Arts and Sciences Discusses University Freshmen Retention
by Audrey Shalinsky, Associate Dean of the UW College of Arts and Sciences

Recently, Dean Oliver Walter asked University of Wyoming Arts and Sciences (A&S) faculty for email list serve discussion on a topic initially presented by Vice President for Student Affairs Sara Axelson. Twenty-five percent of freshmen who entered UW fall 2009 were on academic probation at the end of the semester. Even more surprising was the fact that the percentage had increased from sixteen percent ten years ago. Dean Walter received over 40 responses to his inquiry in less than two days. In addition, he asked twenty graduating award-winning seniors for their explanation.

Interestingly, there was some correspondence between faculty and student views. Both mentioned completing homework as a key to success in college, a practice that many thought is less prevalent in high school. In addition, students and faculty referred to students’ spending time on social media and video games at the expense of their studies. Faculty also noted that many students are employed or have family obligations in addition to school work. Faculty focused their attention on preparedness issues in math, reading, other content areas. Faculty noted that at UW class sizes are larger and formats are different. They suggested meeting one on one with students in large classes or developing additional strategies for student success in large classes. The Wyoming Survey Analysis Center, an A&S unit, is set to conduct research on the topic.

The Wyoming School University Partnership has been working to bring together A&S, community college, and K-12 faculty to foster better understanding of the expectations and challenges each group has. Earlier this semester, mathematics faculty met in Cheyenne with their counterparts to begin discussion. Reading and writing, foreign language study, and the fifth annual summit on the life sciences will bring together collaborative groups of A&S faculty and participants from community colleges and K-12 for examination of student work and discussion this semester.

See pages 2 and 3 for Related Events this spring.

Controversy and public outcry surrounded the scheduled April 5-6 appearance of Professor Bill Ayers at the University of Wyoming. Citing personal and professional reasons, including safety concerns the UW Social Justice Research Center cancelled the appearance with support of the university. The Partnership-sponsored conference call with principals also was cancelled. Look for more discussion about the issues highlighted by this controversy in the next newsletter.
Institute for Reading and Writing Instruction: Developing Social Media Technologies Across the Curriculum
by Mary P. Sheridan-Rabideau, UW English/Composition Program

Across the nation, reading is a concern, and Wyoming is certainly no exception. The 2009 Wyoming ACT results show that 55% of students are unprepared for college level reading and the 2009 PAWS results show failing reading scores in almost every grade, 3-11. The lead article in the Partnership newsletter reports that 25% of UW freshmen students are on academic probation.

Among the many reasons for this drop, we believe, is a mismatch in the way reading instruction is delivered and the ways students prefer to learn. Given students’ digitally mediated habits of reading, it is important for educators to develop pedagogical strategies that will engage them. The Institute for Reading and Writing Instruction, April 16 in Sheridan, will explore techniques for using social medias as a teaching tool across the curriculum.

In this institute, we invite secondary and post-secondary teachers to explore those potentials and to develop sustained, classroom-ready projects that can engage reluctant readers and provide formative assessment for teachers to evaluate students’ progress.

The morning of the institute will focus on the larger contexts that are shaping the problems and possibilities facing teachers of reluctant readers and writers in the digital age. The afternoon will engage participants in developing their visions for how social media can help reluctant readers and writers. A small grant program will be available for educator to then put these visions into action.

For more information, the conference agenda, and to register, visit www.uwyo.edu/wsup.

World Languages Joins Lost in Transition Initiative

French, German and Spanish language faculty at the secondary and postsecondary levels will meet in Casper April 18 and 19 for the first institute focused on student success and articulation understandings in world languages. The institute will be geared toward better understanding each other’s work, the challenges faculty across academic levels face, and the difficulties students face when transitioning from high school to college. Registration is free and open to any interested individuals.

The transition to college and university is difficult for many students. They are challenged by a new social and academic environment. Reading and writing requirements increase, with different expectations about homework and independent learning. In some cases, there is a mismatch between expectations across levels. This conference will focus on identifying those mismatches and better aligning expectations to improve students’ success.

The institute begins with a Sunday evening dinner conversation about these general issues and features an excerpt from Alfred Lubrano’s *Limbo: Blue Collar Roots and White Collar Dreams* to read in advance. On Monday, the institute continues with a particular focus looking at specifics about language learning, with plenty of time for small group discussions and sharing. Registrants need to bring examples of oral and written assignments, quizzes, and instructional materials.

Registration for the conference and meals are free, but substitutes, travel, and lodging are the responsibility of your institution. Go to www.uwyo.edu/wsup to register online and review the agenda.
5th Annual Life Sciences Summit Set in May
by Mark Lyford, UW Life Sciences Program

This year marks the 5th Annual K-16 Life Science Summit which will be held Wednesday, May 5 in Casper. To date, the Life Science Summits have brought together nearly 150 K-12, community college and UW life science faculty to discuss teacher expectations and student success across Wyoming.

Each Summit has been founded on mixed-level examination and discussion of student work brought by participants. We will continue this tradition at the 5th Annual Life Science Summit but will “dig a little deeper” by sharing and examining each of our course assessments that ultimately define student success.

In addition, we will explore these assessments from a “Bloom’s” perspective to gain a more in-depth understanding of our own expectations of students as they transition across the K-16 Wyoming educational system.

Registration for the event will be open in April. Please visit www.uwyo.edu/wsup for updates.

Qwest Foundation Supports Wyoming’s “Lost in Transition” Initiative

Qwest is better known for its work with phone books and telephone lines than they are with schoolchildren and teachers. But in these parts, Qwest is providing tremendous, tangible support for the next generation of Wyoming citizens and leaders. In 2009, the Qwest Foundation awarded the Wyoming School-University Partnership with a $15,000 grant to work on high school to higher education transitions, dubbed the “Lost in Transition” initiative. All of the initiatives you see on pages 2 and 3 are funded by this grant.

With this funding, the Partnership also coordinated a mathematics transitions workshop February 19, 2010 in Cheyenne; 40 teachers, administrators and college professors participated. Additionally, the life sciences site swap pilot project (pages 5 and 7) is funded through the Qwest Foundation grant.

Transitions issues are not solved in one sitting. For this reason, approximately half of the grant funding is allocated for institutes, workshops, and conferences in 2011.

On behalf of the Partnership, teachers, students and administrators around the state, we’d like to thank the Qwest Foundation for its support!
Fremont County School District #6 Joins the Partnership

January 2010 marked the forging of a new relationship between Fremont County School District #6 (Pavillion, Crowheart) and surrounding school districts, community colleges, state education agencies and the university. Fremont #6, a school district serving nearly 400 students in the Wind River valley of western Wyoming, joins 20 school districts, seven community colleges, the University of Wyoming, Wyoming Department of Education and Wyoming Education Association on the quest for improved quality, access, and equity of education across the state.

Fremont #6 Superintendent Diana Clapp explained that her district joined because they realized that they were not alone in challenges facing public education, “but found much of the conversation surrounding education at both the state and national level was narrow in purpose and failed to address the complexities of educating students in the 21st Century. In contrast,” Clapp continued, “the National Network for Educational Renewal and, in turn, the UW School/University Partnership offered both a platform and a partnership of educators committed to the complex work of educating students in and for a democracy.”

Members of the Partnership help create, financially support and participate in opportunities for educators on all levels – kindergarten through college – to collaborate in improving the way students are taught and received in the academic community.

These opportunities include an annual, two-day statewide “In Praise of Education” conference, annual “High School to Higher Education Transitions” meetings in math, science, English, and world languages content areas, smaller district-level events, book study groups, and more.

Fremont #6 is the fourth school district in the county to be a member of the Partnership. Partnership members include:

Albany #1
Campbell #1
Carbon #2
Converse #1
Fremont #1, #6, #14, and #25
Goshen #1
Hot Springs #1
Laramie #1
Natrona #1
Niobrara #1
Park #1
Platte #2
Sheridan #2
Sublette #1
Sweetwater #1 and #2
 Uinta #1
Washakie #1
Wyoming’s seven community colleges
Wyoming Department of Education
Wyoming Education Association
UW College of Arts and Sciences
UW College of Education

Interested in Joining the Partnership?

Help reinvigorate education in Wyoming! When school districts become a member of the Wyoming School-University Partnership, they help create opportunities for students, faculty, and administrators to foster a generation of engaged and aspiring individuals.

Members pay annual dues, amounts varying by member type (i.e., school district, community college). Partnership conferences, content-area meetings, book-study groups, guest speakers, and more are almost entirely funded by membership dues. Your involvement is critical in moving this work forward! Please encourage your school district to become a member if it’s not already.

For more information, contact Partnership director Audrey Kleinsasser at dakota@uwyo.edu or 307-766-6358.

The Partnership’s Online Presence

The staggering mountains of Papua New Guinea, a tropical island north of Australia, create significant travel barriers for its residents – people, plants and animals alike. This geographic obstacle is one of the reasons for more than 3,000 species of orchids existing in an area slightly larger than California. We in Wyoming can relate to such geographical challenges: widely dispersed towns and school districts with treacherous terrain in between, and often wild weather to inhibit travel.

These typical-Wyoming conditions highlight the need for internet-based social networking, which the Partnership embraces as a valuable way for educators to convene at the same virtual table. The Partnership uses a “blogspot” website, through which educators from Cheyenne to Evanston, Casper to Lander, can participate in online book-study groups, discussions, view pictures from recent events, and more. To see how the “blogspot” works, visit http://wyomingpartnership.blogspot.com.

Would you like to go to a public lecture at the UW, but can’t justify the four hour drive? No problem. UW manages an online system called WyoCast, which allows anyone in Wyoming to watch a live presentation from the comfort of a home or office.

The Partnership co-sponsored a WyoCast-recorded lecture by Shirley Brice Heath on March 30. All you need to watch the lecture is a computer and internet connection. Visit http://uwacadweb.uwyo.edu/wsup/showevent.asp?eventid=27602 for more information.

Wyoming School-University Partnership Blog

Wyoming School-University Partnership

The Partnership Established 1986
Starting college can be, for many students, like moving to a new country. Everything they were accustomed to in high school is now drastically different. Classes can be much larger and involve new technology. Homework assignments ask more complex questions requiring higher levels of writing and comprehension. Teachers’ expectations of students’ initiative and quality of work are greater. And most significantly, students must learn to work more independently. This transition poses significant challenges to students, their college professors, as well as their high school teachers seeking to prepare them well for the future.

The Wyoming School-University Partnership, a consortium of 21 school districts, two UW colleges, the seven Wyoming community colleges, the Wyoming Department of Education, and the Wyoming Education Association, is working to rectify this issue. On February 18 and 19, the Partnership piloted its first district-university site swap involving UW’s Life Sciences program and Carbon County School District #2 (Encampment, Hanna, and Saratoga). Ten junior high and high school faculty and administrators, including district superintendent Bob Gates, came to UW to attend classes and talk with a wide range of faculty and students. On April 20, UW faculty and students will complete the swap by visiting Carbon #2 schools.

“This first site swap represents a next step to ‘dig a little deeper’ on understanding the challenges students face when transitioning from high school to college,” explains Mark Lyford, director of UW’s Life Sciences program. “While we’ve been having statewide K-16 discussions about this in the life sciences for five years, experiencing high school and college from the students’ perspective is critical and a real eye-opener for faculty and administrators on both sides.”

The site swap came out of statewide summits, workshops, and colloquia that the Partnership has supported since 2005. Carbon #2 appealed to the Partnership to coordinate a district-level event to determine where student preparedness in high school and student expectations in college do and do not align. “There is a gap between what we get them ready for [in high school], and what they need to do [in college]. We need to close that gap – that’s my goal,” said Carbon 2 superintendent Bob Gates during the site swap event. “What could have been different for a high school student that would have made them more successful in college?”

Carbon 2 participants and UW faculty and graduate teaching assistants from botany, zoology, chemistry, and English delved into discussions ranging from student engagement, incorporation of technology in lectures and homework, challenges of state testing requirements, common skill deficiencies, and more. Carbon 2 participants observed a LIFE 1010 (introductory biology) weekly lab preparation meeting with lab coordinator Diane Gorski and eight graduate assistants, in which they discussed the course’s learning objectives and ways in which students must meet them. The group participated in a Thursday evening LIFE 1010 lab with the graduate teaching assistants and students, and a large lecture class with Associate Professor Patricia Colberg the following morning.

Later this spring, the site swap will be reciprocated by UW faculty and graduate students who will spend time in the Carbon 2 schools. The group will interact with students, experience the constraints school districts work under, and brainstorm ways of better aligning student preparedness and college-level expectations.

“This visit was an eye-opener for all of us. I think this was the best use of time I have spent during my tenure in this district.”

“There is a gap between what we get them ready for, and what they need to do. We need to close that gap - that’s my goal.”

“Continued on page 7.
League of Democratic Schools: School-Based Democracy
by Jennifer Grooms, Wyoming School-University Partnership

What does democracy in schools look like? How can students in first and twelfth grades alike understand and embrace democratic practices? And how does this apply to daily-life? The League of Democratic Schools, a national organization with a Rocky Mountain chapter, promotes the idea that the primary purpose of schooling is to develop in children and youth the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required for successful participation in the nation’s social and political democracy.

Students in League schools learn reading, writing, science and arithmetic much like all other schools in the state. In addition to these lessons, students are overtly taught that democratic traits such as respect, cooperation, open-mindedness and responsibility are important both in classroom settings and in the community. These schools foster and support academic and personal growth of all students, help children develop cross-cultural skills, and encourage community awareness and service.

An example of how a Wyoming League School is working toward these goals can be found at Guernsey-Sunrise High School in Platte County School District #2. Here, all graduating seniors complete a “Senior Exit Interview” prior to graduation. During this interview, each senior has a 30 minute time frame to show his or her best work around the nine core graduation areas required in Wyoming, as well as a proficiency in technology usage. These students bring forth their body of evidence to prove they possess knowledge and skills necessary for graduation and life beyond.

The two other Wyoming League Schools, University Lab School in Laramie and Woods Learning Center in Casper, share common philosophies related to project-based learning and multi-age learning.

“In Praise of Education” Conference Overview

More than 80 Wyoming teachers, professors and administrators convened to discuss issues of education at the first Partnership-sponsored “In Praise of Education” Conference, January 28-29, 2010 in Casper. Below are reactions from a number of conference participants:

“I really appreciated being able to better understand the prerequisite courses and their content that our residency student teachers have been through. That knowledge gives me a way to help support both the professors and the student teachers.” Kathy Bruce, Sweetwater County School Districts #1 and #2.

“One of the most significant messages I took away from the conference was the importance of ongoing and meaningful collaboration between people in the schools, at the university, and in community organizations. By working in partnership with other stake-holders in schools throughout the state, we can make important progress in improving educational outcomes for students in Wyoming.” Kevin Roxas, University of Wyoming

“The most significant message from the conference was the support for diversity education and making awareness of Native American history standards for all Wyoming classrooms.” Marty Conrad, Fremont County School District #1

“From these brief meetings, I found at least two opportunities to establish collaborative projects that would involve in-service teachers, pre-service teachers, and UW teacher educators. Currently, I am encouraging my student teachers to take a leading role in these types of collaboration with teachers across the state.” William Medina-Jerez, University of Wyoming

NNER Conferences 2010


Additionally, the NNER fall conference will be held October 7-9, 2010 in Normal, Illinois.

Conference information, including a call for proposals, can be found at http://www.ed.sc.edu/nner/default.asp
During the recently adjourned 2009 Budget Session of the Wyoming Legislature, the Wyoming P-16 Education Council took an active role in supporting legislation relating to dual and concurrent enrollment. Senate File 39 Post Secondary Options Program was sponsored by the Joint Education Committee and resulted from a study commissioned by the Community College Planning Task Force. Study authors, former State Senator Rae Lynn Job and education consultant Sue Riske, found that there are different arrangements for operating dual and concurrent enrollment programs throughout the state, creating access and equity issues. The Community College Planning Task Force identified dual and concurrent enrollment programs as a statewide interest in its strategic planning process and listed expanding concurrent enrollment by encouraging participation among high school students ready for college-level work as an action step.

The P-16 Council support for SF 39 grew out of its interest in facilitating student transition from high school to college, and in getting more students to move onto some sort of post-secondary education. On the last day of the 20-day session, the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House signed it as Senate Enrolled Act 52 (out of 54), and the Governor signed it into law on March 9, a month after it was introduced in the Senate.

There are five provisions of the law, in effect now:

First, all school districts must provide a post-secondary education enrollment option with a community college or the UW. Second, the post-secondary education agreements must be in compliance with the education standards defined by the department of education, community colleges and the UW. Third, institutions offering post-secondary education options must file regular reports on student participation and completion, revenues and expenditures. Fourth, the community college commission is mandated to conduct discussions on seamless K-12 and post-secondary program transitions. Finally, the community college commission must report to the joint education interim committee on policy recommendations for eligibility requirements, quality control of courses offered, and more.

For more information, visit www.wp-16.org/ or contact Kelley Pelissier, Executive Director of the Council, at p-16wyo@live.com

**National Officer**

Ken Griffith of Guernsey/Sunrise (Platte County School District No. 2) was elected President Elect of the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP). In 2011-2012, he will assume the the position of President of NASSP. In NASSP’s history, Ken will be the first president from Wyoming. Ken is also his district’s contact for the League of Democratic Schools.

NASSP’s membership includes middle level and high school principals/assistant principals. NASSP also sponsors the National Honor Society at the high school, junior high, and the newest honor society, grades 4-6.

**Honoring Bill Berube**

Committed to children, youth, and those who teach them, UW Educational Leadership Professor Bill Berube leaves a powerful legacy. He lost his valiant struggle against cancer March 27, 2010.

To contribute to a scholarship fund in his name, contact 307-766-3145 for more information.

**PK-16 Educator Position Available**

The Wyoming P-16 Council will fill a position for a PK-16 educator to serve out a current term.

Contact Council President Rollin Abernethy at rollin@uwyo.edu for information about the nomination process.

Finally, the Life Sciences Site Swap must report to the joint education interim committee on policy recommendations for eligibility requirements, quality control of courses offered, and more.

For more information, visit www.wp-16.org/ or contact Kelley Pelissier, Executive Director of the Council, at p-16wyo@live.com

**Life Sciences Site Swap continued from page 5**

“Across all levels, academic performance is about skilled and caring teachers who balance high expectations and strong support,” explains Audrey Kleinsasser, director of the Wyoming School-University Partnership. Kleinsasser continues, “In a time of aggressive federal and state compliance, it’s more important than ever for faculty across levels to talk with one another about learning expectations. Since access to academic opportunity is a core Partnership principle, the site swap is the epitome of Partnership work and benefits to students.”

The Life Sciences Site Swap event was made possible by a $15,000 gift from the Qwest Foundation.

To get involved and to receive email updates from the Partnership about these and other events, visit www.uwyo.edu/wsup.
A NATIONAL VISION FOR TEACHER EDUCATION

A RESOLVE FOR QUALITY TEACHING THAT IS UNRELENTING

by Kay Persichitte, Dean of UW College of Education

In late February, Judy Ellsworth (Associate Dean-Undergraduate Programs) and I returned from the annual meeting of the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education. The theme of the program was significant: “Preparing Educators for the New World”. One clear message that I came away with was that we must demonstrate a resolve for quality teaching that is unrelenting.

I think it would be hard to argue that there is weak consensus as to the boundaries of quality teaching, how to measure it, and our responsibility to advocate for policies that assure it…across all parts of teacher education pipeline. We heard repeated calls for rigorous performance assessment to ensure highly effective teachers and leaders. The U.S. Department of Education has an emerging definition of highly effective that is not credential-based (e.g., licensure or degree status), but is clearly performance based for preservice and inservice.

In 2010 there are 98,000 public schools in the U.S. serving 50 million students who are taught by 3.2 million teachers. Of these, 15,000 schools are considered to be high-poverty. Slightly less than 7,000 of these teachers are in Wyoming. The UW College of Education matriculates about 275 new teachers each year…that’s about four percent of the total Wyoming teaching force. We can and should work together to assure that all our teachers and administrators are highly effective.

It is very unlikely that the teaching profession, including school leadership, will look much the same within the next decade. Changes may come more rapidly than that. Federal and state policy, budgets, authority, etc. are being shifted in our new world. More than ever, we will need strong partnerships between K-12 and teacher preparation to meet the challenges ahead. We are all committed to the same ultimate goal: ensuring that teachers and school leaders are prepared to help their learners be successful and productive citizens in their new world.

Have something to say about education? Submit your essay to Brenna Wanous at bwanous@uwyo.edu by May 1, 2010 to be considered for the next newsletter.

PARTNERSHIP CALENDAR OF EVENTS

More information and registration is available at www.uwyo.edu/wsup

APRIL 7-9: 14th Annual Shepard Symposium on Social Justice; UW Campus, Laramie. Conference registration is free.

APRIL 8: WSUP Governing Board Meeting; Casper. 10:00am -2:00pm. RSVP required.

APRIL 16: Institute for Reading and Writing Instruction: Developing Social Media Technologies Across the Curriculum; Sheridan. 8:30am-3:30pm. Registration is free but required.

APRIL 18-19: Institute for World Languages Instruction; Casper. 5:00-8:00pm Sunday, 7:30am-3:30pm Monday.

MAY 5: 5th Annual Life Sciences Summit; Casper.

JULY 19-22: National Network for Educational Renewal Summer Symposium; Seattle, WA.

JULY 22: WSUP Governing Board Meeting; Casper.

OCTOBER 7-9: National Network for Educational Renewal Fall Conference; Normal, IL

www.uwyo.edu/wsup