarship and Excellence in Education Program was established by the United States Congress in 1986 in honor of former United States Senator and 1964 presidential candidate Barry Goldwater, a republican from Arizona. Its goal is to provide a continuing source of highly qualified scientists, mathematicians and engineers by awarding scholarships to college students who intend to pursue careers in these fields.
Lamar University has provided me countless opportunities,” she said. “I have had the chance to do research as an undergraduate, participate in several conferences and of course, obtaining two degrees which I can use to get a good job in the future.”

The Goldwater Scholarship is the most prestigious undergraduate award given in the sciences to only 300 college sophomores and juniors nationwide. A maximum of $7,500 per academic year is granted. The scholarship is awarded based on merit and the actual amount given is based on financial need.

“Keeley has crafted an enviable undergraduate record,” said Steve Doblin, provost and vice president for academic affairs. “We are very proud of her and her accomplishments and cannot wait to see what is next for her.”

Townley-Smith first heard of the Goldwater Scholarship back in fall 2012 when Joseph Young, Lamar’s first Goldwater recipient, came to talk to students about his physics research and getting into graduate school.

“He mentioned the Goldwater award,” she said. “But at the time, I wouldn’t have even dreamed to apply for it, let alone receive the honor. This scholarship is not so much about the money but more about the prestige that it will bring to Lamar University and me when I apply to graduate school.”

Townley-Smith is involved in the STAIRSTEP program and the physics honor society, Sigma Pi Sigma. She is planning to go to graduate school and pursue a Ph.D. in physics and engineering. The opportunity to conduct research on a daily basis in the areas of optics, atomic and molecular physics would be her dream job.

“I would be happy at either a university or national institution,” she said. “At some point in my life, I would also like to teach.”

Ten physics majors graduated in May 2014 with a B.S. degree. They were Jacob Arambula-Wright, Alejandro Gonzales, Kirk Goza, Jacob James, Paul Rizk, Susan Salazar, Dylan Smith, Logan Talbert, Sara-jeanne Vogler, and Jerald Waldrup and one double-major, Anthony Simon. This was a record number for the Physics program at Lamar, and places the program in the top 11% of undergraduate Physics programs nationwide, according to American Institute of Physics’ 2012 statistics.

On May 6, 2014 ten undergraduate physics majors and two faculty were inducted into the Sigma Pi Sigma, Physics Honor Society. The last induction was in 1997.

The department sought to revive the Physics Honor Society for the benefit of physics majors and the Physics program, in general. Dr. Cruse Melvin, the only Lamar faculty who is an active faculty member of the Lamar’s Sigma Pi Sigma’s Chapter, currently serving as Vice-President for Finance, was the Master of Ceremony and honored the new inductees with a certificate, pin, and package received from the national office. Many graduates wore the stole or cords with the symbols of the Sigma Pi Sigma Society at the graduation ceremony, making this event even more special.

Physics major, Alejandro Gonzalez, has co-authored a paper that will be published by the American Journal of Physics on the gravitational dispersion of a torsional wave machine. In this work, Alejandro discovered that gravity induces dispersion on the waves produced by a torsional wave machine, that is, gravity makes waves of different frequencies travel at different speeds. Alejandro’s work was supervised by Drs. Rafael de la Madrid and George Irwin.

Along time research collaboration between Dr. B. Bahrim (Physics), Dr. S. Yu (former postdoc, now in Canada), Dr. J.W. Rabalais (Chemistry) and Dr. B. Makarenko (University of Houston) continues with two new research projects: (1) Channeling conditions and effects during H scattering on Cu(111), with results recently published in the Surface Science journal; (2) Formation and survival of H ions during scattering from Na covered surfaces. This project involves both theory (developed at Lamar) and experiments (performed at the University of Houston).

On March 16, Sara-jeanne Vogler presented her research in space sciences done with Dr. C. Bahrim at The Year of Solar System (YSS) Undergraduate Research Conference sponsored by NASA Science Mission Directorate at Woodlands. A two-page paper titled “Don’t Get Burned! Protection from ICME-related SEP Events in Interplanetary Space” was published in the Conference Book at page 29. She also attended the 45th Lunar and Planetary Science Conference in the Woodlands (March 17-22), which is a prestigious international meeting of space science community, where she had the chance to talk with Dean Eppler, leader of the Dessert Research and Technology Studies program at NASA.

In April, Dr. C. Bahrim was invited in China at the special event “BIT’s 3rd Annual Conference and EXPO of AnalytiX2014” organized in Dalian, in an outstanding setting, with guest speakers from about 40 countries, including 9 Nobel Laureates, and the official opening ceremony of the Bio Valley (the new Silicon Valley for Genetics) on April 25, which is the World DNA and Genome Day. His invited talk was about “Trapping HeNe* excimers on vibrational states using short laser pulses” and reported research which indicates that two rare gas atoms could form a stable molecule when excited on vibrational states using femtosecond laser pulses and proposes a new type of excimer laser.
The 2014 Jack Brooks Conference on Public Affairs and Public Service was a resounding success. The purpose of the Brooks Conference is to provide a forum that brings together a broad spectrum of community and political leaders from across Southeast Texas. Over 100 students, public servants, educators, and elected officials attended the conference on April 17 at the Lamar Institute of Technology Multi-Purpose Center. The theme of this year’s conference was “Reintegration of the Incarcerated.”

Dr. Thomas Sowers, Associate Professor of Political Science, completed the MS 150 charity bike ride from Houston to Austin in April. Dr. Sowers participates in approximately two charity rides every month and raises significant donations and funds for medical research and various non-profit organizations.

The department has announced a new Bachelor of Science/Master of Public Administration program has been approved and will begin in fall 2014. The new program will allow students to complete their BS/MPA degrees in five years and will feature both a thesis and non-thesis option.

Political Science majors Meagan Collins and Candy Rodriguez volunteered with Sara Gubala, Instructor of Political Science, and therapy dog, Kennedy, at the “De-Stress During Finals” event at the Gray Library in December 2013.

GET INVOLVED WITH POLITICAL SCIENCE

The Political Science department is home to many programs that train students for a variety of fascinating and rewarding careers in law, government service, teaching, business and journalism.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT
Dr. Terri Davis, 409-880-8285
(terri.davis@lamar.edu)
Dr. Edythe Kirk assumed the role of chair of the department in June. Dr. Kirk took over from Dr. Jeremy Shelton who was interim chair for one year.

Dr. Edythe Kirk and several graduate students presented posters at the Southwestern Psychological Association (SWPA) Conference in San Antonio in the spring semester.

The department is currently searching for a community psychologist in order to expand the graduate program in Applied Psychology with the goal of beginning to offer community psychology emphasis next year.

Psychology is the scientific study of human behavior. Research is an integral component of the discipline. The Department of Psychology is committed to providing students with opportunities to engage in scientific research and to share their work with the Lamar community and the discipline at large. Twice yearly the department sponsors a Student Research Symposium showcasing undergraduate and graduate student research in Psychology. On April, 10 students presented research on a wide variety of topics in the Science Auditorium. The talks are listed below:

- Mathew Smith: "Internet Gangsters, Revenge Porn, and the Mobbing Effect: Sexual Harassment on Social Media Websites"
- Kevin Smith: “The Effects of Authority on the Misinformation Effect”
- Leah Adkins: “The Effects of Media Violence on Self-Defense Physiological Arousal”
- Amy Becerra: “The Effects of Attitudes and Perceptions on Elder Care”
- Mosunmola Oduwole: “The Effects of Frame Switching on the Locus of Control of Americans and Nigerians”
- Lisa Topping: “Sensory Modality and Gender Differences Associated with Multitasking”
- Hayden Balow: “Using Behavior Analysis to Improve the Quality of Life for Traumatic Brain Injury Individuals”
- Aryn Hernandez: "The Effects of Attitudes and Perceptions on Elder Care”
- Mosunmola Oduwole: “The Effects of Frame Switching on the Locus of Control of Americans and Nigerians”
- Lisa Topping: “Sensory Modality and Gender Differences Associated with Multitasking”
- Aryn Hernandez: "The Impact of Fake Consumer Reviews on Intent to Purchase Services and Retailer Trustworthiness"
- Allison Kondo: “Gender Differences in the Effect of Affect on Creativity”
- Amanda Dunkes: “The Role of Gender in Sympathetic Feelings for Victims of Infidelity”

In addition, the department also sponsored students who presented their work at the Southwestern Psychological Association’s annual meeting in April. Queamani Mickens, Whitney Murdock, Joycelyn Joya, Tho Nguyen, Brandi McDonald, and Zeke Chamberlain, Hayden Balow, Eli Barclay, and Lisa Topping traveled to San Antonio to present research on first impressions based on Facebook profiles, career self-efficacy and sex role identity, behavior analysis, whistleblowing, and the impact of anxiety on memory. Students are also planning to present their research at the Texas Psychological Association’s annual meeting in Dallas in November.

Dr. Ben Smith passed away during the spring semester. According to department chair, Dr. Jeremy Shelton, “Dr. Smith was a very intellectual person who loved reading anything he could. He had a puppy named Mika that he adored and would occasionally bring to school with him when he had to stay late grading tests or assignments. He was also a big Oklahoma Sooners fan which was his alma mater.”

GET INVOLVED WITH PSYCHOLOGY

The Psychology department is home to many programs that train students for a variety of fascinating and rewarding careers specializing in human behavior.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT
Dr. Edythe Kirk, 409-880-7836
(kirkee@my.lamar.edu)
Douglas Shows, an August 2013 Lamar graduate from General Studies, has taken his Lamar degree to a higher level. Shows was one of only three Lamar students honored with the 2013 Plummer Award, recognizing him as one of the top graduates of the class of August 2013 for his high GPA.

A non-traditional student, Shows graduated from high school in 1986. By the time he enrolled at Lamar he was age 42.

“Thanks to Lamar’s core, I was exposed to a variety of subjects and quickly ascertained the areas of my personal interest,” Shows said. “I chose the General Studies degree to allow flexibility. I was eager to learn all I could so every class was enjoyable.”

Shows credits many Lamar faculty members with making his time at Lamar a positive experience including Dr. Julie Wilhelm, who taught Show’s American Literature class.

“I planned on disliking it,” Shows said, “and yet she brought it to life and I enjoyed it immensely. She provided the perfect balance and flow while her love of literature was contagious.”

“Dr. Stewart Wright taught a Sociology of Religion course that challenged me to understand religion from a different context,” Shows said. “Dr. Kevin Smith encouraged me to reassess structure in societies as a whole and know why I believe something, not just what I believe.”

Shows says he feels he is a better person due to the willingness of Lamar faculty to invest so much in students.

Shows now pastors the Campground Baptist Church in Woodville, Texas. With a Lamar degree in hand, he is hard at work on a master’s degree at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. “I am proud to be an alum of Lamar and I constantly speak of its virtues”, he said.

Junior General Studies major Michelle Burdett had two articles about autism accepted for publication by Lamar University Press. She now has seven articles accepted since coming to Lamar. Burdett says she is particularly proud of three of her articles.

An article titled “Autistic Students not Defined by Limitations” describes several students with different disabilities who did not let their handicap stand in the way of pursuing their dreams.

“Growing up my mother worked with people with disabilities,” Burdett said. “Since a young age I have always had a passion and love for people with disabilities.”

Burdett’s article “Famous Autism or Not?” described several people suspected to have Austim including Albert Einstein, Hans Christian Andersen and Sir Issac Newton.

In “Big Puppy with Teeth” Burdett chronicled one Lamar student’s love of alligators.

“Growing up in Fort Worth, I had never encountered such amazing modern day dinosaurs before,” Burdett said. “I had a fascination with them after moving to the area. When I met Paige and discovered her passion for the big puppies as she called them, she invited me to shadow her for a day as she volunteered at Gator Country. I absolutely fell in love with the creatures.”

Burdett plans to graduate from Lamar in May 2015. She is currently a substitute teacher for Lumberton ISD and she also works at Macy’s in Parkdale Mall. She plans to teach English or communications at the high school level in addition to pursuing a master’s degree in English. Before coming to Lamar, Burdett previously attended University of Texas at Arlington.

“One of my favorite things about Lamar is the personality of the professors,” Burdett said. “They are willing to work with their students to ensure their success in the courses. I have been in large classes in the past and the professors have seemed very intimidating, but here at Lamar, that has not been the case.”

Burdett also gives credit for her success to the support system at Lamar.

“Whether I need help with an upcoming test or help editing a research paper, there is a resource on campus that I can go to,” Burdett said. “I have used many of the resources in the past semesters and I can assure you that with their help, I have done better.”

Michelle Burdett
The Center for Death Penalty Studies, as part of the Criminal Justice Department, was founded in December 2013 by the Center’s Director, Dr. Sanaz Alasti and Dr. Eric Bronson, Director of Strategic Planning and Development. The center’s mission is to promote engaged research, scholarship and discussion, with a focus on the ways in which issues of capital punishment and democracy impact the lives of global citizens. The center for Death Penalty Studies at Lamar is striving to achieve the following aims:

• Provide information about the application of the death penalty in the U.S. and Internationally
• Assist in developing an informed position on capital punishment; enhance critical thinking, writing, and other communication skills
• Facilitate critical consumption of published research; produce a better understanding of capital punishment laws in Texas and Middle Eastern countries.

Four Sociology graduates were accepted into graduate programs in fall 2013. Heather Fasulo is in the Ph.D. program at the New School for Social Research in New York. Andrew Strange and Kirstie Smith are attending the graduate program in sociology at University of Houston, and Shannon Jacobs is in the graduate program in Sociology at Texas State University, San Marcos.

Dr. Jennifer Fagen was the faculty mentor to Mari Holmes who was recently awarded a full scholarship to Grinnell College.

Dr. Fagen has agreed to serve as the faculty advisor to a new student organization, Feminists of Lamar. English major Shelby Murphy will serve as president of the new organization. Psychology major Savannah Anderson-Bledsoe will serve as vice-president. The organization was formed to promote, educate, and advocate gender equality and women’s rights on a local and global level. The group is also working to establish a Women’s Studies minor at Lamar. “I decided to start Feminists of Lamar because I felt like women’s rights and gender equality were subjects not discussed enough,” said Murphy. “Being raised in Southeast Texas, many young women are not told of all the opportunities they can have besides being a mother and wife. Feminism is about having the choice to be whatever type of woman you want.” Dr. Fagen recently accompanied Murphy and Anderson-Bledsoe to hear Democratic candidate for Governor Wendy Davis speak in Beaumont. Murphy has been selected as a summer fellow for Davis’ campaign.

Angeliqueca Avery, Instructor in Social Work was presented with the 2012 Minnie Rogers Juvenile Justice Center Award by the Jefferson County Juvenile Probation Department for “Outstanding Achievement and Contributions to the Youth of Southeast Texas and for Making Youth a Priority in this Community.” The award was presented by Chief Cockrell of the Jefferson County Juvenile Probation Department during a January 2013 ceremony at the Minnie Rogers Juvenile Justice Center.

Dr. Deborah Tomplait, Lecturer in Social Work and Angeliqueca Avery took lead roles in organizing the “Do the Write Thing Texas Challenge,” part of the National Campaign to Stop Violence. Middle school students from all across Southeast Texas were honored in a recognition ceremony April 21 at Lamar. The program encouraged students to write essays explaining how violence has affected their lives and what they would do to change it.

Rita Trottman, senior administrative associate in the Department of Sociology, Social Work and Criminal Justice, earned honors March 28 as the second recipient of The Texas State University System Staff Excellence Award. She is a resident of Beaumont and an 11-year veteran of the Lamar staff.

The TSUS Staff Excellence Award was established to recognize and reward support staff employees of the System for outstanding contributions to the TSUS mission and that of its component institutions. The award was presented at the program hosted by the Staff Advisory Council in the University Reception Center of the Mary and John Gray Library.
The generosity of alumni and friends of Lamar University has been an important part of our success. Private funds are critical to our mission. They enable us to assist students in fulfilling their dreams of a quality education as well as provide funds to take advantage of opportunities of excellence that are simply not able to be provided by traditional funding. Every dollar contributed is valued and needed. We thank you for considering a gift to the College of Arts and Sciences or to the department of your choice.

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