

# The Saint Joseph's University Sigma Xi Chapter Newsletter

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## SJU Sigma Xi Chapter Wins 3 Awards at International Sigma Xi Meeting

*Awards for "Chapter of Excellence", "Outstanding Programs" and  
New Membership Conferred at San Diego Meeting*

### Sigma Xi News Release

Each year, Sigma Xi recognizes a small group of chapters for outstanding chapter activity. Certificates of Excellence are awarded to chapters that have demonstrated exceptional innovation and quality in their annual programming. Chapter Program Awards recognize singularly exceptional chapter programs.

Certificates of Excellence are awarded to chapters for overall outstanding activities during the past fiscal year. The SJU chapter was one of 8 chapters to receive the award for general excellence in all activities in the 2002 – 2003 period.

The chapter also received a Program Award for the 14<sup>th</sup> Annual SJU Sigma Xi Student Research Symposium (see story in the summer, 2003 newsletter) at which nearly 140 posters were presented by more than 250 students and faculty mentors from almost 40 colleges and universities.

The third award was for being one of the top chapters in terms of the number of new members inducted. This is the third time in six years the chapter has received this award.

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## Annual SJU Sigma Xi Student Research Symposium set for April 23

*Nobel Prize Winner Eric Wieschaus, Ph.D., of Princeton  
University to Give Opening Lecture*

**Story by: Mike McCann Ph.D. Professor of Biology  
SJU Sigma Xi Secretary**

The 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Saint Joseph's University Sigma Xi Student Research Symposium is scheduled for April 23, 2004. The symposium will begin at 5:00 PM with a lecture by Eric Wieschaus, Ph.D, Squibb Professor of Molecular Biology at Princeton University, and co-winner of the 1995 Nobel Prize in Medicine. His seminar, entitled "Cell Signaling in Normal Human Development and Disease", is free and open to the public. It will be the final "Frontiers in Science" lecture of the year (see story page 6), and will be in the Wolfington Teletorium of Mandeville Hall. A reception will follow in the Mandeville Hall Tower Foyer.

The student research poster presentations will be held in the Champion Student Center from 7:00 until 8:30. The posters, displaying research performed by undergraduate and graduate students in the areas of engineering, mathematics, computer science, the natural and the social sciences, will be set up in the Sun rooms and North Lounge. The poster presentations will be followed by a dinner for the students, their faculty mentors and guests.

Last year's symposium set another record in terms of the number of posters, with nearly 140 being presented by over 250 students and faculty mentors from thirty-seven colleges and universities in five states. This year's symposium is expected to be comparable in size. We hope that many of the members of the SJU Sigma Xi Chapter will be able to stop by for the evening and meet with these young scientists.

More information about the 15th Annual Symposium is available online at the SJU Sigma Xi web site, <http://www.sju.edu/honor-society/sigma-xi>. You can also contact Dr. Michael McCann, SJU Sigma Xi Secretary, at (610)660-1823 or by e-mail at "mmccann@sju.edu" if you have any questions.

## **"New" Organic Chemistry Lab**

**Story by: Roger Murray, Ph.D., Professor and Chair,  
SJU Department of Chemistry**

During the summer of 2003, Saint Joseph's University carried out the complete renovation of the Organic Chemistry Laboratory. This project has provided us with a very attractive modern laboratory where our students can conduct experiments in synthetic chemistry in a safe and healthy environment. During this academic year, six sections each of Organic Chemistry Laboratory I and II and one section of the Inorganic Chemistry Laboratory are being taught in this lab. Each section has a maximum of sixteen students and is taught by a faculty member and a student teaching assistant. Photos of the lab are available at <http://www.sju.edu/academics/chemistry/alumni.htm>.

In the front of the laboratory is a teaching and demonstration area. At the beginning of a lab, the student desks are arranged to face a whiteboard for the pre-lab lecture. The student desks can be turned in the opposite direction so that the hoods and benchtop nearest to the front of the room can be used for demonstrations. During a lab, the student desks are moved close to the whiteboard and each student stores his/her book bag and coat at a desk.

The eight hoods in the lab where the students carry out their experiments are located on three "islands". Since each hood is six feet long, there is sufficient room so that two students can work by separately or as a pair. Each student has a locked drawer that is next to their hood. The students do all of their experiments in the hoods. Consequently, we have a much safer and healthier environment for synthetic chemistry than we have had in the past. The lab also contains four large sinks, each with an eyewash, two safety showers, an explosion-proof refrigerator, an ice-maker, and two vented chemical storage cabinets. There are benchtops on the perimeter of the laboratory where the balances, rotary evaporators, and centrifuges are located.

Connected to the lab is an instrument room that contains four gas chromatographs and a Perkin-Elmer infrared spectrometer that are employed in various experiments.

Across the hall from the Organic Chemistry Laboratory are the rooms for the Chemistry Computing Laboratory and the Nuclear Magnetic Resonance Laboratory. Our JEOL Eclipse 400 MHz FT-NMR spectrometer facilitates multidimensional NMR studies, has multinuclear capabilities, and can be operated at variable temperatures.

## **Biology Department Does "This Old Lab" Renovation**

**Story by: Mike McCann, Ph.D. Professor of  
Biology, Amateur General Contractor**

If you've ever seen the PBS show "This Old House", or if you've redone your kitchen or bathroom, you have a pretty good idea as to some of the "surprises" you can be in for during a renovation job. Imagine how much more fun that job would be if it entailed renovating five different rooms, on two floors, totaling more than 2300 square feet. Toss in a tight budget and a three-month schedule from start to finish, and you have the latest round of lab makeovers in the Biology Department.

Don't get me wrong, I like this kind of work. I enjoy the challenge of "value engineering" where you try and squeeze the greatest amount of use out of a design for the minimum cost and effort. I think we did it, thanks to the hard work of a bunch of talented contractors and a generous administration.

It all started with a new hire in Biology. Dr. Joseph Thompson joined us from a post-doc at the University of North Carolina, and he needed a lab to do his research work in. The space we had for him had been pretty much untouched since the Science Center opened in 1971 (it still had the original coat of paint on the walls!). This, plus the inappropriate layout of the benches (Joe does work on how things like squids move through water so he needs lots of tanks and camera space) meant we needed to gut the space and renovate it.

At the same time, two other rooms needed attention. Our radioisotope facility was in a room slightly larger than my car (which isn't a SUV), which meant being rather uncomfortably cramped when working with radioactive materials. Luckily, thanks to the Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences, Dr. Brice Wachterhauser, a space more than twice as large was made available just across the hall from the old isotope facility. This allowed us to design a really functional work area while at the same time converting the old facility into a common equipment room supporting several research labs.

Along with moving the radioisotope facility, we also

*Story continued on page 7*

## **SJU Mathematicians descend on Math Meetings in Phoenix**

**Story by: Sandra Fillebrown, Associate Professor of Mathematics and Computer Science**

Ten students and faculty in the Department of Mathematics and Computer Science attended the Joint Meetings of the American Mathematical Society and the Mathematical Association of America that were held January 6 – 10 in Phoenix, Arizona. Over 4000 mathematicians from around the world were there to present their work, hear talks by colleagues, participate in poster sessions, panel discussions and minicourses and attend numerous social events.

Dr. Deborah Lurie presented two papers, *“To Play or Not to Play? A writing project that enhances student learning of the basic concepts of counting”* and *“An interdisciplinary approach to teaching statistics to undergraduate life science majors provides numerous opportunities for data analysis projects involving inference”* which was a collaboration with Drs. James Watrous and Denise Marie Ratterman from the biology department.

Dr. Sean Forman (the new president-elect of the SJU chapter, see story on page 4) organized and moderated a session on *Mathematics and Sports* together with Douglas Drinen from University of the South and presented a paper *“Monte Carlo Simulations of Baseball Seasons and NCAA Basketball Tournaments”*. This popular and well-attended session featured papers on the use of mathematics to analyze baseball, basketball, football, cross country races and other sports and the use of sports as a pedagogical tool and was highlighted in *The Wall Street Journal*.

Dr. Agnes Rash presented two papers, *“CAS Visualization, Software or Both?”* and *“Our Favorite Level Curves and Linear Regression”*, both co-authored with Dr. Jean Marie McDill of California Polytechnic State University.

Dr. Rachel Hall presented *“Taylor Series: The Movie”* and *“Mathematics for poets (and Drummers): The Mathematics of Rhythm”*. In the latter the audience was treated to several musical selections demonstrating different rhythmic patterns that had been analyzed mathematically.

Dr. Sandra Fillebrown presented *“Describing Points in some Simple Fractals”* a report on joint work with graduate student Vincent Russo. In addition, she and Dr. David Hecker participated in a minicourse on developing assessment plans for mathematics departments.

Dr. Tom Foley attended mini courses on: ORIGAMI in undergraduate mathematics courses and The Fibonacci and Catalan numbers.

Two senior double majors in Mathematics and Computer Science also presented work. Kevin Dietzler gave a talk titled *“Teaching 3-Dimensional High School Geometry with Animation”* a report on research done last summer with faculty advisor Dr. Stephen Cooper. Christopher Dugan participated in the Undergraduate Poster Session with a poster on *“Patterns of N-Cycles”*, work he is doing for a departmental Honors project. Both students enjoyed the chance to speak with faculty and students from other universities across the country; they plan to attend graduate school and were eager to hear about the various program offerings and opportunities.



*Some of the SJU Mathematics and Computer Science Faculty and Students Attending the Phoenix Meeting*

### **“The Doctor is In” for K-12 Students**

“The Doctor is In”, the online system for K-12 students to pose questions to SJU faculty and students, is up and running. To date we have had some questions but we would really like more. Please share this resource with K-12 students and teachers you may know. Questions are submitted over the web at this address: [www.sju.edu/honor-society/sigma-xi](http://www.sju.edu/honor-society/sigma-xi) Click on the button for “The Doctor is In” and follow the on-screen directions. Answers are usually returned within 48 hours.

## **McGroddy "Frontiers in Science" Lecture Series in Third Year at SJU**

**Story by Mike McCann, Ph.D. Professor of Biology**

Thanks to the support of Dr. James McGroddy, '58, the Frontiers in Science lecture series is now in its third successful year. The series brings nationally known researchers to SJU to discuss their work in areas of research at the boundaries of traditional disciplines.

Last fall, two Frontiers in Science lectures were given. The first, held on October 29, 2003, was by Dr. Amos B. Smith III, a faculty member at the University of Pennsylvania and the recipient of numerous awards for his research in organic chemistry and the synthesis of natural compounds. His lecture was entitled "Total Synthesis of Architecturally Complex Natural and Unnatural Products" and was delivered to a large crowd of SJU students and faculty.

The second lecture of this year's series was sponsored by the Physics Department and brought an SJU alum back to Hawk Hill. Alphonso Diaz, '66, graduated from SJU with a B.S. in Physics. Since 1998 he has served as the director of NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center, which orchestrates the Earth science, space science and technology problems run by the federal government. His talk, "The Goddard Space Flight Center, a Director's Eye View" described the many current and future projects that the center is working on for research directed at Earth, the solar system and the universe itself. Among these projects are: the successor to the Hubble Space Telescope and projects to examine changes happening to the Earth's climate.

This spring, two more seminars will be given as part of the Frontiers in Science program. The next lecture will be given by Lynn Enquist, a virologist whose lab is studies the movement of herpes viruses in the nervous system. Dr. Enquist, soon to be the chair of the Molecular Biology Department at Princeton University, is also editor of the international Journal of Virology. His lecture will be given on Wednesday, April 14, at 4:00 in room 200 of the Science Center.

The final Frontiers in Science lecture of the 2003 – 2004 academic year will be given by Nobel Laureate Dr. Eric Wieschaus and will open the 15<sup>th</sup> Annual SJU Student Research Symposium (see page 1). Both lectures are free and open to the public. Contact Dr. Mike McCann at 610-660-1823 for more information.

## **NSF Grant to Fund Unique Integration of Statistics and Biology**

**Story by: Tom Durso,  
Director of University Communications**

Statistical literacy is essential for pursuing research interests in the life sciences and medicine. However, in most universities, undergraduate biology majors do not receive any formal education in the science of statistics.

Beginning this semester, the Departments of Biology and Mathematics and Computer Science will use a National Science Foundation grant to adapt and implement that education for undergraduate biology majors at Saint Joseph's.

The two-year grant, for nearly \$108,000 and matched by \$18,000 from the university, will be used to develop course materials and purchase laboratory equipment to support Saint Joseph's Integrating Biology and Statistics Education (IBASE) curriculum. IBASE represents an innovative use of interdisciplinary methods by which students concurrently enroll in an applied statistics course offered by the mathematics department and in Cellular Biology, the first course in the core for biology majors.

By taking the courses at the same time, students find that topics covered in both courses can be integrated. Data collected by the students in laboratory experiments will be analyzed in the statistics course, for example. Organizers point out that linking projects in both courses clearly demonstrates the relevance of statistics to the life sciences.

According to Dr. James Watrous, professor of biology and one of the grant's project directors (P.D.), interdisciplinary approaches in the life sciences have led to an increased need for science majors to become proficient in other areas. An example is the Human Genome Project, which mapped every human gene and which relied heavily on computer science to assist in the biomedical research that was being conducted.

"If you start students on statistical training in their freshman year instead of giving it to them in their junior or senior year," he explained, "they learn early on that the life sciences are quantitative, and they have four years to develop and use those skills instead of one or two."

*Story continued on page 6*

## **SJU Psychologist Appointed to PA Advisory Committee for Preparedness**

**Story by: Kelly Schramm**

### **University Communications**

Dr. Paul DeVito, professor of psychology at Saint Joseph's University and executive director of the Early Responder's Distance Learning Center (ERDLC), has been appointed to serve on the newly established Statewide Advisory Committee for Preparedness. The committee will support the Pennsylvania Department of Health (DOH) in efforts to upgrade the state and local public health jurisdictions' preparedness for and response to bioterrorism, outbreaks and infectious disease, and other public health threats and emergencies.

The committee's responsibilities include the oversight of integrated funded activities of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Hospital Resources and Services Administration. Dr. DeVito's appointment was made by Pennsylvania Secretary of Health Calvin Johnson, M.D., M.P.H. Dr. DeVito joins representatives from other state universities such as the University of Pennsylvania, the University of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania State University, Drexel University and Jefferson University.

"This appointment is an acknowledgement of the important work Saint Joseph's has been involved in," said Dr. DeVito. "The university is honored to be in the company of such prestigious universities."

ERDLC was founded in 1999 by a \$5 million federal grant. It was established to better prepare the country's emergency-response community for the psychological consequences of terrorism and other incidents involving weapons of mass destruction. The center provides first-line responders across the country -- National Guard members, emergency medical technicians, police, firefighters, etc.-- with Web-based coursework and on-demand teleconferences to handle the effects of nuclear, terrorist and chemical attacks on their peers and other victims. More information about the ERDLC can be found at the center's web site located at: <http://erdlc.sju.edu>.

## **Major NSF Grant Awarded to SJU and Ithaca College for Computer Science Retention Project**

**Story by: Joseph Cairns**

### **University Communications**

A Saint Joseph's University computer scientist has received a three-year grant from the National Science Foundation (NSF) for more than \$1 million to create basic computer science courses at the community college level in effort to increase retention among students. The grant is the largest from NSF in the history of the university.

Students will use the courses to create interactive games, simulations, and stories. The project provides for sophisticated computer programming, but allows even the novice programmer to yield results in a short amount of time.

"Thus far the program has only existed in small classrooms at Saint Joseph's," said grantee Dr. Stephen Cooper, assistant professor of mathematics and computer science. Larger classrooms and increased diversity forced the course to evolve to incorporate the needs of more students."

Drs. Cooper and Wanda Dann of Ithaca College adapted a three-dimensional interactive animation environment, "Alice," for classroom use to retain students in a field hampered by high attrition rates. The success of Alice in Dr. Cooper's courses at Saint Joseph's made the recent grant possible.

The project, JABRWOC (Java-based Animations: Building Virtual Worlds for Object-oriented Programming in Community Colleges), selected three community colleges, Camden County (N.J.) College, Community College of Philadelphia, and Tompkins Cortland County (N.Y.) College, based on their different sizes, student population served, and geographic locations.

"With a greater understanding of computer science, not only will computer literacy evolve," said Dr. Cooper, "but a greater number and more diverse group of students will seek out careers in computer science."

Dr. Deborah Lurie, assistant professor of mathematics and another co-P.D., noted, "Many of our students are pre-med, and in medicine today it's essential for both clinicians and researchers to understand statistics when reading medical journals, digesting pharmaceutical marketing reports, interpreting diagnostic tests, and making decisions.

"The use of real data sets and the emphasis of communication skills -- both written and oral -- will provide students with the skills they need to succeed both while they are at Saint Joseph's and in their career and professional choices afterward," she added.

Planning for the program began two years ago, when Department of Biology faculty members realized that their majors needed a better knowledge of statistics to grasp the concepts and techniques used within their curriculum.

An interdisciplinary committee comprising members of the biology and mathematics departments met and recommended modifying the math requirement from two semesters of applied calculus to one semester of applied statistics and one semester of applied calculus. Dr. Lurie, Dr. Watrous, and Dr. Denise Marie Ratterman, the Department of Biology's freshman core lab coordinator, then designed the IBASE curriculum and applied to NSF for funding.

The purpose of using real-world data, according to the researchers, is to offer students more compelling subjects to study and to illustrate the integration between biology and mathematics. The students are also required to present their results, giving them additional training in oral and written communication.

The grant provides funds to purchase four microscope-camera-computer systems capable of making a variety of cell measurements to be used for statistical analysis. Student stipends during the summer will enable a biology major and a mathematics major to work together to develop and test the procedures and analyses. Funds for tutors are also part of the grant.

The team will survey students before and after the course in order to gauge its effectiveness. Of special interest is whether this integrated approach will enhance student retention in the natural sciences and improve student attitude toward quantitative methods.

## Profile of Dr. Sean Forman, SJU Sigma Xi President-Elect

First off, I'm thankful for being elected to serve as Sigma Xi's president-elect and next year as the chapter's president. I'm constantly impressed by the work done by SJU's Sigma Xi chapter and excited to be a part of it.

My education occurred entirely at Iowa (my home state) colleges and universities. I received my B.A. in mathematics from Grinnell College in 1994, and thinking that I was destined to become a mechanical engineer I entered a 3-2 program between Grinnell and Iowa State University in Ames. After three semesters in Ames, I decided engineering wasn't as mathematical as I had expected and began applying to graduate applied mathematics programs. This led me to the Applied Mathematical and Computational Sciences program (an inter-disciplinary program centered in the math department) at the University of Iowa in Iowa City. At Iowa, I studied optimization (both continuous and discrete) and my thesis work involved the ab initio prediction of protein structures.

I arrived at Saint Joseph's in the fall of 2000. Since then, I've taught courses in applied math (numerical analysis, simulation, operations research) and my other interest, Internet applications. My current research includes extending and refining my thesis work and other discrete optimization problems such as a technique for drawing unbiased (at least to my mind) congressional districts.



*Sean Forman, Assistant Professor of Mathematics, will become the next president of the SJU chapter this spring.*

## **Personal Web Usage in the Workplace Offers Benefits for Employees and Employers, New Book Concludes**

**Story by Kelly Morrissey,  
University Communications**

More and more employees are surfing the Web for personal reasons during work hours, and according to Saint Joseph's University's Dr. Claire Simmers and Drexel University's Dr. Murugan Anandarajan, it could be beneficial for employees and employers. In a new book entitled *Personal Web Usage in the Workplace: A Guide to Effective Human Resources Management* (Information Science Publishing), they explore the constructive side of personal Web usage.

Better time management, reduction in stress, adding to skill sets, and helping to achieve a balance between work and personal life are some of the advantages cited in the book.

"Personal Web usage in the workplace has a negative perception, especially among administrators who often see it as inefficient and creating a decrease in work productivity," said Dr. Simmers, associate professor of management.

The book suggests that personal Web usage can contribute to employees' continuous learning by helping them stay current on world events and business news, as well as provide support for education through formal classes and professional associations.

"Today, organizations demand more human capital and 'knowledge workers' who can perform at a higher level, but they are reluctant to view personal Web usage as a tool that could help employees perform their jobs more effectively," added Dr. Simmers. "If there is a level of virtual trust built between employees and organizations, then the use of the Internet can prove to be productive."

The study conducted by Drs. Simmers and Anandarajan, one of several presented in the book, analyzed 316 surveys of employees who were either part-time M.B.A. students from a northeastern university, or one of three contacts of each student; all of them had Web access at work.

had to take a room that was initially planned to house a newly acquired scanning electron microscope and rework it to accommodate light microscopy equipment acquired through a recent NSF Grant.

The nice thing about doing the jobs this way was that the cabinet and equipment layout for all four "new" rooms could be designed from the ground up. While budget constraints meant that no walls could be moved and the heating and cooling systems had to be left in their excitingly unpredictably original configurations, we could at least start with an empty space and design it to suit the occupants. The good folks at DMC Corporation (based here in the Philadelphia area) helped us out a lot and Ms. Deidre Garcia worked closely on the cabinet layouts to make the rooms as functional as possible.

As we were doing this initial planning the real General Contractor on the job (my title is an honorary one), Len Geria, came up with a plan to stretch our dollars even further. He has worked with us for years to improve our facilities (see story from the winter, 2002 newsletter about the roof-top turtle houses Len designed and built for Dr. Scott McRobert's research program) and he was well aware that we desperately needed to do something about our glassware and media preparation room. The biggest problem with the room was that Louis Pasteur would have found it somewhat antiquated and we were using "second hand trash," as Len delicately put it, for cabinetry. Len planned out a way to salvage most of the wooden cabinets from the room we were remodeling for Dr. Thompson so that they could be reused in the glassware room. Throw in some new countertops and wall cabinets, along with the first coat of paint the room had since the building opened in 1971, and we had a much-improved facility.

In closing, let me give the rest of the credit where it is due. Sgro mechanical contractors (another old friend of the Department) did the plumbing work and Com1 installed new computer and phone lines to these rooms (thanks to Brian Shepherd, SJU's telecom manager). The VP for Facilities, Mr. Kevin Robinson helped us through the bureaucratic process, and both Dean Wachterhauser and the Academic Vice President Dr. Dick Passon wrote checks to pay the bills. And finally, thanks to the many Biology faculty, led by Dr. Paul Tefft, chair of the department, who made sure that designs were drawn and equipment was moved so contractors could work.

## **SJU Masters Programs Offer Opportunity for New Careers**

*Full and part-time programs in math, the natural and the social sciences provide paths for career change.*

Considering a career change? Interested in moving into the areas of life sciences, computer sciences, criminal justice, K-12 teaching or psychology? Maybe one of the SJU Masters programs is just what you are looking for.

These programs combine a flexible curriculum with full or part-time courses of study, to suit every student's need, whether they are right out of college or coming back after years in the work force. Masters programs relevant to the mission of Sigma Xi are offered in the following areas:

- Biology (MA or MS)
- Computer Science (MS)
- Criminal Justice (MS)
- Education (MS with certification in Biology, Chemistry, Math or Computer Science)
- Health Administration or Education (MS)
- Psychology (MS)
- Public Safety and Environmental Protection (MS)

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

For more information about these programs, contact the appropriate graduate director from the list below or go to [www.sju.edu/academic\\_affairs](http://www.sju.edu/academic_affairs) and click on the "Graduate Arts & Sciences" link.

Graduate Directors:

- Biology – Dr. Karen Snetselaar  
Phone: (610) 660-1826  
E-mail: [ksnetsel@sju.edu](mailto:ksnetsel@sju.edu)
- Computer Science – Dr. Gary Laison  
Phone: (610) 660-1570  
E-mail: [glaison@sju.edu](mailto:glaison@sju.edu)
- Criminal Justice – Mr. Lawrence Walsh  
Phone: (610) 660-1269  
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