Professional Development

Graduate students in the Ecology, Evolutionary Biology and Behavior Program gather weekly for an informal colloquium. During these meetings, students practice thesis presentations, prepare for conferences, and discuss issues concerning the larger academic community. See story on page 4.
DEAN’S MESSAGE

The new academic year began like all others with excitement, anticipation, and promise. These feelings remain, but the horrific events of September 11, 2001, are still etched in our minds. While it is tempting to try to carry on as though our lives really weren’t changed, it would not be honest to do so. We must, however, reckon with those changes and consider how each of us, through our daily work, can contribute positively to what has been called a “new way of life”. As I reflect on the changes at MSU, I am pleased to introduce some of the programs, initiatives, and people that are making positive contributions, through graduate education, to the lives of others.

In this edition of *The Graduate Post*, we feature the interdisciplinary Ecology, Evolutionary Biology, and Behavior (EEBB) doctoral program and the master’s program in Epidemiology. Each contributes in a unique way to the richness of graduate programs at Michigan State.

The EEBB program is a great example of the energy that can be mobilized by a small group of faculty with an idea and a purpose for change. While interdisciplinary graduate programs are more common now, this program was very innovative when it began in the mid-1980s. With a variety of core courses, a very active seminar series, and a large group of enthusiastic graduate students and faculty that spans 4 colleges and 13 departments, EEBB represents an excellent standard for a successful interdisciplinary graduate program.

With the current focus on the possibility of bioterrorism, it is clear that the science of epidemiology will expand its very important contributions to our knowledge of the spread of disease organisms and strategies for protecting public health. Epidemiology at MSU is a relatively new department (1997), yet it has already attracted 50 graduate students. The Graduate School is proud to recognize the 17 individuals from MSU who attended the Congress of Epidemiology in Toronto in June. This is the largest group of MSU faculty and graduate students to attend this annual Congress to date. Congratulations to graduate student Plamen Dimitrov, an international trainee, who won an award for his poster!

In this edition, we also focus on two areas of professional development that are important to graduate students (and to the faculty who mentor them). These are the Teaching Assistant Program and the Responsible Conduct of Research seminar series.

Kevin Johnston highlights some of the activities in the MSU Teaching Assistant Program and will write a regular feature for *The Graduate Post*. In this issue, Kevin introduces himself and his passion for pedagogy and for assisting TAs. He also provides the latest update on the restructuring of the TA Program to better serve the needs of teaching assistants and the undergraduates they teach. In a special feature, Kevin highlights an interview with a Math TA, Ying Li, who invests her time and energy in improving her teaching skills. If you haven’t yet met Kevin, stop in to the TA Program office in 9 International Center and say hello. Kevin is eager to assist departments with their own mentoring programs.

The Responsible Conduct of Research series is in its third year at MSU. Developed and organized by Terry May and Julie Reyes, this program reaches a growing number of graduate students and faculty each year. This series includes both the philosophical underpinnings as to why responsible conduct of research is important for the sanctity of disciplinary and applied knowledge, as well as for preserving the public trust in research. The series covers the “basics” for topics such as the use of human subjects, research misconduct, conflicts of interest, data management, and other areas. While the first half of the series was completed with a seminar in November, there are still 3 more presentations scheduled for Spring Semester. Join us! We expect to offer the program again next year, and are happy to receive your comments and suggestions.

Finally, I am pleased to announce the Andrew Rasmussen Fellowships. MSU Alumnus Andrew Rasmussen created a living legacy through an endowed fund that supports graduate students in their studies. This issue introduces our first two recipients of this Fellowship.

I wish you a safe and happy holiday season!

Karen L. Klomparens
Dean of the Graduate School
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