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University News

VP debate: a 'homecoming'

The eyes of the world were on Washington University October 2 as it hosted the most anticipated vice presidential debate in U.S. history. Tens of millions in the United States and around the world watched as Sen. Joe Biden of Delaware and Gov. Sarah Palin of Alaska squared off on stage in the Field House in the University's Athletic Complex.

Brauers' generosity to support engineering for years to come

Chancellor Mark S. Wrighton announced that the University has received a major commitment from Stephen F. Brauer, former U.S. Ambassador to Belgium and chairman of St. Louis-based Hunter Engineering Company, and his wife, Camilla T. Brauer, to help implement the long-range, strategic plan of its School of Engineering & Applied Science. In recognition of this support, the University will name the second building in its new engineering complex, Stephen F. and Camilla T. Brauer Hall.

Wiens heads seismology effort in international Antarctic study

Douglas A. Wiens, Ph.D., professor and chair of earth and planetary sciences in Arts & Sciences, will head the seismology research team for an ambitious international effort to map and analyze an unknown part of Antarctica. The project is called Antarctica's Gamburtsev Province (AGAP) after the Gamburtsev Subglacial Mountains, which are the main feature of the region.



Photo by Bill Stover

The set on which Sen. Joe Biden and Gov. Sarah Palin debated was all-American, from its red and blue colors, to the eagle, to the American flag panels at both sides of the stage.

Research

Study: Bird diversity lessens human exposure to West Nile Virus

A study by biologists at Washington University shows that the more diverse a bird population is in an area, the less chance humans have of exposure to West Nile Virus (WNV). "The bottom line is that where there are more bird species in your backyard, you have much lower risk of contracting West Nile fever," says Brian Allan, doctoral candidate in biology in Arts & Sciences.

Engineer: Head-first slide is quicker

Base running and base stealing would appear to be arts driven solely by a runner's speed, but there's more than mere gristle, bone, and lung power to this facet of baseball — lots of mathematics and physics are at play. Who gets there faster, the head-first slider or the feet-first?

First gene for clubfoot identified at School of Medicine

Clubfoot, one of the most common birth defects, has long been thought to have a genetic component. Now, researchers at Washington University School of Medicine report they have found the first gene linked to clubfoot in humans.



When the red, red robin comes bob, bob bobbin' along, think West Nile Virus (WNV). Robins are anthrophilic - they love being around humans - and it's relatively easy for mosquitoes to take their blood meals from them because robins feed so much on the ground, making them a very common reservoir species for transferring WNV to humans.

Features

Connecting individual health with public health

Cascades of biomedical discoveries in recent years promise to transform the way we think about our individual and collective health needs. Yet despite this progress, the national health care landscape is clouded. In addition to universally feared afflictions such as cancer and neurodegenerative disease, obesity is epidemic. Twenty-one million people in the United States suffer from diabetes and its complications, such as heart disease and stroke. Other concerns range from the high incidence of cigarette smoking among teens to widespread anxiety and depression among adults and youth.

Population growth drives depletion of natural resources

It's a 500-pound gorilla that Robert Criss, Ph.D., professor of earth and planetary sciences in Arts & Sciences, sees standing on the speaker's dais at political rallies, debates, and campaigns. Its name is population growth. "Population growth is driving all of our resource problems, including water and energy," Criss said. "The three are intertwined. The United States has over 305 million people of the 6.7 billion on the planet. We are dividing a finite resource pie among a growing number of people on Earth. We cannot expect to sustain exponential population growth matched by increased per capita use of water and energy. It's troubling."

Heard on Campus

"We've evolved in this country to where honest mistakes are forbidden. People make mistakes. That's how we learn, how we move to the next plateau."

— Carl Bernstein, former reporter for the *Washington Post*, from his speech at the Eliot Stein Lecture in Ethics entitled "Public Ethics: The Responsibilities of Elected Officials"



Set goals and reach them

The director of the International Center for Advanced Renewable Energy and Sustainability (I-CARES) at Washington University is challenging the next president of the United States to set goals in energy research and implementation. "I would like to see the next president of the United States set a similar goal to President Kennedy's from 1961 — to put a man on the moon and to bring him back to Earth by the end of the decade," says Himadri B. Pakrasi, Ph.D., the George William and Irene Koechig Freiberg Professor of Biology in Arts & Sciences, and Professor of Energy in the School of Engineering and Applied Science.

Kudos

Mike Dudukovic, the Laura and William Jens Professor of Environmental Energy, has been named the recipient of the 2009 E.V. Murphree Award in Industrial and Engineering Chemistry by the American Chemical Society.

Jeffrey I. Gordon, M.D., the Dr. Robert J. Glaser Distinguished University Professor and director of the Center for Genome Sciences and David M. Holtzman, M.D., the Andrew B. and Gretchen P. Jones Professor and chair of the Department of Neurology, both professors in the School of Medicine, have been elected to the Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences, one of the highest honors medical scientists can receive.

Undergraduate students Nathaniel Roman and Intelly Shang-Zhi were named 2008-2009 Barry M. Goldwater Scholars. Goldwater Scholarships are awarded to select college students who intend to pursue careers in science, mathematics, and engineering.

Allyson Gibson, a doctoral student in physics in Arts & Sciences, has received a prestigious Philanthropic Educational Organization Scholar Award for the 2008-09 academic year. She was one of 85 recipients selected from more than 640 applicants from the United States and Canada.

The NCAA Division III defending national champion men's basketball team is ranked No. 1 in the DIII News Preseason Top 25 poll, and the women's basketball team is ranked No. 2.

About @Washington University in St. Louis

This newsletter is prepared by Special Development Communications Projects staff in Alumni and Development Programs. It is intended to provide a brief 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.

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