

AROUND CAMPUS *ONLINE*

NEWS AT A GLANCE

- **Bernice Nuhfer-Halten** has received a \$1,000 grant from the University System of Georgia to study in Spain this summer.
- **Hassan Pournaghshband** was invited by the University of Mashad, Iran to present his research on "Query Optimization for Database Systems." The presentation took place at the Annual Computer Science Conference in December, where Hassan was also interviewed on the future of information technology by a national Iranian newspaper.
- A check has been received by the SPSU Foundation to begin a \$25,000 scholarship created by the Flagler Foundation, in the memory of the late Thomas T. Flagler and T. Thorne Flagler III.
- A scholarship valued at \$2,500 will be provided for a construction student as part of a gift from Michael Noli, of the American Council of Construction Education. In addition, Georgia Concrete Products, the American Concrete Institute and Portland Cement Association have donated design software valued at \$4,000 to the Construction Program.

NATIONAL ENGINEERS WEEK FEBRUARY 16-22, 2003

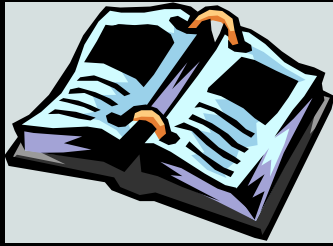
E-Week theme: "Without Engineers the World Stops"

The theme of Engineers Week – 2003 – states the importance of engineering in society. Upon just minimal observation, it's obvious that almost every part of the way we live our lives is impacted by engineering. And, that much of our coming and going and working and playing would indeed grind to a stop without engineering.

At SPSU, E-Week will be celebrated with two events. At a luncheon on February 17, Richard M. Harwell will speak to faculty and staff. Mr. Harwell served in various capacities while employed at Lockheed Martin. Upon retiring, he established a Systems Engineering consulting firm specializing in systems management, engineering processes and systems engineering training programs. Dean Richard Aynsley says that a special feature of the luncheon will be the recognition of SPSU's Outstanding Engineering Technology Faculty Member of the Year, student recipients of GEF awards, and the Outstanding Engineering Technology Student of the Year.

On Friday, February 21, Dave Ledbetter will present the Lockheed Martin F-22 Case Study in the Student Center Theater at noon. Students, faculty and staff are invited to attend. Mr. Ledbetter is senior manager of Manufacturing Development and Integration at Lockheed Martin.

Many representatives of the university will represent SPSU at the E-Week Banquet to be held February 22 at SciTrek. SPSU competitive teams will be displaying their works at SciTrek, as well as on campus during E-Week.



DATES OF INTEREST

February 10
Portal Presentation
11:30 a.m.

February 12
The Tony Tilmans
Annual Chili Cook-
off

February 16-22
Engineers Week

February 17
E-Week luncheon
at SPSU

February 18-19
SPSU Career Fair

February 22
Undergraduate
Open House

February 22
Engineering Week
banquet at SciTrek

March 1
Regional Science
Olympiad Tourna-
ment on campus.

Join the SPSU community of faculty, staff
and students for the
Portal Project
Presentation –
SPSU's
"Face of the Future"

Monday February 10, 2003
Student Center Ballroom
11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Special Guests:
Jordan Williams and Eric Lewitt
from the design firm of plexus r & d

Luncheon refreshments will be served

RETIRING.....

SPSU extends appreciation for work well done, and wishes a happy and healthy retirement to some of our long time colleagues and associates who have turned off their alarm clocks – unless, of course, they want to go fishing or play golf early one morning.

According to the Office of Human Resources, recent SPSU retirees as of January 1 include Lee Tucker, Physics, Chemistry and Biology; Glenn Brooks, IET; William Herbert, Jr., Facilities; Orren Williams, MET; and Julian Wilson, ECET.

Those who are soon approaching their retirement date of April 1 are J. D. Cantrell, Facilities and Howard Pettigrew, CET.

Also wrapping up business on January 31 was Jim L. Thompson, president and CEO of Georgia Youth Science and Technology Center, a statewide organization that was founded by Southern Polytechnic and remains strongly affiliated with the university. Prior to the establishment of GYSTC, Thompson was public relations director for the university.

REFLECTIONS ON SPACE EXPLORATION

During the sad and critical days of investigation and analysis that have followed the loss of the space shuttle Columbia's seven astronauts, many people are reflecting on the nation's role in space. SPSU President Lisa Rossbacher has a special insight into that program and, in this edited version of an opinion editorial she has written, we share some of her memories and thoughts with our campus community.

The cost of exploration

Lisa A. Rossbacher

On February 1, we were reminded how routine space exploration had become. After 112 missions in NASA's space shuttle program, we had all started to take for granted the more-or-less regular launches, missions, and landings. At any given moment over the last 15 years, few Americans could have correctly answered the question: "Are any Americans in space right now?" – to say nothing of being able to give the name, background, or birthplace of any of the astronauts in orbit. People in space had become routine.

When I was finishing my dissertation on "The Geomorphology of Mars," I was on the receiving end of endless kidding from my fellow Princeton graduate students. "So, Rossbacher," they asked, "When are you actually going to do some field work?" When NASA issued a call for astronaut candidates, I applied. I was more astonished than anyone when I found myself as a finalist, spending a week at the Johnson Space Center undergoing interviews and medical and psychiatric evaluations. Ultimately, I was not selected. (*Editor's Note: Dr. Rossbacher has continued her involvement with NASA over the years through her geological research, primarily related to the study of Mars.*)

Even when I participated in the astronaut interview process, several years before the Challenger incident, much of the glory had already worn off the American space program. Astronauts were becoming glorified mechanics, with a future of building and servicing the Inter-

national Space Station. But in other important ways, the glory has continued. Space travel and exploration are extraordinary endeavors that can never become commonplace. The human presence in space is an amazing accomplishment – to lose sight of this achievement is to surrender some of our own humanity and our national character.

The risks associated with space exploration are difficult to quantify, but we have always known that they exist. Exploration has a cost. Since the Challenger loss 17 years ago, astronauts have consciously – sometimes self-consciously – spoken of another shuttle accident in terms of "when," not "if." Although NASA has consistently emphasized the safety requirements, the hazards were known and, for the most part, accepted.

The astronaut training process involves thousands of hours of practicing handling problems in a shuttle simulator, so that the real thing is no surprise. Disaster and crisis becomes routine. But not every crisis can be anticipated or simulated. Sure, being an astronaut is a dangerous occupation, but so is working on ships or drill rigs or doing field work in parts of the world that are marked by civil unrest, forbidding topography or remote locations.

When I was in graduate school, two students doing fieldwork in British Columbia died in a fall. It was tragic and their families and friends suffered a permanent loss. But the response was to identify ways in which the fieldwork could become safer and less risky. No one ever suggested that geologists should stop doing fieldwork.

The response to the loss of the Columbia crew and shuttle should be the same. The causes of the accident

need to be understood and addressed. Appropriate new monitoring and safety procedures may need to be established. The changes and improvements need to be communicated to the American public, as clear evidence that we have learned from this tragedy and that the loss of the crew has explicitly contributed to making future space flight safer.

Education is all about learning from mistakes – benefiting from the lessons of history, and developing the common sense not to make the same mistake twice. What we cannot do is allow the Columbia loss to stop our exploration of space. The message should be to learn what we can and to keep trying, not to give up the effort and stop trying.

In all the media commentary and instant analyses in the hours following the Shuttle's loss, two messages were clear. One message from fellow astronauts was "our colleagues on the Columbia crew would want us to continue the manned space program and the exploration of space." The other message was articulated by Bill Readdy, NASA's associate administrator of

Continued, page 4

Correction: In the January 13 issue, *Around Campus* announced Dr. Nancy Reichert's appointment as director of the new Honors Program. The article stated that Dr. Reichert "is formerly an assistant professor of English." Dr. Reichert is very much still an assistant professor of English at SPSU.

SPEAK OUT



Around Campus would like to feature ideas from faculty and staff about building a stronger Sense of Place at SPSU.

Perhaps you have thought of something from the past that would be meaningful to you again, or something original that has never happened before. Maybe the active person in you thinks a Sense of Place includes a campus clean-up day — while the couch potato that rises to our surface sometimes is looking for a regular gathering spot to chat with others over a cup of coffee.

Is a sense of place

- A place or a feeling?
- Employee recognition?
- Involvement?
- Events?
- Family participation?
- Shared activities with students?
- Environment?
- Food service?
- Professional development and training?
- Your own office space?

All – or none of the above?

Speak up! Let us hear from you by February 21 and we'll share your ideas in *Around Campus*.

Wish **BIG**. Think creative. Win prizes!

If you want us to use your name — sign it. If you don't, we won't. It's up to you. However, if you do want to put your name with your idea, we'll be able to include you as the possible winner in drawings for a very neat SPSU shirt and a SPSU silver business card holder. Please send your ideas to awatson@spsu.edu, with the subject header: Sense of Place. Or drop them in campus mail to the Public Relations Department.



Deadline: February 21, 2003.

GO HORNETS! SPSU'S MEN'S BASKETBALL TEAM IS MOVING UP THE RANKS. AS OF FEBRUARY 3, SOUTHERN POLY'S GACC RECORD WAS 7-2. WITH THE UPSET WIN FOR SHORTER OVER FAULKNER ON SATURDAY FEB. 1, SPSU JUMPED TO A THREE-WAY TIE FOR FIRST PLACE IN THE GACC. **STAY TUNED!**

Space Exploration,

continued

spaceflight and a former shuttle commander himself: "We must find out what happened and move on." *Moving on* may mean some new ways of doing things, including rethinking the role of the Shuttle program in future space exploration, but *moving on* also equates to *not stopping* the human exploration of space.

The manned space program is not just about having a human presence in space; it's about the strengths that people bring to the exploration process. Geologist, Apollo 17 astronaut, and former U.S. Senator Harrison Schmitt consistently emphasizes the importance of the direct human presence in space exploration. Yes, there are risks, but the benefits of having human eyes and brains and hands engaged in the exploration process are incalculable.

The American public needs to support these efforts. Exploration carries risk – hazard is the price of knowledge. In a world full of traffic, carcinogens, food allergies, and crime, the riskiest thing any of us do is get out of bed in the morning (and staying in bed carries risks as well). We have to keep learning, continue exploring, and always push the edge of the envelope.

Lisa A. Rossbacher

Send information to share, news, questions you'd like answered, or letters to the editor to the Public Relations Department, c/o awatson@spsu.edu, or via campus mail.

There is no newsletter without your news and views.
Thanks!

Around Campus is posted on the SPSU Web, linked through the Public Relations Main Page.