



Washington University

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February 2003

University News

WU SETS STANDARD IN STUDYING LIFE SCIENCES:

Chancellor Mark Wrighton recently gave hundreds of North American academic and urban leaders a lesson in how to succeed in life sciences, St. Louis-style. At a conference on "Great Universities and Their Cities," Wrighton spoke about accomplishments that are perhaps underappreciated at home--but cause leaders elsewhere to turn green with envy.

FOUR STARS: Charity Navigator, a leading Internet-based charity watchdog group that evaluates 1,750 of America's largest charities, ranked Washington University first on its list of the top "ten consistently excellent charities." For the second year in a row, it gave the University a four-star rating--its highest--for organizational excellence, citing its commitment to "fiscal responsibility and sound management practices."

PRIZE-WINNING PAPERS: University

Libraries recently acquired the literary archive of National Book Award-winning novelist William Gaddis (1922-1998). The extensive collection of this literary giant includes novel manuscripts, unpublished stories, film scripts and plays, and his working library.

BEST CHILDREN'S HOSPITALS: An independent national survey confirms what thousands of children and their families already know: St. Louis Children's Hospital is one of the best children's hospitals in America. *Child* magazine, in its February 2003 issue, ranks the pediatric teaching hospital for Washington University School of Medicine No. 6.



Photo by Joe Angeles

Barbara Schaal, the Spencer T. Olin Professor of Biology in Arts & Sciences and professor of genetics at the School of Medicine (left), supervises Ana Caiicedo's dissertation project, a study looking at the population genetics of disease-resistant genes in wild tomatoes.

Research

DRUG DOORWAY: The age when a person begins to smoke marijuana has a significant influence on

whether he or she will develop problems with drugs and alcohol later in life, independent of his or her genetic and family background, according to a study led by researchers from the United States and Australia.

CANCER CELL KILLER: School of Medicine researchers have identified a protein that can destroy several different types of cancer cells without having toxic effects on healthy cells. The protein may play an important role in future new cancer therapies and in helping existing therapies, like chemotherapy, work better.



Shirley J. Dyke, Ph.D. (left), associate professor of civil engineering, leads New Horizons in Science Briefing attendees through a tour of her laboratory. She is shown here with an earthquake damping device.

EARTHQUAKE DAMPING DEVICE: If a structure is outfitted with a giant shock absorber called a magnetorheological (MR) damper, the damage from a simulated earthquake can be reduced by more than 50 percent. University researchers are working to design new construction techniques to safeguard buildings and bridges from earthquakes.

SUPPRESSING IMMUNE RESPONSES: University researchers have discovered how to grow a little-understood type of human immune cell, which is thought to turn off unnecessary immune reactions and block the action of immune cells that otherwise would attack the body and cause dangerous inflammation. The finding has

implications for new treatments for autoimmune diseases like lupus and for organ rejection after implantation.

Features

SILENT SUMMER: As the West Nile virus makes its way across the country, University researchers are targeting the virus to determine what the virus attacks, why some people are more susceptible than others, and whether a particular antibody will help prevent humans from getting the disease or help those who are already ill.

HEADS UP: All four brands of commercial headbands intended to protect soccer players from head injuries are effective only at high speeds, according to a University study. At slower speeds, they simply failed to reduce the force.

GOOD GIFTS: How do parents choose the right toys for their children? R. Keith Sawyer, assistant professor of education in Arts & Sciences, suggests that toys that are "low realism," or not likeness-based, can improve a child's creativity and improvisational play skills. Even better, he says, is adding parent-child interaction during play time.

Heard on Campus

"You have got to reach into your spirit and soul and willingly sacrifice like King did."

- Juan Williams, political analyst and critically acclaimed author of *Eyes on the Prize: America's Civil Rights Years, 1954-1965*, at the Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration Lecture at the medical school on January 20

Kudos

Frank C.P. Yin, the Stephen F. and Camilla T. Brauer Professor of Biomedical Engineering, has been named chair-elect of the College of Fellows of the American Institute for Medical and Biological Engineering and a fellow of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers.

Three University faculty members were recently elected fellows of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS). They are Timothy J. Ley, M.D., the Alan A. and Edith L. Wolff Professor in Medicine and professor of genetics;

Steven E. Petersen, Ph.D., the James S. McDonnell Professor of Cognitive Neuroscience; and Ralph S. Quatrano, Ph.D., the Spencer T. Olin Professor of Biology in Arts & Sciences. They were elected in recognition of their efforts toward advancing science. [Read more!](#)

18-0 and ranked No. 1 in NCAA Division III -- that is where both the Bears men's and women's basketball teams find themselves as they begin the final month of regular season action. [Related story!](#)

Announcements

[EUROPEAN ART MEETS ST. LOUIS](#): German, French, and Italian art currently take center stage in the Gallery of Art's newest exhibitions: Contemporary German Art: Recent Acquisitions; Made in France: Art from 1945 to the Present; and Italian Renaissance Engravings, c. 1470-1510.

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This newsletter is prepared by the staff of the Office of Special Development Communications Projects and the Office of Alumni and Development Programs. It is intended to provide a summary of what is happening at the University. Alumni, parents, and friends of the University for whom we have valid e-mail addresses automatically receive @ Washington University in St. Louis as a service of the University.

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