

UGS Monthly

Office of Undergraduate & Graduate Studies

News on UMR's efforts to enhance its learning environment & the learning outcomes of students

New system monitors academic progress

Special points of interest:

- UMR's new academic alert system
- Expanding interest in undergraduate research
- UMR faculty & the Voyager Learning Community
- Technology in the classroom
- UMR Writing Center services
- Resources for academic advisors

Beginning this semester, UMR faculty and students will use the new interactive, on-line "Academic Alert System."

The Academic Alert System is a web-based application that replaces the paper version of the former Early Warning System. The Academic Alert System is intended to improve student retention through increased early intervention.

The system supports communication among instructors, advisors and students in cases where students are not meeting academic course requirements.

Following is a description of how the Academic Alert System is intended to work:

UMR instructors have the ability to initiate academic alerts for students in their courses. Students must respond within three days of receiving an alert. Students are informed of the need to contact their academic advisor to discuss recommended actions. Once

actions are taken, students communicate the results to their advisor and the advisor will update the academic alert system.

With the implementation of this new system, the Early Warning System paperwork, formerly issued by the UMR Registrar's Office, will no longer be used. Faculty are encouraged to utilize the new on-line system in its place.

The Academic Alert System provides UMR with beneficial information about student academic success.

Departments chairs will receive mid-semester reports containing specific information about the academic alerts that were issued within their departments. Departments will also receive follow-up reports at the end of each semester. The information will more quantitatively inform departments of their students' progress and academic work.

The new Academic Alert System is currently available for use by all



The Academic Alert System improves communication between UMR students, instructors and advisors.

UMR students and faculty at: <http://campus.umn.edu/acalert/>.

A detailed help document is located at: http://campus.umn.edu/acalert/help/help_document.html.

UMR faculty and staff are invited to attend an interactive demonstration of the new Academic Alert System on Friday, September 9, 2005 from 12:00-1:00 pm in the Turner Room of the Havener Center.

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Undergraduate research takes hold at UMR

This year, approximately 130 UMR undergraduates will participate in research projects through the Opportunities for Undergraduate Research Experiences (OURE) program.

OURE offers undergraduate students the opportunity to participate in individual or group research with a faculty research advisor in their department. Participating students receive \$1,000

for the completion of their projects. Students receive a \$500 stipend during the fall semester and an additional \$500 in the spring, upon completion and submission of their final report.

OURE students, and others participating in undergraduate research at UMR, are encouraged to present the results of their research projects at the UMR Un-

dergraduate Research Conference on April 12, 2006.

The Office of Undergraduate & Graduate Studies is currently accepting applications from students interested in participating in the OURE program during the 2006/07 academic year. For more information, or to download a copy of the OURE application form, please visit: <http://campus.umn.edu/ugs/OURE.htm>.

UMR faculty reflect on the Voyager experience

“After our initial experience with the Voyager program, we believe it represents a unique opportunity for entering UMR students across the disciplines. We saw friendships developing, students making connections with course material that would not have happened otherwise. We truly enjoyed getting to know this group a little better.”

By Will Canu, Ph.D., and Mike Nelson, Ph.D.

We were both excited about our chance to offer general psychology students a component for the Voyager program in Fall 2004.

Voyager was just as new to us as it was to them; weaving the extra Voyager assignments and discussions into existing courses was a little bit of a challenge. When, early on in our courses, we raised the question “Who is in Voyager?”, more people responded with their own question—“What is Voyager?”—than responded in the affirmative.

We have learned that their question is not easily answered. Every department that includes Voyager in their introductory curricula has different activities. However, a common aspect involves increased interaction between faculty and students and deeper engagement in the course material.

To start the Voyager ball rolling, we assigned a “new classic” book describing cases of neuropsychological dysfunction, *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat* by Oliver Sacks. About midway through the semester, we had a round-table style discussion with students about their favorite stories, answering questions and discussing the implications of different disorders. For instance, one case describes a woman with a

visual impairment: she could not see motion. How was this the only deficit? Here we reinforced concepts derived from neurocognitive psychology: parallel processing and localization of brain functions. Our brains, fortunately, do not operate in a serial fashion; multiple processes in vision, for example, occur simultaneously and are not mutually dependent. Shape, texture, color, and other aspects of her vision were intact because the lesion in this woman’s brain was small and in a specific area of the visual cortex dedicated to motion perception. Of course, we also talked about how strange life might seem when motion was missing from your perception of the world!

Following our discussion section, Voyager students, along with the entire campus, were invited to attend a lecture by Laura Schopp, Ph.D., a board-certified neuropsychologist and faculty member in the Health Psychology Ph.D. program at UM-Columbia. Dr. Schopp, an expert in rehabilitation of patients with brain injuries, was very well received. She presented a fascinating array of case material from her own experience that extended students’ appreciation of brain-behavior relationships.

Finally, toward the end of the fall, our Voyager students completed a short paper regarding their own reflections on Sack’s stories. Some students observed that reading about how individuals with

cognitive impairments suffered and persevered was inspirational. Others noted how they were simply amazed at the complexity involved in our brain’s functions and failures. Still others hypothesized about novel ways to intervene and assist these patients.

After our initial experience with the Voyager program, we believe it represents a unique opportunity for entering UMR students across the disciplines. We saw friendships developing, students making connections with course material that would not have happened otherwise. We truly enjoyed getting to know this group a little better.

We are excited about continuing this program in Fall 2005, and think Voyager is an example of how the UMR experience can be intimate and fun.



Will Canu and Mike Nelson are Assistant Professors in the Psychology Department at UMR. Dr. Canu received a Ph.D. in clinical psychology from the University of Texas at Austin. Dr. Nelson received a Ph.D. in psychological and brain sciences from Dartmouth College.



Jennifer Abbott, Michael Yegerlehner, and Daniel Ashbaugh will serve as academic mentors for the Voyager Learning Community during the 2005/2006 school year.

Voyager students benefit from weekly seminars

First year students participating in the Voyager Learning Community this year will benefit from a series of weekly seminars designed to help them adjust to campus life.

The Voyager Seminar Series will present students with a comprehensive introduction to the UMR campus and the beneficial resources available, including academic skills development resources and information on how to get involved and make friends.

Voyager students are required to

attend a minimum of 12 seminars during the academic year, 6 each semester. Voyager student mentors are responsible for arranging the seminars, tracking attendance, encouraging participation among the students and assisting students with academic needs.

Voyager students share similar academic experiences both in and out of the classroom. All Voyager students are enrolled in at least two similar courses, including: Chemistry 1, English 20, Psychology 50 or any freshman math

class. In addition to the shared classroom experience and seminar series, Voyager students participate in Voyager committee activities, including academic social and community service activities. At the conclusion of each semester, Voyager students write an essay summarizing their overall experiences.

The Office of Undergraduate & Graduate Studies would like to thank all the UMR departments who have agreed to offer seminars this year.

Faculty using technology to engage students

By Marcie Thomas, Coordinator, Center for Educational Research & Teaching Innovation

An instructional technology used to assess student learning and to engage students in large lecture classes is being piloted in Mathematics, Chemistry, Chemical Engineering, Physics, and Biological Sciences classrooms.

Beginning this fall, a new group of response system users, Kimberly Henthorn, Douglas Ludlow, Ronald Frank, Robert Roe, Allan Pringle, Martin Bohner, and Elvan Aikin-Bohner, will be joining experienced response system users, Harvest Collier, Ekkard Sinn, Klaus Woelk, and Lia – Sotiouro-Leventis, to form the core group of faculty charged with examining how response systems impact learning, improve content retention, and engage students.

First premiered on campus in fall 2004 through a proof of concept study in the Chemistry department, the effective implementation of response system technology has shown significant merit for improving student grades and attitudes for learning. Grade results showed a marked increase compared to previous semesters and student survey results showed students were more engaged and motivated to learn when the clickers were used in class.

While the end-of-semester results were outstanding, during the semester Chemistry faculty encountered unexpected technical support issues ranging from battery failures to total equipment failures. In addition, faculty found it necessary to make some changes in content delivery. Because response system technology makes

it possible to assess student learning at the discretion of the instructor, lesson planning and thoughtful question development are absolutely necessary if students are to fully benefit from the technology.

Organized by CERTI and IT, the purpose of the pilot project is to identify and provide solutions to the technical support and pedagogical issues as well as to recommend a streamlined process for a larger campus implementation.

Formal assessment on student learning, student engagement, and pedagogical issues will be spearheaded by UMR's Laboratory for Information Technology Evaluation.

The analysis and interpretation will be completed during Spring



Pilot study participants at the PRS training session hosted by CERTI. From left to right: Douglas Ludlow, Ekkard Sinn, Klaus Woelk, Peris Carr, Kim Henthorn, Ronald Frank, Anna Pillai, Robert Roe, and Zahra Afrasiabi-Navan.

“...the effective implementation of response system technology has shown significant merit for improving student grades and attitudes for learning.”

UMR Writing Center opens on September 6

Each year, over one thousand UMR undergraduates come to the Writing Center to work with peer tutors to improve their writing skills. On Tuesday, September 6th, our tutors will begin assisting undergraduates with all types of written assignments, from English and history papers to scientific lab reports and technical proposals, to documents relating to advanced engineering coursework.

Tutoring hours for the fall semester are 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Thursday and 12:30–5 p.m. on Sunday. Students may make an appointment by calling 341-4436, or they are welcome to drop by the Writing Center, located in 113 Campus Support Facility, during tutoring hours.

Graduate students in the College of Arts and Sciences, the School of Materials, Energy, and Earth Resources, and the School of Management and Information Systems are also

**UMR Writing Center
Tutoring Hours-Fall 2005**

Monday-Thursday
11 a.m.-7 p.m.

Sunday
12:30-5 p.m.

invited to seek assistance at the Writing Center. Graduate students in these divisions who have completed a journal article, proposal, or one or more chapters of their thesis or dissertation may bring their documents to the Writing Center to be edited by a professional technical editor. These students may stop by the Writing Center at their convenience to fill out an information sheet and drop off a hard copy of their document. An editor will read the document, make suggestions, and then contact the student to set up a mandatory face-to-face meeting. At that meeting, the editor and student will look over the suggested

changes together and discuss the reasons for those changes. Editors at the Writing Center focus exclusively on writing style; they cannot be held responsible for the content of any document. Documents will be edited on a first-come, first-served basis. At this time, graduate students in the School of Engineering are not eligible to receive these services. Engineering graduate students should speak with their academic advisors about writing resources that are available to them.

If you have any questions about the services available at the UMR Writing Center, please contact Dr. Kate Drowne, Director of the Writing Center, at kdrowne@umr.edu, or call the Writing Center at 341-4436.

UMR advising conferences

The Office of Undergraduate & Graduate Studies offers a series of beneficial advising development conferences for academic advisors. For more information, contact UGS at 341-7276.

2005-2006 Schedule

Academic Alert System

9/9/05, 12:00 - 1:30 PM

The Millennial Student

10/3/05, 10:30 AM-12:00 PM

Academic Dishonesty

11/2/05, 2:00-4:00 PM

Voyager Learning Community

1/11/06, 11:00 AM-12:30 PM

UMR Residential College

2/1/06, 1:00-2:30 PM

Hot Topics in Advising-

3/1/06, 3:00-4:30 PM

4:30 PM– Reception

[At the Havener Center]

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Student success is important at the University of Missouri-Rolla. The Office of Undergraduate & Graduate Studies strives to create and support programs that continually improve the UMR learning environment and the learning outcomes of students.



Upcoming Events– September 2005

For Faculty

September 9

"Academic Alert System" Demonstration, by IT & UGS, 12:00-1:30 PM, Turner Room, Havener Center– (RSVP required)

September 15

"Motivating Students" GTA Workshop, by Tammy Pratt & Patti Fleck, 3:00-5:00 PM, Meramec Room, Havener Center

September 16

"Problem Based Learning" Faculty Workshop, by David Jonassen, 2:00-4:00 PM, Missouri Room, Havener Center

September 29

"Leadership Development Seminar for Deans, Chairs and Associate Deans," by Marc Frankel, 8:30 am-4:30 PM, St. Pat's C, Havener Center

For Students

September 8

"Diversity Fulfilled" Voyager Seminar, by Marcus Huggans, 7:00-8:00 PM, South Lounge, TJ Hall

September 12

"Playing IT Safe"- Copyright Law & Computer Ethics, Voyager Seminar, by Christopher Dew, 4:30-5:30 PM, South Lounge, TJ Hall

September 28

"Campus Life Part I– Having Fun Yet?", Voyager Seminar, by Matt Goodwin, 5:00-6:00 PM, South Lounge, TJ Hall



David Jonassen, Distinguished Professor of Education at the University of Missouri, will visit UMR on **September 16, 2005** to conduct a **Problem Based Learning Workshop**, hosted by the UMR Center for Educational Research & Teaching Innovation (CERTI). Jonassen earned his doctorate in educational media and experimental educational psychology from Temple University. For more information about the upcoming workshop, contact CERTI at 341-7648.