Western Connecticut State University President James W. Schmotter, long a familiar presence among students and in the community, has introduced another method to communicate about the university and its strengths.

Schmotter is host of a new show on WXCI, the student-run radio station. His guests will be faculty and staff working on interesting and important projects. His goal, Schmotter said, is to show off the university’s assets. With 3,000 watts of power, WXCI has a broader reach than other local stations, so the show can be heard far beyond the Midtown and Westside campuses.

“Given my job, I know more about more areas of the university than most stakeholders or colleagues, and I want to share,” Schmotter said. “The concept is to showcase the wide array of interesting activities and people that make up our university community.”

Timothy J. Kaiser, WXCI’s news director, suggested to Schmotter that he have some kind of presence on the air and the format developed during conversations with family and colleagues.

Schmotter interviews guests in his office for about 30 minutes. WXCI staff edit the show to about 15 minutes, and it airs twice a week: Tuesday at 1:30 p.m. and Thursday at 9 a.m.

The first edition of “My WCSU, with President Jim Schmotter,” featured Sharon Guck, coordinator of the alcohol and substance abuse program known as “CHOICES.”

Under Schmotter’s questioning, Guck pointed out that year-to-year surveys show alcohol and drug abuse have decreased on Western’s campuses, and she said many students want information about how to avoid getting involved in drinking and drugs.

Other guests include:
- Gary Lemme, director of the new Institute of Financial Literacy at WCSU, which was founded to help students cope with the difficult issues of debt, interest rates and consumerism.
- Dr. Theodora Pinou, associate professor of biological and environmental sciences, who specializes in turtles and snakes.
- Maureen Gernert, director of the university’s Career Development Center, which places students in internships and jobs.
- Dr. Oscar De Los Santos, chair of the department of writing, linguistics and creative process, who is a science fiction fan and writer.
- Dr. Christopher Kukk, associate professor of political science, about the importance of voting.
- Elizabeth Popiel, associate professor of theatre arts, about succeeding in the competitive arena of performance art.
- Dr. Tom Lonergan, chair of biological and environmental sciences, on the partnership with the Candlewood Lake Authority.

continued on page 11

By Robin DeMerell

For his tireless efforts to repeal the death penalty and his commitment to speaking with law enforcement about the issues surrounding it, Associate Professor of Justice and Law Administration Dr. George Kain was recently recognized by the Connecticut Network to Abolish the Death Penalty (CNADP).

On Sept. 14, Kain received the CNADP Walt Everett Humanitarian Award at the organization’s annual meeting in Hartford. This year’s meeting was dedicated to law enforcement and their perspectives on the death penalty.

Last April, Kain and Terrence Dwyer, an assistant professor of justice and law administration at WCSU, sponsored a symposium on law enforcement and the death penalty. Six months prior to that, Kain invited former death-row inmate Juan Melendez to speak about his 17 years in
Professor’s study researches searing experiences of war nurses

By Paul Steinmetz

The memories are disturbing: Scenes of violent injury and death. A sense of deprivation and omnipresent danger. A land foreign in every sense.

Such are the experiences of nurses at war, captured in interviews by Dr. Mary Ellen Doherty, associate professor of nursing, who published a study on the findings.

Her research demonstrates that nurses who serve during war are subject to the same stresses and illnesses as fighting troops. Not only are nurses treating horrible injuries they don’t normally see, but they also come under fire themselves.

“The literature says 70 percent of veterans come back with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder,” Doherty said. “From my research and talking to people, I think it’s higher.”

Doherty said she and her co-author, Dr. Elizabeth Scannell-Desch, a nursing professor at Mount Saint Mary College, who also is Doherty’s twin, believe more needs to be done to prepare nurses before they head to war and to take care of them when they return.

“I think the armed services do as much as they can to prepare people, but studies like this cause the tri-services to do more,” Doherty said.

Doherty has a personal interest in researching military issues: several family members and students have served, including her sister, who retired from the Air Force Nurse Corps as a colonel.

“We did the study because we felt people needed to hear the voices of nurses,” Doherty said. “It’s not out in the media.”

As the authors wrote, “Nursing in war is a unique experience regardless of education, preparation and training. There are a myriad of variables that enter into the experience and affect outcomes, both personal and professional. Wartime nursing is a reality in the current clinical practice arena. War takes its toll on everyone involved, including the caregivers. Nurses returning from war can provide valuable insights to those who follow.”

Doherty and Scannell-Desch interviewed nurses who served in both Afghanistan and Iraq. Some of their subjects described the shock of treating injuries they would never see in American hospitals. Others they spoke to felt out of place in a foreign land and misunderstood by the locals. All of them lost friends.

“A lot of nurses we talked to said they would go back in a heartbeat, but because of their experience, they would go with a clearer lens,” Doherty said. And the nurses who participated in the research “thought there would be some benefit to those going after them and to educating the public.”

The paper was published by the “The Journal of Nursing Scholarship,” the official journal of Sigma Theta Tau International: Honor Society of Nursing. It tells the nurses’ stories.

“You want to hear the story, the meaning of it, the way it changed their lives,” Doherty said.

The method is not without its risks to the researcher. She described how she conducted an 11 p.m. phone interview with a nurse stationed in Hawaii, who told of her assignment on an “Angel Flight” to bring back the remains of those killed. She came across a set of boots and dog tags, all that remained of a good friend from the base. Doherty couldn’t sleep that night and decided, “It’s better to do the interviews over breakfast.”

Doherty and her sister also have completed a study on women who were pregnant when they were widowed by the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. They are working on two more studies, one that looks at the health and hygiene issues of deployed military nurses and another on nurses who must leave their children at home when they are sent overseas.

Recollections of the nurses interviewed by Dr. Mary Ellen Doherty

One Navy nurse related: “Four of us were jogging on an Afghan Army base. An insurgent dressed in an Afghan army uniform opened fire on us with an AK-47 from a security tower. First, I was shot in the arm. Then, my best friend and another jogger were killed. Our other running buddy was not hit and took off to get help.

It all happened so fast. I was only shot once, probably because I stayed down and lifeless. My best friend was hit in the thigh first, and she was moaning, so he shot her again in the back. The other jogger was shot in the head and probably died instantly because his brains were all over the grass.”

Others were tasked with serving the dead as part of their routine. “There is one image I will always remember,” an Army nurse said. “There was a Marine I became friends with. I would eat lunch with him when he wasn’t on patrol. He was a second lieutenant like me. One day he told me he wouldn’t be around for awhile since he was going on patrol. Three days later it was my turn to go out on an ‘Angel Flight’ to pick up bodies. Well, it was him. We found his dog tag attached to his boot. Evidently, three Marines were together and one stepped on an IED (improvised explosive device). There were no bodies, just pieces. There was nothing for me to recognize except his dog tag.”

“Servicing in a foreign land caused some to struggle with cultural misperceptions — both those of the residents and their own. “Many of the nationals put kerosene in drinking water bottles, and kids would accidentally drink them,” said a major. “So, you have a brain-dead baby in ICU, and you try to explain to the parents that it’s a bad idea to put kerosene in water bottles. They can’t understand why you can’t save their baby since you are an American, and you can fix anything.”

War, of course, causes injuries that nurses don’t see in normal situations. Some said the experience helped them grow professionally. “Working on a forward surgical team, I got a lot of experience. I had never seen trauma like that before, fresh from the field. I didn’t know how I’d handle it. Now, I know no matter what is thrown at me, I can handle it. I definitely came back a more confident nurse.”

Another said she had to shield herself from the trauma: “Some folks got really involved and it may have led to compassion fatigue. Well, I did the opposite. I didn’t get involved. I couldn’t look at patients and talk to them. My way of coping was doing nursing tasks, and waiting for the midnight meal because then I’d know the shift was half over.”
Paul Reis joined the university administration in August as vice president for finance and administration. Reis worked previously at Roosevelt University in Chicago, where he was vice provost for planning and budget, with responsibility for academic budgeting and operation of academic facilities. Before that he worked in various finance and facility roles at Roosevelt and at the University of Chicago. He lives in Wilton with his wife, Mary Jane, and 5-year-old daughter, Anna-Katherine. He agreed to sit for an interview with The Gates after three weeks on the job.

How have you found Western so far?
People here work very well together. I enjoy being on campus and there are many things here my prior institution would kill for. For example, the O’Neill Center. Roosevelt would love to build a field house of any size.

How different is Western from your previous school?
There are actually lots of similarities between the two institutions. Roosevelt has a little more than 5,000 students on a full-time equivalent basis. We had two campuses — but they were separated by 30 miles instead of four. There are a lot of first-generation college students in the Roosevelt population, and the school has an historic mission of outreach to underserved populations. It’s a college that is reorienting itself to have a larger number of traditional first-time full-time freshmen, and it’s trying to attract more residential students. Many of the issues that have come up at Western feel familiar.

What issues are you tackling in your first weeks here?
Much of that is similar as well. We are looking at how many sections we offer so that students get the maximum opportunity each semester and classes are as full as possible. How do you offer faculty class assignments so students get the advantage of full-time faculty? There is always the need for space — and for the School of Visual and Performing Arts, with classes that make noise, where do you find space so the musical instruments don’t disrupt other classes? That’s absolutely an issue.

What about finances?
The state’s financial situation was made very clear to me when I was interviewing. We will see if we can save money here by creating efficiencies and eliminating redundancies. We will also look at revenue enhancements, perhaps with increased rental of buildings during the summer. Part of any strategy will include good communication between work groups to improve efficiency and perhaps create cross-functional teams.

My general approach to an issue, financial or otherwise, is to be collaborative. I’m here to address and solve problems for the institution. The University Planning and Budget Committee was briefed by the provost last semester on the state financial issues and will be integral in developing the institution’s response. From my perspective, many states’ budget crises are much worse. In Illinois, the state stopped transferring money to the public universities’ accounts, for example. And private continued on page 6

Gutzman delivers lecture on Constitution Day

By Robin DeMerell

No taxation without representation. A federal government with limited powers. Remember those words? They are part of the U.S. Constitution and on Constitution Day Dr. Kevin Gutzman discussed our country’s founding document, the way it was supposed to work and the way it works today.

Gutzman, who teaches history, gave his lecture, “Out of the American Revolution, the U.S. Constitution,” on Sept. 17 to a crowd of faculty, students and members of the public.

“Essentially, the idea of the Constitution was that most political decisions should be made by legislative elections through the state and give the federal government few powers, such as military and diplomacy,” Gutzman said. “The current behavior of the federal government assumes that it has unlimited authority. We have the opposite model from the one we adopted when the Constitution was written.”


“The Constitution is used to justify what federal judges want to do if they want to void state laws, but when it comes to the intention of the Constitution to limit powers of Congress, they say it’s old-fashioned,” Gutzman said. “If you give a certain group of people authority and it’s limited only by the limits set by that group, then basically there aren’t any. That’s the U.S. Constitution. The federal government does whatever it wants and the federal judges uphold it.”

Paul Reis joins WCSU as vice president for finance and administration

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“It’s very difficult to set the past aside when many of your closest kin have been killed in the war, and politicians searching for power are always stirring the pot of revenge,” he said. “So how does one break out of this cycle of revenge? Our answer as artists is to come together to perform, to talk with each other, because only then will we understand that we all have the same needs.”

— Eric Lewis
The Manhattan String Quartet may never have embarked on its historic mission this spring to pioneer a new era of U.S. cultural exchange with war-ravaged Bosnia and Herzegovina if MSQ cellist and WCSU Adjunct Professor of Music Chris Finckel had not gone on a fishing trip.

“Chris is a fanatic angler, and he’s tried to fish streams, lakes and seas all over the world,” recalled WCSU Professor of Music and Music Education Eric Lewis, violinist for the MSQ. “A friend who lived in Bosnia and Herzegovina for a while suggested he go there to do some fishing, and during his trip he took an interest in what they are doing with classical music after the war. He learned they are in need of material support and spiritual uplifting in the arts, so Chris proposed to the quartet that we arrange to go there and provide this support to this newly formed country.”

Together with MSQ violinist Calvin Wiersma and violist John Dexter, Lewis and Finckel journeyed to Bosnia from May 17 to 26 to perform in three cities of this redgling nation still recovering from the ethnic warfare that raged for more than three years following the referendum establishing the independent state of Bosnia and Herzegovina in March 1992. The quartet’s tour of Banja Luka, Mostar and Sarajevo also afforded a rare opportunity to provide master classes at local music schools and conservatories, and to engage in cultural exchange with musicians, teachers and other members of Bosnian society.

Lewis said during an interview at his White Hall office that the MSQ’s Bosnia trip carried on a tradition of cultural diplomacy that has characterized the quarter’s international travels across Europe, Asia and the Americas since its founding in 1968, including the pioneering tour of the Soviet Union during that nation’s “glasnost” period of opening to Western cultural exchanges in the 1980s. While hostilities in Bosnia ended with signing of the Dayton Accords signed in December 1995, he noted the MSQ’s tour marked the first to be conducted by a U.S. music group under the sponsorship of the U.S. State Department since the war.

“We’re really the first Americans to pay attention to Bosnia in this way since the war,” he said. “The Bosnian people are very forthright, very hospitable, very open to the exchange of ideas, and very happy to meet American artists in this way.”

The tour broke fresh musical ground as well with the MSQ’s debut performance in Bosnia of a new composition by University of Arizona Associate Professor of Music Craig Walsh, who wrote the commissioned work inspired by Bosnian folk music themes specifically for the quartet. Walsh joined the MSQ throughout the tour to participate in an intensive round of difficult rehearsals exploring uncharted musical territory, culminating in the quarter’s performance of the work.

“It turned out to be quite a challenging piece, filled with folk rhythms from the region,” Lewis observed. “It was a pretty wild piece, very exotic to the Western ear, and we got quite excited about it.”

An example of the unique challenges posed by Walsh’s composition was its second movement, which seeks to reproduce the sound and rhythms of Bosnia’s traditional “ganga” singing through the string instruments. “You sing these songs in half-steps with some glissando slides, and then some blues-style notes that flatten to quarter tones,” Lewis said. “And it’s very emotional: You’re working with amazing music that covers just about everything you experience as a human being.”

Along with the demands of mastering unfamiliar musical styles, the compressed timetable for learning and rehearsing the piece for live performance posed an equally formidable test of the MSQ’s skills.

“Typically it takes about a year to think about a new piece and get it ready for touring — putting it together, taking it up to play, putting it aside, then coming back and refining it,” Lewis said. “In this case, basically we were learning it on the move — even on the train! And it wasn’t the kind of piece where you could always see where it was going.”

The driving force in coordinating Bosnian arrangements for the MSQ tour was Dino Mulic, a professor of music and piano instructor at the Sarajevo Academy of Music. When an initial anticipated source of funding for the tour failed to materialize, Mulic made an urgent appeal to U.S. Ambassador to Bosnia and Herzegovina Charles English for State Department sponsorship. English endorsed the project, and within days Washington approved his request for tour funding.

Their arduous travels took them from the Bosnian capital of Sarajevo across mountainous, stream-cut terrain to Banja Luka in the north, continued on page 11
institutions, where the budget is enrollment driven, are experiencing softness in enrollment.

All institutions have issues and all institutions need resources. We have a responsibility for the long-term sustainability of the organization. We will work with financial restraint and move ahead within the framework of the strategic plan that Dr. Schmotter developed with the community when he arrived here.

No one knows for sure what the General Assembly will do. My approach is to work with the community to develop plans for a few likely scenarios, while being prepared to adjust these as the Assembly finalizes its decisions. Overall, Western will be better served by continuing to focus on how to best serve its students today rather than attempting to guess what may happen tomorrow.

As you look to the long-term future, what do you envision for WCSU?

The new building for the School of Visual and Performing Arts will be a striking, and exciting addition to the Westside campus. The design/development phase is 98 percent complete. We'll see this spring if the governor gives final approval to issue the bonds needed for construction.

When I look at the university’s Master Plan, I see exciting opportunities for making improvements to Higgins and Berkshire halls, and for additional residential facilities down the road. We will always have a number of commuters, but for many students living at college — away from home — is an integral part of the college experience. Western is lucky to already have the critical mass of residential students needed to create a vibrant campus — one that provides residents with many extracurricular activities and gives commuting students opportunities for greater involvement too.

Most of all, I am excited about the opportunity to help Western move ahead with its strategic plan to create an excellent, diverse, affordable student-focused public institution with outstanding faculty. I think the current financial strains will be short- to mid-term in duration. I envision a Western that will move past these trials and continue to build on its many strengths and successes in years ahead.

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After completing two years of mission work, Friar Brad Heckathorne had every intention of staying in Jamaica. But when he heard about an opening at WCSU, he knew it was an opportunity not to be passed up.

“When I looked into Western, it seemed like the perfect fit,” Heckathorne said. “We’ve had friars from our province who had been campus chaplains here and they all loved it. I’ve been here since the beginning of July and everyone so far has been very welcoming.”

Heckathorne, who was born and raised in Manchester, N.H., takes over for Friar Michael Lasky, who left the university in May to work in New York City at the United Nations with Franciscans International.

After earning a bachelor’s degree in English from Stonehill College, Heckathorne received a master’s degree in divinity from St. Anthony-on-Hudson Seminary and a master’s degree in education from Canisius College. Prior to his stint in Jamaica, he spent eight years as a chaplain at Catholic University in Washington, D.C.

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Newman Center welcomes new friar

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Bookstore begins textbook rentals

Students now have the option to rent textbooks required for courses in a wide range of academic disciplines with the launch this fall of a cost-saving rental program at WCSU Bookstore sites on the Midtown and Westside campuses.

Barnes & Noble College Booksellers, which owns and manages the WCSU Bookstore, introduced the textbook rental system at WestConn for the fall 2010 semester after a successful pilot program over the past year received an enthusiastic response from students at 25 campus bookstores nationwide. Barnes & Noble estimates that students who exercise the option to rent textbooks typically will realize a savings of more than 50 percent on the comparable cost of purchasing the same books in newly printed condition.

Hil Estock, vice president of Barnes & Noble College Booksellers, said the new rental program provides an additional alternative to existing bookstore options for purchase of new and used books, as well as textbooks in digital format. "We are committed to providing students the widest range of content options and price points available," Estock noted.

Vice President for Student Affairs Dr. Walter Bernstein welcomed Barnes & Noble’s textbook rental program as "a good example of how the company is trying to help students deal with the reality of the increasing costs of purchasing textbooks. I commend the company for taking this important step, which provides yet another option for students at WestConn."

Terms of the new program require that students provide a valid credit card as security for the rental, while payment may be made in all forms of tender accepted for bookstore purchases. Selected textbooks available for rental are marked with a "Rent Me" sticker and may be brought to the bookstore counter for processing. Rentals also may be arranged online at wcus.bncollege.com, which specifies a rental option for those textbooks available under the new program.

Rentals may be converted to purchase during the first two weeks of the semester; rental periods expire at the end of each semester, with books due back no later than 10 days after the last day of finals for that term. Students may return books in person or by mail, and Barnes & Noble will accept books with highlighted and marked pages on the same terms that it currently accepts used books that students sell back to the WCSU Bookstore.

‘The Things They Carried’ selected as 2010’s ‘One Book, One Community’ common read

Author Tim O’Brien shares stories of Vietnam

By Robin DeMerell

Pulling body parts from trees. Trudging through muck in the eerie darkness. Laughing over the grim circumstances of war. These are some of a soldier’s experience as told in Tim O’Brien’s “The Things They Carried.”

The book, selected as the read for this year’s “One Book, One Community,” is a collection of fictional short stories based on O’Brien’s experience as a soldier in Vietnam. One Book is an annual collaboration between WCSU, Danbury public schools and the Danbury Public Library to encourage everyone in the community to read the same book and participate in events and discussions through October. O’Brien spoke on campus on Oct. 26.

At the One Book Aug. 25 kick-off ceremony at the Haas Library, Mark Hasskarl, director of the Danbury Library, called O’Brien’s work one of the finest books about Vietnam. He explained that the 22 short stories follow a platoon through Vietnam and through a combination of fiction and memories, O’Brien highlights their experiences.

“They try to make sense of what’s happening to them and, in Tim’s case, what happens to him later,” Hasskarl said. He noted that Vietnam was a defining moment of the ‘60s and ‘70s, when soldiers returned wounded, families lost loved ones and politics divided a nation. “It’s a war that still affects present-day politics,” Hasskarl said. “It’s still a presence in American political life.”

Bryan Bielefeldt, WCSU student and a veteran of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, said the book is important for the community to begin to understand what a soldier goes through during war.

“Our community is ill-equipped to help the transition of soldiers coming home,” Bielefeldt said, adding that the book and follow-up discussions can help. While in many respects today’s war doesn’t compare to Vietnam, “it’s a way to try and understand.”

While Danbury Mayor Mark Boughton said the book has a weighty subject matter, he said it’s also important to focus on the university collaboration with the schools and library for a learning event.

“Good things happen when we work together for the community,” Boughton said. “We forget who veterans are. We forget they were young once and the sacrifices they made is something we can never really repay. But it’s important to remember that they gave twice: They gave the life they had and they gave the life they would have had.”

Boughton said the discussions prompted by the book are crucial to our veterans and to the community’s understanding of the veterans.

“Talking allows them to let go of the ghosts of the past and begin anew.”
WEATHER!


Red Flag Campaign. (top): Dr. Glory Blanceagle, an assistant counselor in the WCSU Counseling Center, plants red flags to call attention to domestic violence and abuse.

Summer Literary Readings (above left) held by the Master of Fine Arts in Creative and Professional Writing program brought together students and authors, including (right) Steven Almond.

(right): Theatre arts students staged “As Bees in Honey Drown” in October.

Ives Fine Arts Series. (below left): A harpist performs with the Ives Festival Orchestra. (right): Professor of Music Dr. Margaret Astrup sings while Associate Professor of Music Dr. Fernando Jimenez conducts the orchestra. 

flickr gallery: wcsu.edu/flickr
Entrepreneur Day. WCSU held a daylong celebration of the entrepreneurial spirit on Oct. 6 at a luncheon honoring Middlebury electrical contractor Paul Dinto and a lecture featuring nationally acclaimed business startup expert and author Barry Moltz. (above left): Dinto, (at right) founder and owner since 1987 of Paul Dinto Electrical Contractors, receives the 2010 Entrepreneur of the Year Award from the 2009 recipient Joseph Platano, president of WestCo Scientific Instruments. (top right): Guests at the Entrepreneur Day luncheon included (l-r): Elaine Dinto, Regina Platano and William Totten. (bottom right): Moltz, author of three books and commentator for national media and a weekly radio show on entrepreneurship, offers his perspective on key elements for success and failure in business startups as he delivers the 2010 Macricostas Lecture.

Goodall Summit. (left): Dr. Jane Goodall speaks to a large O’Neill Center crowd about ‘Gombe and Beyond: The Next 50 Years.’ (right) (l-r): Jane Goodall Institute Educator Dr. Rick Asselta, Dr. Jane Goodall and 2006-07 Youth Leadership Fellow Chase Pickering address summit attendees. (below left): Bridge the Gap TV Executive Director Chris Bashinelli makes a presentation.

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Reflecting global trends: Chinese and Portuguese courses offer language training and cultural insights to a changing world

By Robert Taylor

In a world where emerging powers such as China and Brazil play an increasingly important role in the global economy, WCSU is providing students with the opportunity to gain an introduction to the languages and cultural heritage of these influential nations.

The department of world languages and literature is offering an introductory course sequence in Chinese, as well as two Portuguese sequences at the introductory and intermediate levels, during the fall 2010 semester. Department Chairperson and Associate Professor of World Languages and Literature Dr. Galina Bakhtiarova observed that inclusion of these sequences in the curriculum recognizes the need to raise awareness of Chinese- and Portuguese-speaking nations' significance in the world's future economic and cultural development.

“Our objective when we teach introductory language courses is to enable our students to communicate effectively in the target-language environment,” Bakhtiarova explained. “In all our language classes, we incorporate listening, speaking, teaching and writing skills, and we also provide a very strong cultural element.”

She noted Brazil and China, along with India and Russia, are recognized as major emerging markets that exert growing influence in the global economy. “China has become one of the most powerful nations in the world in recent years in trade and politics,” she said, “so communication with China is absolutely imperative.”

Enrollment in the intermediate-level sequence of the Portuguese curriculum, introduced for the fall semester, filled quickly due to strong demand from students of Portuguese and Brazilian heritage, reflecting the large representation of these ethnic groups in the Danbury community. In contrast to the two-semester introductory sequences that assume no prior exposure to the language studied, the Portuguese for Heritage Speakers curriculum is designed specifically for students whose families continue to speak Portuguese at home.

The instructor for both the introductory and intermediate Portuguese sequences is Dr. Jordano Quaglia. Quaglia joins WCSU with extensive experience in Portuguese instruction at the State University of New York at Albany, Fairfield University and Yale University, where he has taught all Portuguese language levels as well as bridge courses linked to the literature curriculum.

Quaglia said the new courses will emphasize knowledge of Brazilian and Continental Portuguese, reinforced by immersion in the language, culture and civilization of peoples of Portuguese heritage. He explained these goals will be achieved through intensive feedback in written assignments, as well as integration of music, dance and video as tools to promote education about the Brazilian and Portuguese cultures.

Instructor Yu Lian offered the two-semester introductory course in Chinese for the first time during the 2009-10 academic year. A native of Beijing who emigrated to the United States in 2001, Lian earned a master’s degree in education at Columbia University. She holds teaching certification in Connecticut and teaches at a Bridgeport high school.

Lian expressed pride in her students' enthusiasm for learning the language and culture of her native China. She makes a point of taking the educational experience beyond the classroom by planning special cultural activities to learn more about Chinese arts, history, sports and cuisine, as well as a traditional celebration of the Chinese New Year.

“Every day, when a student leaves my class, I want to know that he or she has learned something new about China,” Lian said. “If I can share my enthusiasm with them and get them excited to know more about Chinese language and culture, then they will become motivated to continue learning Chinese after they leave my class.”
Grant used to clean up Kenosia

By Robin DeMerell

From the water to its shores, Lake Kenosia has long been a gathering place for Danbury residents. But in recent years development around the lake has caused an imbalance that is threatening the health of the water environment.

WCSU students and faculty already have started to conduct research to clean up the water and restore balance to the lake. Dr. Theodora Pinou, WCSU associate professor of biological and environmental sciences, and environmental consultant and Danbury’s Greenway consultant, Jack Kozuchowski, said that the lake suffers from low oxygen and invasive plants and periodic algal blooms.

“When you have that, you tend to get nutrient-loading in the water,” Pinou said, caused by decaying plant material, phosphates from detergents, and nitrates washing into the water during heavy rainfall. “We know it’s a problem because we’re not finding the diversity that used to be in Lake Kenosia. Certain fish and the diversity of amphibians and reptiles should be there. A lot of non-native plant life is now colonizing the lake.”

Earlier this year, the university received a $45,000 grant from the Connecticut Institute of Water Resources and $9,000 in donor contributions to conduct testing to determine what and how many nutrients are being loaded into the water after a rainfall. Pinou, Kozuchowski and two graduate biology students will collect approximately 12 water samples after substantial rainfalls and then send them to a testing laboratory. This baseline study will continue until January.

The sampling will compare the water upstream from the lake. By looking at the difference, which Pinou suspects is great, they will be able to develop a plan of action. Pinou hopes to apply for a separate grant to put in storm drains to alleviate water runoff.

“It’s a question of whether we can use this water to irrigate, to swim in, to drink,” Pinou said. “What we see is algae growing and sometimes odors, that may be better controlled if we can understand how the nutrients are flowing into the lake. We want the community to enjoy this local resource and make sure that it is a healthy environment for citizens.

Pinou said the project came about after the city approached the university to help figure out how to preserve this valuable community resource. She said the city has considered using the lake as a community water supply.

WCSU graduate students Nicole Stiteler of Newburgh, N.Y. and Aaron Ferraro of Brentwood, N.H., are eager to get involved with this hands-on research. “I hope that this study actually leads to improved storm water treatment for the lake,” Ferraro said. “On a personal level, one benefit of the project is that it’s great to get these ‘workplace’ skills. This internship will allow me to keep my skills sharp while taking classes and looking for employment where I put my experiences to use.”

In addition to the water testing, Kozuchowski’s involvement and the paid graduate internships, the grant will also provide funds for community outreach. Pinou said brochures about the project will be available and geared toward local school children.
Mark Fitzgerald did not know where his undergraduate studies would lead him when he first enrolled at WCSU — yet it seems only natural that the WestConn senior has discovered his career and his passion in the science of life.

"I've always been fascinated by life and the variety of organisms on our planet," said Fitzgerald, a Brookfield resident and biology major. "From a young age, I've been incredibly intrigued by the fact that no matter how much it seems that modern science knows or has answers for, there are always a limitless number of questions that have yet to be answered."

During the sixth annual WestConn Research Day in May, Fitzgerald received the 2010 Provost's Prize for his collaboration with graduate student Mary Alice Secola, also of Brookfield, to study the smallest life forms in the Candlewood Lake ecosystem. The prize, funded by the WCSU Office of the Provost and presented by Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Dr. Linda Rinker, will provide $1,000 toward expenses for Fitzgerald's presentation of an original research study at a professional conference during the 2010-11 academic year.

Fitzgerald coauthored the research project presentation with Secola under the guidance of Associate Professor of Biological and Environmental Sciences Dr. Edwin Wong. Fitzgerald and Secola performed analyses of the genomes of microbial communities collected from sediment in exposed and submerged shoreline areas of Candlewood Lake.

In their abstract for the research project, Fitzgerald and Secola hypothesized that the biennial implementation of winter drawdowns of the water level of Candlewood Lake — in part to control Eurasian watermilfoil, a pest weed whose spread can impair recreational use of the lake — also may have unintended effects on microbial communities along the shoreline. To study whether this occurs, the researchers compared genomes found in the microbe samples collected from shoreline sediment exposed during a lake drawdown with genomes from microbes collected from lakebed regions that remained submerged during the drawdown. Their analysis utilized molecular biological research tools to sequence and fingerprint DNA samples and run search-engine comparisons through DNA databases to determine whether microbial communities in exposed and submerged shoreline regions revealed differences.

Fitzgerald observed that any force unleashed by human activity that alters an ecosystem, such as the lake drawdowns, potentially may have negative consequences for organisms that inhabit that system. "Microorganisms sit at the bottom of an ecosystem's food chain, and any negative impact on their populations could pose a potential threat to the well-being of other resident animal populations, and to the balance of the lake's ecosystem as a whole."

Metagenomic research provided a useful tool for Fitzgerald and Secola to detect the presence of bacterial DNA and compare the quantity and diversity of specific species of bacteria that otherwise cannot be cultured and analyzed in a laboratory environment. Preliminary findings from the limited sample size and timeframe of their study revealed no clear difference between microbial communities in permanently submerged and winter drawdown shoreline areas, but he noted further studies involving larger sample sizes are needed to reach a conclusive determination.

Fitzgerald credited Secola for her collaboration and Wong for his guidance in conducting the many hours of research required to complete the sample collections, laboratory analyses, data collection and poster preparation culminating in the project presentation.

"The genetic research that I did under the guidance of Dr. Wong taught me what real research is like," he said. "Often things go wrong, experimental procedures get messed up, results are not ideal, but all the same you keep on going through with it as long as you can. The best part of this research experience was the end result: Having all our data complete and organized onto a professional poster was a feeling of elation and a proud moment."

Fitzgerald expects to pursue graduate studies leading to a career in disease research. His passion for scientific research first ignited during lab work for courses taught by Professor of Biological and Environmental Sciences Dr. Frank Dye.

"Dr. Dye has been on the faculty here since 1967," he said. "A few years ago, he told me that the more he learns about cells, the more fascinating he finds them — and right then, I knew that this was the field for me. When I saw how excited Dr. Dye could get about his field after teaching it for more than 40 years, it really inspired me."

"I remember Dr. Dye told me once that the mere fact that each of us is alive — with an unfathomable number of biochemical reactions taking place each second within each of our trillions of cells — is a miracle," he added. "I think about that all the time, and it really drives me to want to learn all I can about cell biology."

The commitment to student success shown by faculty in biological and environmental sciences and other departments has provided "an incredible undergraduate experience," Fitzgerald observed.

"The small class sizes mean that I've always had the opportunity for one-on-one personal instruction from, and interaction with, many brilliant professors," he remarked. "I know that if I ever need to meet with a professor in person, or need clarification on some aspect of the course work, they will always be there to assist me. You really can't put a price on receiving a quality education directly from a professor, like you get here at Western."
Dr. Theodora Pinou and Dr. Kathryn Campbell were honored recently for their outstanding work in their academic fields by the Connecticut State University System and its Board of Trustees.

Eight faculty members from the system’s four universities — Central, Eastern, Southern and Western Connecticut State University — received awards on April 8 and two of the eight honorees received additional recognition as system-level award recipients.

Pinou, associate professor of biological and environmental sciences, was selected as the recipient of the Norton Mezvinsky Trustees Research Award at both the system and university level. Campbell, associate professor of education and educational psychology, received the Trustees Teaching Award at the university level. Pinou is recognized for her scholarly work in ecology and the evolutionary development of vertebrates. She is widely respected for her teaching and for engaging and inspiring students, colleagues and others in scientific research and forging international collaborations. She has published extensively in scientific journals and exemplifies that the creation of knowledge and teaching are intricately related and can be shared with expanding audiences.

“I am honored that my colleagues thought enough of my work to select me as an exemplary researcher, and I am humbled by this award because it’s about them more than me,” Pinou said. “It really represents the trust that administrators had in my work when they provided opportunities for me to conduct my research, and the success that WCSU students can achieve when they are able to become passionate and confident about their interests.”

Campbell is widely regarded as an exemplary faculty member in the university community for her consistently high standards, guiding support of students and adherence to the principles of critical thinking and scholarly work. She is a recognized champion in the use of student learning assessment for educational improvement and incorporating that into the unit’s national accreditation process, which she has coordinated.

“I am honored because this award is based on recommendations of the students, colleagues, and administrators with whom I have been working for many years, and it is the result of a peer-review process,” Campbell said. “It is wonderful to have my work acknowledged in such a public forum by people who are important to me in my professional life.”
WCSU graduate finds adversity poses no obstacle to her dreams

By Robert Taylor

Two years ago, Lenore Kubie lost nearly everything she owned — but the aspiring chemist has discovered that no adversity could take away the powerful drive to learn and succeed that she gained from her experience at Western.

“The largest lesson I learned while I was an undergraduate student at Western was to not dwell on the past,” observed Kubie, who earned her bachelor’s degree in chemistry at WCSU in May 2009. “Though reflection is important, it is outlook that matters in chemistry, and in life.”

Kubie’s remarkable outlook in seeking opportunities where others see only obstacles has carried her through a challenging educational journey at Western to new horizons of research pursuits as a graduate student at the University of Rochester in New York. Her doctoral studies focusing on alternative energy and solar technology recently earned her the prestigious honor of selection as recipient of an Integrative Graduate Education and Research Traineeship (IGERT), a National Science Foundation program designed to promote multi-disciplinary research and develop a new generation of scientific, policy and business leaders in the field of renewable energy.

“Through this program, I will have the opportunity to take courses and attend seminars on the public policy, sociology, psychology, science and business behind alternative energy,” Kubie said. “My research in grad school is very specific to cutting-edge solar technology, so normally I would live only in this science bubble. The IGERT program will help me to change the way the world views alternative energy, and I will be able to implement change not only through my experiments, but also through public policy and entrepreneurship.”

Her ambitious goals reflect a personal strength and self-awareness that have been tested by hard work to pay for her college education and a devastating tragedy for her family that threatened to disrupt her progress toward an undergraduate degree at Western.

“One week into my senior year, my house burned down,” Kubie recalled. “All of my textbooks, my notes from all my classes, my photographs, my computer, my clothing, my cat — all gone in one evening. That time is a blur of sleep deprivation, insurance companies, and tears.”

As she took a week off from her studies to restore a semblance of order to her life, a community of caring was rallying to provide the essential support required to complete her undergraduate education.

Western students she had never met responded to a front-page story in “The Echo” by offering a place to sleep until she had resettled. Classmates made copies of notes for the classes she missed, while coworkers from her analytical chemist job at ATMI in Danbury contacted the WCSU Bookstore and repurchased all the required textbooks for her fall semester schedule. The chemistry department faculty took up a collection to purchase a gift card large enough to enable her to purchase new clothing and other essential items. “To this day,” Kubie said, “my wardrobe remains provided thanks to the WCSU chemistry department.”

“By the time I walked across the stage at graduation,” she added, “I thought only about how wonderful the WestConn community is, and how much I would miss everyone.”

Kubie credited an engaged and enthusiastic faculty at WCSU for preparing her well for pursuit of a doctorate and career in science.

“At Western, I was given individual attention,” she said. “If you walk down the third-floor hall in the Science Building, you will notice that every professor available has his or her door open. Many times I would have a question about something that couldn’t be ‘Googled,’ and I was able simply to poke my head into someone’s office for a quick, yet thorough and satisfactory answer. I never felt silly about asking a question — most of the faculty were as excited about my curiosity as they were about chemistry.”

A faculty committed to student success does not mean easy A’s or excessive hand-holding for students who need to learn how to ask questions and pursue research inquiry on their own, Kubie emphasized. Her role models included Professor of Chemistry Dr. Paul Hines and Professor of Chemistry Dr. Russell Selzer. Selzer served as faculty mentor for her research work at WCSU: “He never had a list of experiments he wanted me to run. I had to figure out what to do next,” she said. “This process of forcing me to think about chemistry, and not simply follow a procedure, is what real science, and grad school, is all about.”

Her goals after achieving her Ph.D. in chemistry include landing a post-doctoral position at a major research university and ultimately teaching at the university level. Yet as she reviewed the opportunities and challenges ahead in her recent note to her WCSU faculty mentors, she also recognized where her journey began.

“I am very thankful that I got the opportunity to do research at Western!” she wrote. “Without it, I think I would have been completely overwhelmed in grad school.”
Troia named 2010 President-to-President Scholarship recipient

Christine R. Troia has continued her educational journey along many paths since she left WCSU to marry and start a family in 1987. This fall she resumed her pursuit of a Western bachelor’s degree as recipient of the 2010 President-to-President Scholarship.

Troia, who received an associate degree in business management in August from Naugatuck Valley Community College, was nominated by NVCC President Daisy Cocco DeFilippis to receive the President-to-President Scholarship. The award, given annually since 2003 to pay full tuition costs for a graduate of NVCC to pursue undergraduate studies at WCSU, recognizes Troia’s achievements in maintaining a grade point average of 3.95 at NVCC over the past two years. Her goal at Western is to obtain a bachelor’s degree in business administration with a concentration in supervisory management.

“I am proud to have been selected as the recipient of this prestigious award,” Troia remarked. “When I received the notification, I was filled with excitement and felt like shouting from the rooftops! I now have the ability to complete my undergraduate studies in business administration at a university that I have already called home. I have learned many life lessons in that span of a quarter century since I left WestConn, and each and every life experience has been leading me back to school.”

In his letter to DeFilippis confirming Troia’s selection for the award, WCSU President James W. Schmotter noted that the scholarship program’s success in providing educational opportunities at WestConn for academically gifted NVCC graduates offers “yet another manifestation of the productive partnership that our two institutions enjoy.”

NVCC Assistant Professor of Management Robyn-Jay Bage noted in her recommendation letter that Troia exemplifies both superior academic performance and personal leadership skills, evidenced by her contributions as president of the Alpha Beta Gamma international business honor society at the community college.

“Christine is a highly motivated woman who aims for excellence in any endeavor she pursues,” Bage observed. “In addition to her academic prowess and leadership abilities, it is Christine’s character that makes her such an extraordinary woman. Her spirit is contagious; her gentle good nature is engaging and enduring.”

Troia, the mother of two adult children and a resident of Oxford with her husband Dan, has gained a wide diversity of experience in the workplace as a bookkeeper, office manager, bank teller and accounting clerk. In recent years, she has served as business manager and director of faith formation at St. Thomas the Apostle Church in Oxford, and has earned graduate certificates for continuing education courses in faith formation, evangelization and pastoral ministries. She views her studies in business management at NVCC and WestConn as preparation for future pursuit of a master’s degree in parish administration.

Troia’s extensive volunteer work includes her service at St. Thomas Church as a member of the parish council and chairperson of the church’s finance council and strategic planning committee. She also has served as youth minister and organizer for parish mission trips to Group Workcamps sites in New York and Pennsylvania, facilitator for child abuse prevention programs of the Archdiocese of Hartford, and volunteer for area shelter, food bank and blood donation programs. At NVCC, she served as secretary of the Student Government Association and as campus representative for the Newman Club.

Troia described herself as “a lifelong learner, drawn to the process of learning and energized by the journey from lack of knowledge to proficiency.” She expressed a commitment to pursue success “with the energy to set an active pace and define expectations,” combined with an inquisitive nature and a desire to build teamwork through consensus and a recognition of individual strengths.

She attributed her decision to return to college in 2008 to the lessons she learned from her father’s tragic death in a horseback riding accident five years earlier, and her recognition as parent and counselor to her own children during their college years that a latent desire to advance her own education had reawakened.

After her father’s death, “my goals and priorities changed, and living life became a main concern,” she said. “I left a very stressful job as an office manager when I was offered an opportunity to join St. Thomas in their faith formation program. With the guidance and support of the pastoral team, I pursued any and all continuing education courses, programs and conferences available. I had found the place that I belonged, and the collaborative environment in which I am able to excel.”

Through her children’s college experiences, she added, “an incentive to pursue my studies developed in the spring of 2008 and I have been a full-time student, employee, wife and mother since then. My family is where the rich soil is cultivated, giving the seed an opportunity to grow strong roots. NVCC has encouraged the seed to break through the soil into the sunlight and reach for the sky. It is my hope that WCSU will foster and promote the continual growth and development that will enable me to yield and bear ample fruit.”
President James W. Schmotter cordially invites you to a reception for renowned sculptor Alice Aycock.

Ms. Aycock will discuss the concept and execution of “Acceleration,” installed recently at the Westside Campus Center

Tuesday, Dec. 7, 2010 from 5:30 to 7 p.m.
Westside Campus Center Ballroom, 43 Lake Ave. Ext., Danbury, Conn.

Please RSVP to (203) 837-8460 or e-mail mckayj@wcsu.edu by Thursday, Dec. 2.

The works of American sculptor Alice Aycock can be found around the world—from the museum of Modern Art in New York City, to the Kunstmuseum in Switzerland. In addition to exhibiting in major museums and galleries in the Americas, Europe and Japan, Aycock has received numerous awards including four National Endowment for the Arts Fellowships.

Since 2003, Aycock has been a member of the New York City Arts Commission and has also been appointed to the GSA’s National Register of Peer Professionals. She has taught at several colleges and universities, including Yale where she also served as the Director of Graduate Sculpture Studies. Since 1991, she has taught at the School of Visual Arts in New York.

Dates and times are subject to change. Check our online events calendar to ensure the event you are interested in is still scheduled. All events are free and open to the public unless otherwise noted. For more information about these and other events, please call the Office of University Relations at (203) 837-8486 or visit wcsu.edu.