Engaging with the World: Smith in the World

Late in the afternoon of November 11th, the whole of the Campus Center was abuzz with conversation and visitors for the ninth Smith in the World conference. This annual showcase of student internships, community service, and international study highlights the opportunities offered by a Smith education and the many ways in which our students expand their educations beyond the Grécourt Gates. Of the 40 students presenting at the conference, 17 science majors or minors described their work, often in places as far-flung as Belize, India, and Côte d’Ivoire (http://www.science.smith.edu/wordpress/clarksciencecenter/?p=1123).

The panel I attended featured three science students who stretched themselves with summer Praxis internships. Their stories were compelling. Dannia Guzman ’15 discussed the powerful learning she undertook at the University of Illinois at Chicago under the direction of Smith alumna, Dr. Kristine Molina ’05. Dannia provided a brief overview of her substantive research project examining the health of Latino immigrants in the U.S. and shared with us the announcement that she was departing the very next morning for a national conference at which she was presenting this important work.

Her fellow panelists shared their own inspiring stories. Lauren Kauffman ’15 described how her advanced neuroscience coursework in one of Professor Mary Harrington’s classes led to her awareness of the pioneering work happening at Temple University’s Center for Neural Decision Making and ultimately, helped her to craft a Praxis application to intern there, where she was involved in a variety of studies centered in this emerging field. Krithika Venkataraman ’15 described how she landed her internship after an invitation from Professor Adam Hall to attend a meet-and-greet with Dr. Kevin O’Connor who visited campus as a colloquium speaker. Krithika shared what a big impact that conversation over coffee had on her trajectory, noting that she was able to parlay it into an internship at the Yale School of Medicine where she was the only undergraduate researcher in Dr. O’Connor’s lab.

These stories reveal the power of a Smith education to open doors, to make connections, and to help students to find a sense of purpose in the larger world. By engaging with the world, our students find themselves.

--Patty DiBartolo
Faculty Director of the Sciences
Developing Skills and Knowledge:
Active Learning in Science Courses

A headline in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* recently announced, “Undergraduate science gains are tied to hands-on lab experience” (February 4, 2014). Our own strategic planning report makes a similar point, noting that best-practices in science education focus on active, student-centered, and inquiry-driven approaches to learning. I am happy to report that we have many examples of this work within our classrooms and that number is growing.

Come to McConnell foyer to see an end-of-semester poster showcase of some of the active and student-centered pedagogies happening in our science classrooms. Students in Peter deVilliers’ colloquium, *Understanding Minds*, will be presenting their work on December 8th and 10th from 9 to 9:50 am. On December 11th, three different courses will share work throughout the day: BIO 364, *Plant Ecology*, taught by Jesse Bellemare (from 10:30 to 11:30 am); and CHM 223, *Chemistry III: Organic Chemistry*, taught by Kevin Shea and BIO 303, *Research in Developmental Biology*, taught by Michael Barresi (both from 1 to 4 pm). Come be a part of introducing our students to the integral role that connectivity and communication play in the scientific process. Come talk to your colleagues about their experiences in this kind of classroom. Finally, if you are thinking about shifting a new or existing course toward this kind of teaching, come chat with me. I can help connect you to colleagues and resources (including some modest research funding) that are often essential for this kind of pedagogical innovation.

--Patty DiBartolo

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**THE OFFICE FOR PREHEALTH ADVISING HAS MOVED!**

With the restructuring of the Office of STEM Advising & Mentoring, there has been a recent move as well. You can now find Katie Lipp and the Office of Prehealth Advising in McConnell 414. Send your students along to peruse the resources in the office and stop on by to welcome Katie to this new space.

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**IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event/Event Details</th>
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<tr>
<td>December 8, 10, 11</td>
<td>Poster sessions for intermediate- and upper-level science courses (see story above)</td>
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<td>December 11th 2014</td>
<td>Last day of classes</td>
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<td>December 12th 2014</td>
<td>Clark Science Center Holiday Party, 3:30-5 pm, Seasons Room, Ford Hall</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 23rd 2014</td>
<td>College closes (reopens January 5th 2015)</td>
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<td>February 16th 2014</td>
<td>SURF applications due (faculty recommendations due February 23rd)</td>
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