BEHIND THE CURTAIN

Too often we walk through life only seeing the people around us from a single perspective. This tunnel vision can prevent us from connecting with each other as people journeying along similar paths in life. I hope this section gives each of you a new perspective on the faculty with whom you spent your college years.

Paul Wagner did not run any marathons this year, but he did spend a lot of time traveling, both for his work in the Computer Science department and for other purposes. In addition to presenting papers and workshops at computer science education conferences in Houston, TX and Bologna, Italy (with Dan Stevenson), Paul spent his summer:

• Traveling to Denver, CO to visit friends and hike in the Olympic Peninsula.
• Working on a Sierra Club Service trip near St. John’s, Newfoundland, Canada, developing and maintaining trail on the East Coast Trail system, a soon-to-be 300 mile network of trails along Newfoundland’s rugged east coast.

The field of computer science has changed over the years, my interests have also changed – well, actually, they have come full circle. When I started my teaching career in the spring of 1976, I taught mathematics – fulfilling my childhood dream of being a math teacher and being able to help bring the joy of math to those who struggle with it. Now, beginning in the fall of 2007, I will once again return to teaching mathematics full time as my tenure is transferred from Computer Science to the Department of Mathematics.

While I am partially filled with sadness at the thought of leaving this wonderful department, I am also filled with joy as I anticipate returning to my first love – mathematics. The memories of many of you and this department are great and will last forever!

So long and best wishes to all, — Sue

An Important Message from the Chair

This year, the Department of Computer Science received $200,000 from the estate of Scott Seawell, a 1984 graduate of our program. This generous donation will be used to endow the Scott Seawell Memorial Scholarship Fund. We hope it gives Scott’s family some small measure of comfort to know that Scott’s legacy will live on through the numerous deserving students that will benefit from his scholarships.

I was a classmate of Scott’s at UW-Eau Claire and was deeply saddened to hear of his passing. Scott was a kind, gentle man with an incredible work ethic and a deep sense of community commitment. I remember him being an “easy target” for classmates that needed help with programming assignments, homework, or just plain coping. Scott cheerfully gave his time to help them get on track. I remember thinking that he might become a professor; but it was not to be. It does, however, give me a sense of connectedness that his generous bequest to our department will allow his helping hand to assist students for years to come.

Scott’s passing caused me to reflect on all the wonderful times (and not so wonderful times) that I shared with my CS classmates as an undergraduate student at UW-Eau Claire. Sadly, I have lost contact with almost all of them now. I don’t want this to be the case for the alumni of our department any longer. The Department of Computer Science, therefore, has established the UW-Eau Claire Computer Science Alumni group on the Wisc Eau Claire network at www.facebook.com. As you may already know, Facebook is a private web-based company that enables people to stay in contact in the way we do in the real world. Registered users can post pictures, send messages, share interests, join groups, and so on. Facebook requires that users be authenticated via an email address associated with a social network (i.e., Wisc Eau Claire). To receive an alumni email alias at www.cs.uwec.edu/facebook, please submit your suggestions at http://www.cs.uwec.edu/mascot-Contest/. The winning name will be selected by vote of the computer science student body in April, 2007. I know you have more important things to do, but take a break and have some fun!

“Name that Critter”

We are pleased to announce the first mascot for the Department of Computer Science. In typical geek fashion, the little critter was constructed by overlying “C” and “S” (in Century Schoolbook font). Ain’t it cute? The motivation behind the mascot is to give our department an icon that we can use to brand our department. The goal was to produce a fun and inviting image that might appeal to younger folks. The problem is that we don’t have a name for the little dude (or dudette). This is where you come in – if you have any great ideas for a name (or even OK ideas since we are running a bit short of our own), please submit your suggestions at http://www.cs.uwec.edu/mascot-Contest/. The winning name will be selected by vote of the computer science student body in April, 2007.

I encourage each of you to visit www.cs.uwec.edu/facebook/ to obtain your own special alumni email alias and join the UW-Eau Claire Computer Science Alumni group on Facebook. Don’t let time disconnect you from your CS classmates.
Three New Faculty Join Department

The Department of Computer Science is pleased to welcome three new distinguished faculty: Drs. C. Michael Morrison, Joline Morrison, and Daniel Ernst. As you can see from their profiles below, all three are impressive individuals. We are honored to have such well-rounded, talented, and dedicated additions to our faculty.

Mike Morrison (left) Dr. Mike Morrison joined the CS Department in August 2005 after teaching in the MIS Department for ten years. While there, Mike developed new courses in networking, Web programming, and object-oriented programming as well as teaching every course in the curriculum at one time or another. Mike earned four college degrees including a B.S. in Geological Engineering from the Colorado School of Mines, a M.S. in Geology from Oklahoma State University, an M.B.A. concentrating on Finance from Oklahoma University and a Ph.D. in Business Administration majoring in MIS with a double minor in Electrical and Computer Engineering from the University of Arizona. He started his professional career as a petroleum geologist in Casper, Wyoming. In 1981, Mike took part interest in his father’s oil company in Oklahoma. It was there that he became a registered professional engineer and a certified professional petroleum geologist. After receiving his Ph.D. in MIS from the University of Arizona, Mike joined the faculty of the MIS Department at the University of Wyoming where he taught and was involved in research. In 1993, he moved to the University of Wisconsin at Madison where he started his teaching career. Mike currently specializes in database applications, database administration, and programming. As a result, he earned a Ph.D. in Management Information Systems from the University of Wisconsin in 1992 and has worked on a number of projects involving artificial intelligence and database systems. Joline P. Morrison (right) Dr. Joline Morrison joined the Computer Science Department in the fall of 2005. She was born and raised in Wyoming, and received a bachelor’s degree in Engineering from the University of Wyoming in 1980. She worked as an engineer in the petroleum industry for ten years, and during that time became interested in computer technology and programming. As a result, she earned a Ph.D. in Management Information Systems in 1992 from the University of Arizona, and worked on a number of projects involving artificial intelligence and database systems development. She also taught technical MIS classes at the University of Iowa and most recently in the MIS-Department of UW-Eau Claire. Her primary expertise is in the area of database design, web/database application development, and database administration. The seventh book authored by Joline and Mike titled “Creating Database Applications Using Microsoft SQL Server 2005” is finished and was published in the spring of 2006. Mike enjoys tennis, quilting, gardening and patching the lawn in the places where Mike rides his motorcycle! They have a daughter, Lauren, who is studying at UW-Madison.

Daniel J. Ernst (top) Dr. Daniel J. Ernst joined the CS Department in the fall of 2006 as our newest faculty member. Dan received his B.S. in Computer Engineering from Iowa State University in 2000, and his M.S.E. and Ph.D. in Computer Science & Engineering from the University of Michigan in 2002 and 2005, respectively. After completing his Ph.D., Dan spent a year as a lecturer at the University of Michigan before joining our department as an Assistant Professor of Computer Science. Dan brings with him an impressive record of teaching and scholarly works, including a patent pending on a technique for reduced-tag dynamic scheduling. Dan will primarily head the new Computer Engineering emphasis within our department.

Dan and his wife Beth met when both took a course on computational complexity during graduate school. Beth is currently working to complete her own Ph.D, so their spare time is limited. When they get the chance, they enjoy taking walks, cheering on the Wolverines, and attempting to cook.

Corporate Learning Scholars

The 2006-2007 academic year marks the first year of the department’s new Corporate Learning Program. This program connects talented freshmen with corporate sponsors in hopes of linking the students’ formal education to the corporate world at the earliest possible stage. The Department of Computer Science is proud to announce the first two recipients of Corporate Learning Scholarships.

Dustin Haag from Marshfield, Wisconsin is the 2006-2007 selection as the Marshfield Clinic Corporate Learning Scholar. Dustin grew up in Marshfield, Wisconsin and is majoring in computer science because of his love for working with computers and the excellent career outlook. Dustin also enjoys participating in archery competitions throughout the nation. Dustin looks forward to an enjoyable and rewarding career in the computer science field.

Andrew Dietzelt from McFarland, Wisconsin is the 2006-2007 selection as the Great Lakes Higher Education Corporate Learning Scholar. Andrew graduated with honors from McFarland High in 2006 and enjoys playing tennis and soccer. Andrew was a founding member of a social improvisation troupe that traveled around the Madison area putting on skits about social issues like alcohol abuse and relationships.

The Department of Computer Science is proud to welcome these bright young scholars into our program.

Paul Wagner Promotion Announcement

At its June meeting in Madison, the UW System Board of Regents officially approved the promotion of Computer Science faculty member Dr. Paul J. Wagner to Associate Professor with tenure. Paul joined the CS faculty at UW-Eau Claire in the fall of 2002 after spending eleven years teaching computer science at UW-Stout. In his time here at Eau Claire, Paul has taught six different courses ranging from introductory programming courses to the senior seminar course. He is also responsible for coordinating the Computer Security course, and through a pair of National Science Foundation grants obtained with Andy Phillips, helped develop a computer security laboratory that has attracted national attention. Paul’s primary interests are in the areas of computer security and database systems, and he has taught courses and conducted faculty/student research in both areas.

In a letter of support for Paul, Michael Wick, chair of the department, wrote... Paul’s synergistic approach to teaching and scholarship makes him a wonderful role model for future promotion candidates.”

Wick went on to say that Paul has created a direct feedback loop from his scholarly activity to his classroom and the experiences of his students that is invaluable in helping to keep the UW-Eau Claire Computer Science Department as part of the ‘Eau Claire Advantage’.

Congratulations, Paul.

A Shameless Plea from a No Name

“Those that know” have explicitly advised me not to include this section in the newsletter as it may serve to alienate some alumni. But I think, maybe, our alumni are different (besides, why should I start listening to “those that know” now)? As most of you experienced as students, academics is rarely supported by the State at a level that is either appropriate or sufficient. To make matters worse, most funds that come from the State are earmarked for specific purposes such as computers, course materials, office supplies, and so on. This leaves precious little discretionary money with which to support important academic endeavors like student travel to conferences, departmentally supported faculty/student collaborative research projects, and outreach to high school students who might be interested in attending the UW-Eau Claire. This is where you might come to the rescue. If everyone who received this newsletter would pledge as little as one dollar a month to the Department of Computer Science, we could develop a source of support that could be used to fund many of the student-oriented activities that we must currently go without. These activities could have far-reaching effects on our ability to attract, retain, and graduate computer science majors and minors. Please consider becoming a monthly supporter of the UW-Eau Claire Computer Science Advancement Program by completing and returning the automatic deduction application enclosed with the newsletter (you can also arrange to give online at https://www.uwec.edu/donations/cardvalidation/). Be sure to designate the gift to the Department of Computer Science. Remember, every dollar helps! Please.