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University News

The future of news:

Washington University has joined a group of leading research universities in launching Futurity (futura.org), an online research channel covering the latest discoveries in science, engineering, the environment, health, and more. Washington University is one of 35 partners supporting the project. All the current partner universities are members of the Association of American Universities, a nonprofit organization of leading public and private research universities.



FUTURITY

Discover the Future

Scholarship drive will "Open Doors to the Future":

Washington University's Board of Trustees has authorized a fundraising initiative designed to increase support for student scholarships. "Opening Doors to the Future: The Scholarship Initiative for Washington University" has a goal of raising \$150 million for annual and endowed scholarships and fellowships. A formal kickoff for the initiative will take place on November 7, and the effort will continue through June 30, 2014.

BJC Institute of Health at Washington University to open in December:

Two years ago, the BJC Institute of Health at Washington University was a set of renderings and a large hole in the middle of Washington University Medical Center. Since then the building has risen 11 stories into the sky and is enclosed in 24,000 square feet of metal panels, 20,800 square feet of brick, 99,000 square feet of limestone panels, and 75,000 square feet of glass.

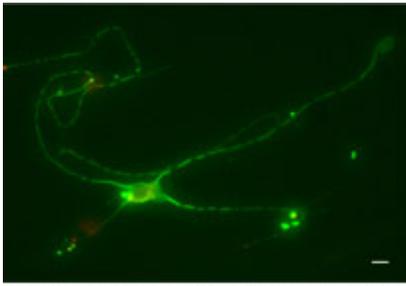
Research

20,000 neurons keep steady time when working together:

Researchers at Washington University have shown that individual cells isolated from the biological clock can keep daily time all by themselves. By themselves, however, they are unreliable. The neurons get out of synch and capriciously quit or start oscillating again. The biological clock, a one-square millimeter area of the brain just above the roof of the mouth and atop the crossing of the optic nerves, comprises about 20,000 neurons. These cells, remarkably, contain the machinery to generate daily, or circadian, rhythms in gene expression and electrical activity. But the individual cells are sloppy and must communicate with one another to establish a coherent 24-hour rhythm.

After the hurricanes:

Four years after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita led to devastating floods, the city of New Orleans still lacks a comprehensive plan for dealing with water, argues Derek Hoeflerlin, a senior lecturer in the College and Graduate School of Architecture & Urban Design in the Sam Fox School of Design & Visual Arts. Hoeflerlin has led a series of post-hurricane architecture and urban design studios, including most recently Gutter to Gulf, which explores spatial strategies for a potential water plan.



Researchers at Washington University in St. Louis have shown that isolated nerve cells like this one from the biological clock are capable of keeping time, but they do a better job when there are some 20,000 other neurons around.

Tools of the trade:

New research published in the *American Journal of Primatology* reveals that chimpanzees in the Congo have developed specialized "tool kits" to forage for army ants. This not only provides the first direct evidence of multiple tool use in this context, but suggests that chimpanzees have developed a sustainable way of harvesting food. A team from the Goulougo Triangle Ape Project, led by Crickette Sanz, Ph.D., assistant professor of anthropology in Arts & Sciences, studied several communities of chimpanzee throughout the Nouabalé-Ndoki National Park in the Republic of Congo.

Features

"McDonaldization" of frogs:

Everyone knows that frogs are in trouble. But a recent analysis by Washington University researchers of data on Central American frogs collected by a University of Maryland colleague shows the situation is worse than had been thought. Under pressure from an invasive fungus, the frogs in this biodiversity hot spot are undergoing "a vast homogenization," which is leaving behind simpler communities that increasingly resemble one another. "We're witnessing the McDonaldization of the frog communities," comments Kevin G. Smith, Ph.D., the lead author of the analysis and associate director of Washington University's Tyson Research Center, a site the fungus has also reached.



Photo by Sandra Galeano

Agalychnis calidrya, otherwise known as the red-eyed tree frog, was one of the winners of the fungal lottery. It became more abundant as other species disappeared

First drink at young age may affect genes and risk for alcoholism:

The age at which a person takes a first drink may influence genes linked to alcoholism, making the youngest drinkers the most susceptible to severe problems. A team of researchers, led by scientists at Washington University School of Medicine, studied 6,257 adult twins from Australia. They wanted to learn whether twins who start drinking at an early age are more likely to develop a more heritable form of alcohol dependence than those who begin drinking later in life. The researchers found that the younger an individual was at first drink, the greater the risk for alcohol dependence and the more prominent the role played by genetic factors.

Heard on Campus

"Life is not a romantic comedy. There's a message in everything we put out there whether we like it or not. I want to take responsibility for that."

—Harold Ramis, LA66, the director/producer of films including "Caddyshack," "Groundhog Day," and "Analyze This," in his Assembly Series talk, titled "Existentialism, Post-modernism and Deconstructionism: Will This Be on the Test?," in Graham Chapel on September 9, 2009

Mary Fairchild: Washington University's forgotten Impressionist:

In the late 19th century, the University's first female faculty member, Mary Fairchild (MacMonnies Low), left St. Louis for Paris on scholarship. Though she is oft forgotten today, she made an indelible artistic mark on both cities during her lifetime.

Kudos

Ramanath Cowsik, Ph.D., professor of physics and director of the McDonnell Center for the Space Sciences in Arts & Sciences, received the 2009 O'Ceallaigh Medal for his "outstanding contributions to cosmic ray physics" at the 31st biennial International Cosmic Ray Conference, held in Lodz, Poland.

Ralph Damiano, Jr., M.D., the John M. Shoenberg Professor of Surgery and chief of cardiac surgery, has been named president-elect of the International Society for Minimally Invasive Cardiothoracic Surgery and president of the Society of Clinical Surgery.

James W. Fleshman, Jr., M.D., professor of surgery and chief of the Section of Colon and Rectal

Surgery, has been elected president of the American Society of Colon and Rectal Surgery.

Steven M. Kymes, Ph.D., research assistant professor of ophthalmology and visual sciences, received the 2009 Investigator Award from Prevent Blindness America. He was one of four researchers to receive the award, given to research studies dedicated to preventing avoidable vision loss.

Mitchell G. Scott, Ph.D., professor of pathology and immunology and clinical research assistant professor of medicine, began his term as president of the Academy of Clinical Laboratory Physicians and Scientists on June 6 at the academy's annual meeting in Los Angeles.

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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