



Washington University in St. Louis

November 2009
e-News for Alumni, Parents, and Friends

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University News

New green roof at Washington University promotes sustainability, adds green space:

Take a walk across the new lawn on the South 40 at Washington University, and there might be more than just dirt beneath your feet. There might be pots, pans, and a truck or two. An environmentally friendly "green roof" — containing grass, native plants, and approximately 110,000 pounds of soil — opened in September at the South 40 House on the University's Danforth Campus. The roof shelters a loading dock, kitchen, and other areas of the South 40 House's southern lower level.



Photo by Joe Angeles

The green roof on the South 40 House acts as insulation, keeping the building cooler in the summer and warmer in the winter, which reduces energy usage.

Engineering and curry: International program offers unique experience:

Energy and the environment are among the most important issues facing this generation of college students. What better way to learn about these issues than over Korean banchan or Indian curry? The elective International Experience in the Department of Energy, Environmental & Chemical Engineering allows Washington University undergraduates the opportunity to study energy science at a top university in another country.

Obama taps Beachy to lead new federal agency:

President Barack Obama has asked Roger Beachy, Ph.D., president of the Donald Danforth Plant Science Center and professor of biology in Arts & Sciences, to lead a new federal agency that will transform the way plant science research is funded in the United States. Beachy is the founding president of the Danforth Plant Science Center, a private, nonprofit research institute in St. Louis County established in 1999 by a partnership that includes Washington University.

Research

Cloudy with a chance of pebble showers:

Intrigued by the discovery last February of Corot-7b, a rocky exoplanet, Washington University scientists set out to investigate its atmosphere the only way so-far possible: mathematically and by simulation. Tidally locked with its star and orbiting very close to it, the planet is hot enough to melt rock on its star-facing side. Its atmosphere consists of the components of silicate rocks in gaseous form and, the simulation suggests, periodically rains pebbles or grains of sand onto the molten surface below.

China's rapidly aging population — part of a worldwide trend:

China's population of adults over 65 tops 100 million. This number is steadily growing, putting China at the forefront of a global demographic shift that includes the United States and other developed nations. "While a common tendency is to focus on the burdens an aging population will place on a country's economic and social welfare, an aging society represents an opportunity, not just a crisis," says Nancy Morrow-Howell, Ph.D., productive aging expert and the Ralph and Muriel Pumphrey Professor in the George Warren Brown School of Social Work.



Image by ESO/L. Calcada

The exoplanet COROT-7b is close enough to its star that its "day-face" is hot enough to melt rock. Theoretical models suggest the planet has an atmosphere of the components of rock in gaseous form and lava or boiling oceans on its surface. Original image file can be found at www.eso.org/gallery/v/ESOPIA/illustration/phot-33a-09-fullres.tif.html

Scientists identify roots of diabetic tissue damage:

Results from comprehensive assessments of diabetes' effects on cell metabolism may aid efforts to reduce diabetic damage to nerves, blood vessels, and other tissues, according to researchers at Washington University School of Medicine and elsewhere. The scientists found that by blocking the sorbitol pathway, one of several pathways cells employ to use the sugar glucose, they could prevent diabetic damage to nerves and blood vessels in a rat model. Prior clinical trials of blockers for this pathway have been disappointing, according to the researchers, but they and others now think that may be because the sorbitol pathway was inadequately blocked.

Features

Business is good:

Historically, the number of new, entrepreneurial ventures rises during periods of recession. If jobs aren't available in the traditional market, the argument goes, why not start your own company? Thanks to a program on campus, Washington University students are doing just that — creating, purchasing, and selling on-campus businesses as undergraduate students. It's called the Student Entrepreneurial Program (StEP) and it helps uniquely position students to get hands-on experience as entrepreneurs while they still are in school.



Photo by Joe Angeles

Nine student-run businesses operate on campus through the Student Entrepreneurial Program, including Sharing With A Purpose (SWAP), a nonprofit that provides used dormitory essentials. Here, SWAP employees Jeff Branz (second from left) and Michael Young help freshman Callan VanHemert (left) and her mother, Stacy Fox, pick out items for her room.

New master's degree in landscape architecture to be offered in 2010:

The Sam Fox School of Design & Visual Arts will launch a new Master of Landscape Architecture (MLA) program in fall 2010. "The discipline of landscape architecture is central to solving many of today's most pressing environmental concerns," says Bruce Lindsey, the E. Desmond Lee Professor for Community Collaboration and dean of the College of Architecture and the Graduate School of Architecture & Urban Design.

Heard on Campus

"I thought that's what happens when you really miss somebody. You begin to see him everywhere. And that was my 'Aha' moment."

— Julie Otsuka, author of *When the Emperor Was Divine*, the Freshman Reading Program book for 2009-2010, during her Assembly Series/Neureuther Library Lecture in Graham Chapel on September 15

What spooks the stock market in October?:

October ushers in the fourth quarter, falling leaves, football, and in some, now infamous, years, financial meltdowns. Is the tenth month of the year more prone to stock market crashes than others? Economics professor Stephen Williamson, the Robert S. Brookings Distinguished Professor of economics in Arts & Sciences, says there is little evidence to support that the next big crash would have occurred last month just because the last three major crashes happened in October.

Kudos

Bernard Becker, M.D., who headed the Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences at Washington University School of Medicine from 1953 to 1988, has received the 2009 Laureate Recognition

Award, the highest honor given by the American Academy of Ophthalmology.

Michael R. DeBaun, M.D., the Ferring Family Chair in Pediatric Cancer and Related Disorders, and professor of pediatrics, of neurology, and of biostatistics, has been elected to the Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences, one of the highest honors medical scientists in the United States can receive.

Rebecca Lester, Ph.D., assistant professor of anthropology in Arts & Sciences, has received the 2009 Stirling Prize for Best Published Work in Psychological Anthropology for her essay "Brokering Authenticity: Borderline Personality Disorder and the Ethics of Care in an American Eating Disorder Clinic."

Carl Phillips, professor of English and of African and African American studies in Arts & Sciences, has been selected — for the third time — as a finalist for the National Book Award in poetry for his 10th collection of poetry, titled "Speak Low."

John Watts, a senior in the School of Engineering & Applied Science, captured his second men's tennis individual national title with a 6-3, 6-3 victory over Andy Peters of Middlebury College in the finals of 2009 Division III ITA National Small College Championship on October 17 in Mobile, Alabama.

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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