FEBRUARY & MARCH
University Health Services will offer a free nutrition program and support group for WestConn students, staff and faculty members. The program is set to start with an informational meeting at 4:30 p.m. on Thursday, Feb. 5, in the lobby of University Health Services in Litchfield Hall on the midtown campus. Participants will meet weekly for one to two hours, after 4 p.m., with the day of the week to be determined. Participants will be responsible for the cost of the smoking cessation aids they use. For more information, send an e-mail to nurse Charlene McDermott at McDermottO@wcwesu.edu or call (203) 857-8641.

WED. 4 & FRI. 6
WestConn will screen “Draesalim” (‘Let There Be Peace’) by Issa Serge Coelo at 1 p.m. on Wednesday, Feb. 4, and at 7:30 p.m. on Friday, Feb. 6, in the Student Center Theater on the midtown campus as part of the university’s eighth annual Festival of African Films in celebration of Black History Month. The screening will be free and open to the public. For more information, call (203) 857-8641. [See this page.]

THURS. 5
WestConn will host a screening of “Do the Right Thing,” Spike Lee’s exploration of race relations in America, at a group of Bedford-Stuyvesant neighbors, at 3:30 p.m. in the Student Center Theater on the midtown campus. The movie will be screened as part of the university’s “Psycho Cinema” series, which will examine the relationship between the rational and emotional mind during the spring semester. The event will be free and open to the public. Call Dr. Robin Flanagan at (203) 857-8771 or send an e-mail to FlanaganO@wcwesu.edu for more information. [See story on page 2.]

THURS. 5
WestConn will host a 6 p.m. planetarium show, followed by telescope viewing of the Moon near the observatory on the midtown campus. The event will be free and open to the public. For more information, call (203) 857-8641. [See this page.]

SAT. 7
The WCSU Ice Hockey Club will play Bates College at 8 p.m. at the Danbury Ice Arena. 1 Independence Way in Danbury. The game will be free and open to the public. For more information, call (203) 837-0016 or (203) 794-1704.

MON., TUES. & WED. 10
Melissa Stephens, assistant professor of music, and a student at the Conservatory of Music at the University of Southern Mississippi, will discuss “New and Improved Financial Aid Procedures for 2004” at three events in February. She will speak at 8 p.m. on Monday, Feb. 9, in the Grasso Hall Lounge on the Westside campus. She will address the same topic at 7 p.m. on Tuesday, Feb. 9, in the Newbury Hall Lounge on the midtown campus, and at 7 p.m. on Wednesday, Feb. 11, at the Wellesley Inn, 116 Newtown Road in Danbury. The event will be free and open to the public. Current and prospective WestConn students are urged to attend. For more information, call (203) 857-8072.

MON. 9
Lucille Klein, founder of a new healthcare profession known as kineling, will discuss “On the Stage of Holistic Health,” from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. in Warner Hall on the university’s midtown campus. Admission will be charged. For cost and other information, send an e-mail to the Connecticut Holistic Health Association at CHHA@Danburyrcn.com or call (203) 753-0877.

TUES. 10
Internationally renowned concert pianist and recording artist Frederic Chiu will perform a recital at 8 p.m. in Ives Concert Hall in White Hall on the university’s midtown campus. Admission to the event sponsored by the WCSU Keyboard Club will be free for WestConn students. To maintain theFREE nature of this public can purchase tickets at the door of the night of the concert. For cost and other information, call Dr. Hirshfeld at (203) 837-8590.

WED. 11 & THURS. 12
WestConn will host screenings of “Fast King,” a 1999 film by Ousmane Sembene, at 1 p.m. on Wednesday, Feb. 11, and at 7:30 p.m. on Thursday, Feb. 12, in the Student Center Theater on the midtown campus as part of the university’s eighth annual Festival of African Films in celebration of Black History Month. The screening will be free and open to the public. For more information, call (203) 857-8641. [See this page.]

SAT. 14
WestConn will host a 6 p.m. Valentine’s Day planetarium show, followed by telescope viewing of the alignment of Venus, Mars and Saturn from 7 to 9 p.m. at the Westside Observatory on the Westside campus. The event will be free and open to the public. For more information, call (203) 857-8641.

THURS. 16 & FRI. 20
“Silent desserts,” a film produced byivosha打ち(“Oh, Life!”) by Dsouga Mocfar Bi will be screened at 1 p.m. on Thursday, Feb. 19, and at 7:30 p.m. on Friday, Feb. 20, in the Student Center Theater on the midtown campus as part of the university’s eighth annual Festival of African Films in celebration of Black History Month. The screening will be free and open to the public. For more information, call (203) 857-8641. [See this page.]

THURS. 19
WestConn will host a 6 p.m. planetarium show, followed by telescope viewing of the Moon and other celestial objects from 7 to 9 p.m., at the Westside Observatory on the Westside campus. The event will be free and open to the public. For more information, call (203) 857-8702.

WED. 25 & FRI. 27
WestConn will screen “The Breakfast Club,” a 2000 film by Tunde Kelani, at 1 p.m. on Wednesday, Feb. 25, and at 7:30 p.m. on Friday, Feb. 27, in the Student Center Theater on the midtown campus as part of the university’s eighth annual Festival of African Films in celebration of Black History Month. The screening will be free and open to the public. For more information, call (203) 857-8641. [See this page.]

THURS. 26
State Rep. David Scribner (R-Brookfield) will discuss possible casino expansion from 5:25 to 6:25 p.m. during a political science class in Room 102 of White Hall on the university’s midtown campus. Scribner, a member of the Connecticut General Assembly’s Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee, is an opponent of casino expansion in Western Connecticut. The discussion will be free and open to the public. It is one of several scheduled during the semester for the World Governments, Economies and Cultures course taught by Scott Benjamin. For more information, call Benjamin at (800) 210-2146, ext. 129, (203) 857-5521.

FRI. 27
The WCSU Jazz Orchestra will perform at 8 p.m. in Ives Concert Hall in White Hall on the midtown campus. The concert will be free and open to the public. For more information, call (203) 857-8550.

SAT. 28
WestConn will host a 6 p.m. planetarium show, followed by telescope viewing of the Moon near first-quarter phase and other celestial objects from 7 to 9 p.m., at the Westside Observatory on the Westside campus. The event will be free and open to the public. For more information, call (203) 857-8762.

MARCH 4 & 6
WestConn will host a screening of “Princess Mononoke,” an epic, animated fantasy that delves into the struggle between nature and man, at 7:30 p.m. in the Student Center Theater on the midtown campus. The event will be free and open to the public. Call Dr. Robin Flanagan at (203) 857-8471 or send an e-mail to FlanaganO@wcwesu.edu for more information. [See story on page 2.]

ALL LISTINGS ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE.
PLEASE CALL TO CONFIRM.

WestConn to offer African films for Black History Month
Contemporary cinema created by African artists will offer audiences a global perspective at WestConn in February. The university will host its eighth annual Festival of African Films in celebration of Black History Month from Wednesday, Feb. 4, to Friday, Feb. 27, in the Student Center Theater on the midtown campus. Screenings of four outstanding films — featuring two from Sénégal and one selection each from Chad and Nigeria — will be free and open to the public. An open discussion will follow each screening.

The festival will begin with the screening of “Draesalim” (‘Let There Be Peace’) by Issa Serge Coelo at 1 p.m. on Wednesday, Feb. 4. This 104-minute film in Arabic with English subtitles also will be shown at 7:30 p.m. on Friday, Feb. 6. It is a 2000 feature from Chad — fictionalized as the state of “Draesalim” — and depicts the challenges two childhood friends encounter as young adults when financial burdens and an increasingly challenging political infrastructure spiral into a civil war.

A 2001 film by Ousman Sembene, “Next Estate,” a 1999 film by Ousman Sembene, and a 1999 film by Ousman Sembene will be screened. Set in the most unlikely of settings, the film explores the impact of the changing roles of Wolof women, as mothers and daughters collaborate in unorthodox ways to meet the demands of modern family life. In French and Wolof with English subtitles, the film runs 110 minutes. A second screening of this film from Senegal will take place at 7:30 p.m. on Thursday, Feb. 12.

“Ndeyesama” (“Oh, Life!”) by Dsouga Mocfar Bi will be screened at 1 p.m. on Thursday, Feb. 19, and again at 7:30 p.m. on Friday, Feb. 20. This 2001 film from Senegal tells the mystical tale of a fishing village unable to catch its nets due to a mysterious fog. As a result, two lifelong friends end up at odds because of shifting family fortunes. With a running time of 91 minutes, the film is in Wolof with English subtitles.

A product of the growing video industry in Nigeria, “Thunderbolt” will be the final film featured in the festival. It will be screened at 1 p.m. on Wednesday, Feb. 25, and at 7:30 p.m. on Friday, Feb. 27. Tunde Kelanis 2000 work presents, in the first half, a psychological variation on Shakespeare’s “Othello.” In the second half, the film introduces a supernatural perspective, coupled with insights into indigenous medicine. In English, Ibo and Yoruba with English subtitles, the film runs 102 minutes.

For more information, contact Assistant Professor of Anthropology Dr. Robert Whitemore, the festivals organizer, at (203) 857-8461.
M.E.D.I.A
MENTIONS

Below is a sampling of mentions about WestConn that appeared recently in the local media. Unless otherwise noted, the articles appeared in The News-Times.
November – January

WESTCONN CONSIDERS LEADERSHIP QUALITIES
COLLEGE TO BEGIN SEARCH FOR NEW PRESIDENT

Fourteen of the 17 members of the Committee for the Appointment of President will come to their first meeting Dec. 17 to discuss the committee’s success and the search process that the Committee for the Appointment of President will begin. The goal is to have the candidate selected by the committee for the appointment of President that the Board of Trustees will appoint. The search process will be led by Dr. John J. Coyle, chair of the Committee for the Appointment of President.

PHOTONICS FINEST CHAMBER OF COMMERCE HONORS FENO MACBROOUSTAS

Recognizing Connecticut Times’ Heart of Excellence honor, the Photonic and Electronic Super-international Community of Commerce and the Great Pacific Associations have recognized Feno Macbroostas as the founder of Brookfield-based Photonics Inc. and the Macbroostas family. Foundation’s trustees honored 11.1 million to WestConn.

WESTCONN ENROLLMENT CONTINUES TO GROW

WestConn saw the only one of the four main universities that increased its in-state student body during 2011. Still, the enrollment of 1,520 students attending the university’s public and independent colleges and universities is the highest in the history of the university.

ON TRACK CRUISE THE RAILS
BACK TO OLD-TIME NEW YORK
(THAT ADVOCATE, GREENWICH TIMES)

Every year, WestConn’s Prep of the Arts in the Performing and Visual Arts Department offers students the opportunity to experience the arts in the city. This year’s theme is “The Art of the Suitcase,” and the trip will include a visit to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Museum of Modern Art, and the Whitney Museum of American Art.

WESTSIDE WALK TO FOCUS ON WINTER WILDLIFE

WestConn Biology Professor Dr. Dan Hahn led a walk through the 31-acre Wildlife Preserve near the campus. The walk was open to the public and included a tour of the wildlife center.

FAMILY HARMONY: MOTHER-SON COME HOME TO DANBURY HIGH AS THEY PURSUE TEACHING CAREERS

WestConn student Dennis Alocsio and his son, Spencer, are attending Danbury High School, where they were classmates. Dennis Alocsio, who is completing his bachelor’s degree in health education at WestConn, has been a teacher in the school’s history department. Spencer Alocsio has been student teaching music classes while completing his master’s degree in music at the University of Bridgeport.

CULTURE WITH A KICK
MAZOR ART HELPS KEEP STREET ARTISTS ON GROUNDS

Artist Michael Smart created a 12-foot tall sculpture of a woman holding a paintbrush. The sculpture, which is located on the grounds of the Gifford Art Center, was commissioned by the WestConn Art Department. The sculpture is designed to promote community involvement and to encourage visitors to engage with the arts.

COMMUNIQUE
A NEWSLETTER FOR THE UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY

First Ed.D. cohort made up of diverse members

by Yvonne Johnson

They are nine men and 18 women of varying ages and backgrounds. Some have less than a decade of teaching experience. Others have been helping students — from grade-school children to high schoolers — learn for more than 30 years. They are teachers, school counselors, a principal, and literacy and library specialists who work in public or private schools. Some work with special education students, others teach science, foreign languages, art, English, music, and social studies.

Save their shared focus on education, these 27 Western Connecticut State University students appear to be the very definition of diversity. However, their connection is more substantial. All are jugglery family, work and other responsibilities as they pursue the first doctoral degrees offered by WestConn. They are enrolled in WestConn’s Doctorate of Education in Instructional Leadership program designed primarily for K-12 educators.

Their similarities — not their differences — were most obvious even as they came together as a group for the first time during the fall semester, said Dean of Graduate Studies and External Programs Dr. Ellen Durbin. An October orientation and reception gave the students the opportunity to meet each other and introduce themselves to WestConn faculty members and administrators.

“These people are definitely leaders. There were no momentary shriveling,” Durbin said, remembering that many of the students used the opportunity to express their enthusiasm and offer suggestions about the program. “I’m very proud of the cohort that has been selected. They’re a high-energy, high-achievement group, and I expect they’re going to do great things.”

Forty-eight-year-old Cornwall, Conn. resident Mark Pastre is among those who were chosen from the more than 50 educators who submitted complete applications for the program.

Pastre began his teaching career only after working nearly 20 years as an engineer, designing instrumentation used in pharmaceutical testing. He earned his bachelor’s and a master’s degree in education from WestConn, becoming a second-grade teacher at Sharon Center School in Sharon, Conn., about six years ago. He now has his sights set on completing WestConn’s four-year, 60-credit doctorate of education program in Instructional Leadership, which is the only one in the state and one of only 15 in the United States.

“I thought this would provide me with more options for leadership,” said Pastre, who has been involved with developing curriculum both in his school and for the school district. “I also want to be more of a team leader within our school district.”

With his experiences as a new teacher still fresh in his mind, Pastre said he hopes the program will give him tools to work with incoming first-year educators. He’s also eager to brainstorm with educators who have more experience.

“Any time we collaborate, I return to my classroom with better ideas for my students, as do my colleagues.”

M.F.A. in Professional Writing program aims to combine creativity with practicability

by Sherrill Hill

In a document proposing that WestConn offer a Master of Fine Arts (M.F.A.) in Professional Writing program, the authors — English department faculty members Dr. John Briggs, Dr. Edward Hagan, Dr. Oscar De Los Santos and Dr. James Scrimgeour — noted, “The reality of most professional writers in today’s society is that they need to be able to cross writing genres in order to express their creative insights and put food on the table. To accomplish both usually requires proficiency in more than one type of writing.”

With that reality in mind, WestConn recently requested and was granted a license by the Connecticut Department of Higher Education to offer a multidisciplinary, low-residency, distance-learning program that will culminate in an M.F.A. in Professional Writing.

The program will be structured to meet the needs of professionals who, in most cases, are already working in a writing field. It will enable them to acquire and demonstrate professional-level proficiency in more than one realm of writing, including the creative genres such as poetry, fiction and creative nonfiction; and the practical genres such as advertising copywriting, journalism, business and technical writing, and Web authoring.

“The M.F.A. in Professional Writing is a very rigorous writing degree,” De Los Santos said. “It will entrench the student in creative and informative written expression, in a multiplicity of ways.”

In-depth research has indicated the demand for such a program, Briggs, Hagan, De Los Santos and Scrimgeour stated in their proposal. Only seven M.F.A. programs in professional writing exist among New England’s 242 colleges and universities, and in Connecticut, only Yale University offers an M.F.A. degree but limits the focus to playwriting.

“We found in the process of investigating other programs was that we had a unique program on our hands,” De Los Santos said. “The duality of our program does everyone a favor, because the reality is that only 3 percent to 5 percent of individuals can stay home and write for a living, which is pretty disheartening.”
Note from the President

Welcome to the spring semester.

Every academic year, our faculty, staff and students undertake new programs to fulfill our mission of serving the community and meeting the educational needs of the citizens of Connecticut.

The first half of this academic year was one full of new beginnings. We admitted the initial cohort of professionals pursuing the Doctorate of Education in Instructional Leadership, launched the advanced certificate program in Interdisciplinary Gerontology Studies and received state Department of Higher Education approval for our proposed Master of Fine Arts in Professional Writing program.

Thanks to our faculty, we are introducing new ideas through grants and partnerships. WestConn received a National Science Foundation grant to lead a consortium of organizations planning a regional center for information systems security and obtained a three-year grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration to support substance abuse prevention efforts. We also are participating in the U.S. Department of State’s “Global Access Project” to increase understanding of international affairs.

A new year Department of Professional Development

What do the 1984 low-budget science fiction film “The Brother From Another Planet,” the critically acclaimed 1994 drama “The Shawshank Redemption,” and the 1984 suspense thriller “Gaslight” have in common? They are the first three titles listed by Assistant Professor of Psychology Dr. Robin Flanagan when asked to name her favorite films.

The reason? All three contain compelling psychological subtexts. They’re just good movies.

Flanagan loves cinema, so it’s no surprise she found a way to combine her appreciation for film with her expertise in cognitive psychology. The result is WestConn’s ongoing “Psycho Cinema” series, now in its second year, which provides free screenings of films with a psychological perspective in the Student Center Theater.

“Psycho Cinema” is meant to present WestConn students with important cultural references and a link between classroom material and real life, while exposing them to great films they might not otherwise see, Flanagan said. The films are grouped in themed sets of three. Flanagan introduces each offering and provides a brief explanation of the psychological concepts in the film before the screening.

“Success is when a group of students hang out after a movie discussing their interpretation of what they’ve seen or arguing the possibility of a different ending,” Flanagan said. “The screenings may provide a common experience not only for the psychology students, but also for those involved in different disciplines. Everyone can participate in the dialogue.”

The series is one of several casual banter that took place in the hallway of the psychology department last year. Flanagan and her colleagues were discussing how great it would be if they could collaboratively utilize one film a month as a springboard for discussion with their classes. It might improve critical-thinking skills, they agreed, or the screenings could illustrate psychological themes in a more concrete way, facilitating better understanding of theoretical concepts. Flanagan took the conversation seriously and drafted a proposal. She acquired financial support from the psychology department, the Division of Student Affairs and the Office of Media Services, and “Psycho Cinema” was born.

Flanagan said the Student Center staff also has played a key role in the program’s success.

Flanagan has created some thought-provoking groupings of films, and attendance at each movie screening has consistently been close to 100 people. The first “Psycho Cinema” theme in fall 2002 was “The Nature-Nurture Debate,” featuring the films “Gattaca,” “Trading Places” and “Gaslight.” “ Virtuousity,” “The Man With Two Brains” and “The Matrix” were featured in the second segment of the series, which examined “The Mind-Body Problem.”

This academic year, Flanagan decided to tie “Psycho Cinema” to the School of Arts and Sciences’ “Exploring War” series. Featured during the fall were “Catch-22,” “Paths of Glory” and “The Best Years of Our Lives.”

The tie-in with the war series pulled in even more students from different disciplines to these screenings,” Flanagan said, pointing out that students receive extra credit for attending. “War is a serious topic, even on film.”

Nick Callahan, a freshman majored in business management, reflected on the purpose of the screenings.

“I saw Paths of Glory, which was a really good movie,” he said. “Not just because it was a war movie, but because you could really see how the soldiers broke down emotionally.”

Senior psychology major Christina Stabile agreed.

“I think the Psycho Cinema films are great. When you understand how they associate to psychology, you appreciate them even more,” she said.

Flanagan already is planning the series for the spring semester, which will examine “The Rational Mind Versus the Emotional Mind.” The films featured will be Spike Lee’s ‘Do the Right Thing,” the animated fantasy “Princess Mononoke” and the French satire “King of Hearts.”

CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS

This section is reserved for correcting errors or clarifying statements appearing in the Communicue. Please report factual errors or items needing clarification by calling (203) 877-6777 or sending an e-mail to annmarie@wcssu.edu.

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Director leads CTA workshop

Erik Norlin (center) leads a group of WestConn CTA students in an exercise during a workshop at the university.

Erik Norlin, one of Europe’s premier directors, recently presented a workshop at WestConn, giving a number of communications and theatre arts (CTA) students the chance to see how he creates his fascinating theatre pieces for Theatre Silvia in Sweden. The project was sponsored by the Student Government Association through Backstage, for students interested in the technical aspects of theatre. CTA Professor Sal Trapani organized the event after meeting Norlin and his company three years ago at the Edinburgh International Festival in Scotland.

President James R. Roach
Holocaust survivor shares her story, hope for humanity

by Yvonne Johnson

Seventy-six-year-old Clara Knopfler made the more than 125 listeners who crowded into the WestConn Student Center Theater laugh shortly after she took the stage in December.

Knopfler explained she was born in Transylvania and then said she could tell that many in the audience associate the former Romanian state with a character who has come to represent vampires.

“...I’m not Dracula’s niece,” Knopfler said, earning that laugh from the crowd. It was one of the few light moments of Knopfler’s presentation.

That’s because Knopfler, a Jewish Holocaust survivor, then talked about her life before, during and after the Holocaust. During that period, the Nazi regime and its conspirators systematically persecuted and murdered about 6 million Jews. While she was still a teenager, Knopfler survived the infamous Auschwitz extermination and concentration camps, lost more than three dozen of her relatives, including her father, brother and grandparents to the Holocaust, and was forced to work as a slave laborer alongside her mother before they were liberated from a death march.

Knopfler first spoke about her happy childhood before the German occupation of Transylvania.

“I didn’t feel anti-Semitism,” she said. “I didn’t feel any hostility or hatred... until 1940.”

The German occupation began a period of daily uncertainty for her family, she explained.

“We waited day by day for new orders and to find out what would happen to us,” she said. “Sedycy was their best weapon.

Knopfler described sub-human conditions, detailing her family’s forced stay in a ghetto that had only outdoor, trench latrines for more than 10,000 people and a train trip during which she was among 70 people crammed into a cattle car. She said fear was a constant factor as she and her mother survived numerous “selections” that meant the difference between life and death.

“We were hungry all the time,” she said. “We were filthy all the time.”

In a matter-of-fact tone, Knopfler said she lost 57 of her blood relatives, detailing her brother’s shooting in front of their father and her father’s death from malnutrition.

“Nobody came back from — or survived — the Holocaust,” she said of her family members.

As she spoke about the suffering she, her family, her friends and so many others suffered, she also discussed the humanity of those who played a role in the Holocaust. They were caught up in its horrors, too, Knopfler explained.

“Even among Nazis, there were people who felt compassion, who tried to help us,” she said, recalling a Nazi supervisor and a German youth who showed shreds of humanity.

Knopfler immigrated to the United States in 1962 and now lives in Scarsdale, N.Y. The retired teacher regularly speaks about her experiences at high schools and colleges.

“This is a mission now,” she said.

When she speaks, she’s fulfilling a promise the Jews made to each other regularly — even as they were suffering and dying. As one of the few remaining survivors of Auschwitz, she’s also trying to ensure this terrible segment of history is never repeated.

“We have to get out of here to tell the world what happened to us,” she and her mother vowed to each other, Knopfler remembered.

“Fight injustice,” Knopfler urged the young people, many of them WestConn students, in the audience. “Fight against hatred.”

Knopfler said people must learn to go beyond tolerating each other’s differences to accepting them.

“There is a possibility to live together,” she said.

Markus Gottschlich, a WestConn senior from Vienna, Austria, who has a contract major in international business and political relations, organized the event and a screening of “Schindler’s List” that preceded Knopfler’s presentation. He planned the evening for his work as an academic research mentor (ABM) for Litchfield Hall.

ABMs are responsible for contributing to the academic and personal development of students in their residence halls.

“I’m asking you to open your hearts and to feel,” Gottschlich said at the beginning of the event sponsored by the WestConn Inter-Residence Hall Association and Litchfield Hall.

Sisters Rose Barkus, a sophomore social work major, and Dawn Er lingen, a 1996 alumna, said they felt deeply as Knopfler spoke. Barkus had read about the Holocaust but wanted to hear Knopfler tell her story in her own words.

“We really need to take the time to hear these people speak while they’re still here,” she said.

Barkus and Er lingen said they both were surprised by Knopfler’s positive attitude and apparent lack of bitterness.

“She has a lot more hope than I expected,” Er lingen said.

Barkus nodded her head in agreement.

“She has a lot more faith in humanity,” Barkus added.

Diverse Ed.D. students share common focus, goal (cont’d.)

Paste added. “I see the program as providing opportunities to share ideas about class work.”

Deborah Hardy, a 57-year-old resident of Yortown, N.Y., also is focusing on the possibilities for collaboration as she works to add the WestConn Ed.D. in Instructional Leadership to her long list of credentials. Hardy is chair of the guidance department for the Irvington Union Free District’s middle and high schools. In addition to being a certified school counselor, Hardy has obtained her school administrative and supervision certification and her school district administrative certification. That means she’s qualified to be a school principal or a superintendent.

Hardy is participating in the WestConn program because she believes it will directly benefit her and her team of counselors as they work with the classroom teachers. The teachers are striving to help students meet specific learning requirements while managing all the behavioral and social issues the young people bring with them to the classroom each day, she said.

“I’m hoping this program will give me the chance to better understand what they’re experiencing in classrooms,” Hardy said. “I’m also hoping to develop more skills and tools that will support a team approach.

Using what she learns at WestConn, Hardy plans to do even more to integrate counseling content with the work teachers in her school are doing to help their students meet academic standards.

“I think this will be a great resource,” she said. “I see it as part of the developmental process to work with teachers.”

Associate Professor of Education Dr. Marcia Delcourt, the interim coordinator of the program, said the cohort’s development got off to a good start during the fall semester.

In late November, Dr. Dennis Shirley, an expert in the field of instructional leadership, discussed “New Roles for Instructional Leaders: A Rapidly Evolving Field” during a public lecture the students attended. Shirley then met with Delcourt and the students for a three-hour doctoral discussion seminar.

Taking into account that the students are working professionals, the program’s schedule calls for offering one course each during the fall and spring, with three, three-credit courses offered during the summer.

The students now are working on personal leadership assessments. The process contains three components. The first involves completion of a leadership assessment tool.

“The idea is for them to assess their current leadership abilities,” Durmin explained.

Upon completion of that assessment, the students will move to the second component and receive specific information about the dimensions of leadership.

The third component will be accomplished when the students create personal development plans, which will include tasks for the students. Working with faculty guidance, the students will outline specific, detailed steps to promote instructional leadership. The plans will serve as personal road maps as the students move toward receiving the Ed.D.

This spring, the students will take a Group Leadership, Group Process and Team Building in Education course taught by Assistant Professors Drs. Aram Aslanian and Michael Gilles.

“We decided it was important to offer this course early on, because we want the students to focus on their common purpose and work together as a team,” Durmin said.

Team building also will be critical as the educators work as leaders in their schools, she pointed out.

For more information about WestConn’s Ed.D. program, call the Division of Graduate Studies and External Programs at (203) 837-8246.
Students gain experience, insight while serving community

by Shari Hill

A career choice is difficult to “try on” before you have make the commitment, and like many things in life, it’s often a decision that has to be made without the benefit of hindsight. So, imagine how advantageous it might be for college students to spend a mere 15 hours working in their chosen fields to get a sense of whether or not it’s something they might want to do for the rest of their working lives.

For Sarah Baldwin, a Danbury resident studying business at WestConn, 20 hours of work spread over eight weeks during her freshman year proved to be just what she needed to unequivocally decide that she wants to do with her life. What made it even more worthwhile, Baldwin said, was that the time was spent helping others in need. Baldwin enrolled as a freshman in a humanities course, A Search for Meaning, taught by the Rev. Dr. Mark Horton. Horton, WestConn’s campus minister, strongly believes in the benefits of experiential learning and community service. It is an ideology shared by WestConn and put into practice through programs such as PRAXIS, which Horton oversees.

The word PRAXIS was coined by Aristotle to describe an action/reflection model of education and translates literally as “learning by doing.” It forms the basis of an experiential education program that has spread to college campuses nationwide, seeking to integrate service learning experiences into the curriculum so students, the university and the community all benefit.

“PRAXIS really offers the best of three worlds,” WestConn Vice President for Student Affairs Dr. Walter Bernstien said. “The students acquire hands-on work experience; they have the opportunity to give back to the community, and the program enables them to relate their academic studies to the real world.”

Horton agreed. “The bottom line is that we offer our students opportunities for service learning because we really believe this,” Horton said. “I see this as one of the requirements to be a citizen — to give back. This is one way the students can give back.

When students enroll in PRAXIS in the humanities class, Baldwin was intrigued. She decided to participate and found a volunteer opportunity at a Danbury law firm, assisting with social security benefits cases for indigent individuals. The experience reinforced her desire to pursue a career in law.

“I thought I might want to be a lawyer before PRAXIS,” she said, “but now I know it’s what I want to do with my life.”

Horton said Baldwin is one of many examples of the program’s success. “It enriches the community — both the university community and the Greater Danbury community,” he said. “The people who are served benefit, and the students themselves benefit through personal growth.”

Priscilla Behling, associate director of The Volunteer Center Serving Western Connecticut, couldn’t agree more. “Our mission is to recruit and match volunteers with volunteer opportunities in the Greater Danbury area in order to strengthen our community,” she said. “We are delighted that WestConn has the PRAXIS program, because if we can get the students involved and interested in their community, it has the potential to establish what might become a lifelong pattern of service.”

Twice a year, at the beginning of the fall and spring semesters, Behling cultivates a list of volunteer opportunities appropriate for WestConn students.

“We look for options that offer flexibility in terms of days and times, because we know WestConn students are juggling classes, part-time jobs and other obligations,” she said.

The list details opportunities at places such as Literacy Volunteers, Great Hollows Wilderness Center, The Hope Chest, and the Juvenile Justice Center, as well as countless senior centers, schools, daycare providers, homeless shelters, and other local organizations. Even WestConn has tapped PRAXIS volunteers for service activities.

During the academic year, between 200 and 250 WestConn students volunteer in Danbury.

Chris Barrett, a 1984 graduate of WestConn’s social work program, is director of Good Friends. He said PRAXIS really is a two-way street for everyone involved.

“The fourth- and fifth-graders love having the college students come to their school. Having an adult who focuses time and attention on them is a huge thing,” Barrett said. “For the college students, it provides a place to be where kids at that age level are at — it helps them talk about classroom theory in the context of practical experience. In some cases, it reinforces a desire to work with children in an educational or social service role; in other cases, it reinforces rules it out.”

It’s anecdotal information like this that led Kain to believe PRAXIS participation has a significant impact on student perceptions, attitudes and beliefs. To prove his theory, Kain conducted a research study that has become the basis of his doctoral dissertation. He taught two sections of Juvenile Delinquency during the spring 2002 semester. In one section, he required participation in PRAXIS, in the other, he did not even discuss the program. The students participating in the program were required to record their experiences in journals.

Both groups of students mastered the course materials equally. Kain’s results were statistically significant, however, in demonstrating that the students who participated in PRAXIS learned more about themselves than the students who did not volunteer. Kain noted there were significant differences in personal growth issues, such as opinions, feelings, confidence, self-esteem, and interpersonal interaction, in the PRAXIS group. Kain said those differences increased his students’ empathy, understanding and self-awareness.

“Clearly, the PRAXIS group got much more out of the class than the other group,” he said. “Part of my job is to sensitize students to the kinds of problems kids involved with the juvenile justice system have, so they can develop empathy. These students had an incredibly powerful experience working with the kids, not just in helping them, but also in learning about themselves. They realized they can make a difference.”

This personal insight comes to light during reflection groups conducted twice during the semester, which allow the students to relate the lessons of their service experience to the course materials. The professors who employ PRAXIS each put their own spin on the reflection process. Some, like Kain, require journals. Some conduct reflection sessions themselves. Others invite Horton to facilitate the discussions. Horton said the stories the students share are often amazing and inspiring.

“It gives them a sense of I’m doing something, I’m having an impact,” he said. “It’s very immediate, and they can see their contributions right away. It’s so satisfying when you’ve had that kind of effect on a student.”

Bernstein agreed. “I’m extremely proud of the students who take on this commitment,” he said. “It’s a real tribute to WestConn students and reflects their ability to simultaneously pursue their studies, work, and volunteer in the community. “PRAXIS has existed at WestConn for many years, and it has proven to be a powerful educational model to connect the world of work to academic studies,” he continued. “It brings the community together with the campus — and everyone benefits.”
Dream explorer leads workshop

Lifelong dream explorer and best-selling novelist Robert Moss shared his synthesis of modern dreamwork and ancient shamanism during a workshop at WestConn in November. Moss led “Honoring the Secret Wishes of the Soul: Explore the Healing Gifts of Active Dreaming.”

Weinstein shares work during presentation

Dr. Laurie Weinstein, a professor of anthropology at WestConn, shared some of what she has learned through her work at a community event in November. She discussed “Thanksgiving — Let Them Eat Turkey: The Wampanoag Indians and the Plymouth Colonists” on Nov. 16 at the Institute for American Indian Studies in Washington, Conn.

Displaying slides to illustrate her points, Weinstein also discussed some of her work related to the Wampanoag Indians of Western Connecticut. Weinstein is the general editor of the Native Peoples of the Americas series, which is published by the University of Arizona Press.

University hosts first Horn Day

The music department, with the aid of Assistant Professor of Music Dr. Marjorie Callaghan, hosted WestConn’s first Horn Day last semester. Abby Mayer, a former member of the National, Baltimore and Indianapolis symphony orchestras and the U.S. Military Academy Band at West Point was the guest artist. The Oct. 26 program opened with a lecture and recital focused on the evolution of the horn. Mayer and Callaghan discussed and played early horns: conch shells, shofars and hunting horns and then progressed to 17th- and 18th-century natural horns. The recital culminated with two-horn renditions of Telemann’s “Suite for Two Horns and Orchestra” and Bach’s “Concerto for Two Violins,” a solo piece, entitled “Shofar Variations,” performed by Mayer, and a jazzy duet called “Blippy No. 7,” which was performed on modern valve horns.

Following the lecture and recital, Mayer held a master class. Each of eight horn players attending the event performed a selection and received feedback from Mayer. The eight horn players included area high school and WestConn students. After the final master class performance, the group came together and played “Foll Eulenspiegel’s Blues,” arranged by Don Haddad.

WestConn to host AniFest ’04 computer animation festival, student competition

The Graphics Research Group (GRG) at WestConn will host AniFest ’04, its third festival to feature student computer animation created by college students and faculty, later this year.

The university now is accepting works for the festival’s juried student animation competition and exhibition. The student competition is one of the highlights of the annual festival that will run from Tuesday, April 27, through Thursday, April 29, at the Student Center on the Middletown campus. The festival will be free and open to the public.

Saturday, Feb. 28, is the deadline for submissions to the student competition. Creative works submitted by faculty from various post-secondary institutions also will be displayed during the festival. Faculty members are asked to meet the same formatting and deadline requirements as students.

Log on to http://cs.wcsu.edu/fgg for festival information or an entry form required for all submissions to the competition. For more information, call GRG Director Dr. William Joel at (203) 837-9353.

Dow co-writes book on playwriting

WestConn Emerita Professor of English Jan Henson Dow and her daughter, Shannan Dow, recently co-wrote a book recently published by iUniverse. The mother-daughter team co-wrote “Writing the Award-Winning Play,” a witty, easy-to-follow, step-by-step guide filled with practical information about writing, revising and marketing a play.

Perhaps the only mother-daughter playwriting team in the country, the two have won numerous national and regional playwriting competitions and are produced nationally. Their book is on sale for $16.95 and available through iUniverse, Amazon.com and Barnes & Noble.

Marriage proposal takes center stage

An aspiring director, New Fairfield native Erik Tonner has guided many memorable productions at WestConn and the Brookfield Theatre for the Arts. But the most unforgettable performance of his life came recently during the intermission of the WestConn communications and theatre arts department’s staging of student-directed, one-act plays.

To the delight of the audience, fellow cast and crewmembers, Tonner, a senior, took center stage and included the lead in his own carefully choreographed play. Taking his prop — a rose — he walked to the edge of the stage and faced Gina Rea. A Danbury resident who graduated from WestConn with a bachelor’s degree in social sciences in 2000, Rea has been Tonner’s long-time girlfriend.

Tonner had strategically placed Rea in the second row, center of the audience. He said her name and brought her on stage. Tonner, 52, then dropped to one knee and proposed.

With Rea’s “yes,” Tonner produced a custom-designed engagement ring and placed it on her finger. Their kiss elicited thunderous applause from the appreciative and misty-eyed audience.

Pre-production work is already underway for the couple’s June 5 wedding on Block Island, and Tonner predicts a happy ending.

Annual museum bus trip a success

The 29th annual WestConn New York City Museum Bus Trip took nearly 100 participants, including students, faculty and staff representatives, and members of the community, to the city for a day of art appreciation in late October. The stops included The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Frick Collection and others.

For more information about the annual trip, call the art department at (203) 837-8410.

Hirschfeld performs in New York City

WestConn Assistant Professor of Music Dr. Russell Hirschfeld performed the music of Claude Debussy and Olivier Messiaen during a Nov. 8 piano concert in the Florence Gould Hall at the French Institute Alliance Francaise in New York City. More than 150 people attended.

Hirschfeld will again share his talents with the public in March. He will perform a free concert at 2:30 p.m. on Saturday, March 6, at the New York Public Library, 205 West 53rd St. in New York City. Call (212) 621-0620 for information.

Wine tasting quenches thirsts, raises support

WestConn’s fifth annual wine tasting in November was another success, raising more than $15,000 to support student scholarships.

Committee Chairman Anthony Caraluzzi said it was “the best event — until next year” when asked about the event that drew more than 250 people for sumptuous hors d’oeuvres, delicious wines and a good cause.

The generous support of lead sponsors — the Caraluzzi Family, the Bethel Food Market and Nutmeg Discount Liquors — keeps expenses for the event low, allowing nearly all the funds raised to be applied to scholarships. More than $75,000, including the state match for endowed scholarship funds, has been raised since the first wine tasting in 1999.

Efforts promote awareness to decrease substance abuse

Members of the WestConn community look on as volunteers participate in a mock car crash to illustrate the dangers of drunken driving.

Even as students, faculty and other members of the WestConn community have been working to increase awareness and decrease substance abuse, the university recently received some support for its efforts.

WestConn will receive about $255,000 over three years for a program to prevent substance abuse among students, WestConn Vice President for Student Affairs Dr. Walter Bernstein and Director of Grant Programs Dr. Margaret Lebow recently announced. The award represents WestConn’s share of a $2.2 million grant to the state from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, a division of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Connecticut is one of only three states to receive this award.

The grant came as WestConn recognized National Collegiate Alcohol Awareness Week (NCAAW) during the fall semester. A mock car crash with accompanying trial, hard-hitting discussions of the role alcohol can play in unwanted sex, and a variety of fun, non-alcoholic events were among the offerings available as WestConn focused on the dangers of alcohol abuse and urged responsibility during its NCAAW events. The Division of Student Affairs, the Drug and Alcohol Awareness Force, the Student Government Association and other student organizations planned the activities.
Pegolotti shares newly published biography of composer

by Yvonne Johnson

Composer, critic, author and radio personality (Joseph) Deems Taylor made significant contributions to American culture during the first half of the 20th century — from narrating Disney’s “Fantasia” to composing the first operas commissioned by the Metropolitan Opera (The Met) to inviting millions of listeners to enjoy classical music.

In his newly published book, “Deems Taylor: A Biography,” WestConn Librarian Emeritus Dr. James Pegolotti explores the importance of Taylor’s work and sheds light on his interesting life. It is the first biography of Taylor, who enjoyed tremendous popularity during his lifetime but faded from the public consciousness after his death in 1956.

Pegolotti read selections from his 410-page book published by Northeastern University Press during a free Dec. 9 event in the Archives and Special Collections Department of the Ruth Haus Library. Pegolotti began the event by letting the audience see and hear Taylor, showing a clip of him as the on-screen host of the two-hour Disney animated masterpiece “Fantasia.” Pegolotti then went on to sing Taylor’s praises.

“Today, it would be hard to find any man to match his talents,” Pegolotti said of the self-taught composer. “His work deserves to be enjoyed.”

Born in 1885, Taylor was a key player during a pivotal time in American culture and made a number of significant contributions. The composer of the orchestral suite “Through the Looking Glass” and “The King’s Henchman” and “Peter Ibbetson” operas, Taylor saw more of his works performed at The Met than many of his contemporaries. However, he may be more easily known as the intermission commentator for the New York Philharmonic radio broadcasts. Taylor is credited by some as introducing millions of Americans to the joys of classical music during his Sunday afternoon broadcasts from 1937 to 1945.

Pegolotti’s book also chronicles the vivid personal life of Taylor, a New York native who lived for many years in Stamford, Conn., and rubbed elbows with prominent figures such as George Gershwin and F. Scott Fitzgerald during the golden age of radio. During the reading, Pegolotti only mentioned Taylor’s personal life a few times.

“I’m leaving out all his wives and love affairs,” Pegolotti quipped.

Pegolotti, who retired from WestConn in 1999 after 18 years of service, said part of his interest in Taylor stems from his own childhood in Northern California. As a youngster, Pegolotti regularly tuned in the NBC and CBS radio stations to enjoy concert performances of classical tunes. Pegolotti’s love of music has continued; he now serves as music correspondent, writing concert reviews, for The (Danbury) News-Time. He also has written program notes for local concert groups for more than a decade.

“I became really conscious of classical music by listening to the radio,” Pegolotti recalled.

Dr. James Pegolotti (standing) begins his reading by letting the audience see and hear (Joseph) Deems Taylor, showing a clip of him as the on-screen host of “Fantasia.”

Deems Taylor was a very important figure in music on radio. He was the spokesperson for concert music during his time, so it seemed fitting to recognize him and his contributions.”

After the reading, Pegolotti answered questions and signed copies of his book.

Participants also had the opportunity to enjoy an exhibition of items related to Taylor and his life, such as a New York Times review of Taylor’s “Peter Ibbetson” and a program from the opening of “Fantasia.”

WestConn Systems Librarian Veronica Kemuzas was among those who attended the reading.

“I thought it was fascinating,” she said. “I’m anxious to read the book and find out more about Taylor and his work.”

German Studies Center hosts cultural differences workshop

by Yvonne Johnson

Relationships between people and the way they directly affect business were at the heart of a November workshop presented by the German Studies Center at WestConn.

“Relationships are often difficult, whether they are between husband and wife, between friends, between business partners or between countries,” the center’s director, Dr. Renate Ludayni, said at the beginning of the event.

The workshop was entitled “The U.S. and German-Speaking Europe: Intercultural Issues and Their Effects on Business.” Eva Nell, a marketing manager from Holtheim, Germany, who attended college in Wisconsin, led the free session that drew students, members of the WestConn faculty and staff, and community members. Nell asserted that cultural differences play a central role in relationships — from what we consider “truth” to how we negotiate — and are becoming more important as the “global economy” gains momentum.

To point out the differences between the American and various European cultures, Nell asked the participants to use their imaginations. Imagine that you are the only witness when your best friend hits a pedestrian as he is driving 50 mph in a 20-mph zone, she directed.

“What would you do?” Nell asked, urging the participants to consider whether they would like to protect their friend and whether the friend would have any right to expect such protection.

“It seems like you always have to start with the truth,” one participant offered.

Nell said the situation boils down to whether you believe in universal truth — “one truth” that applies no matter what the variables of the situation — or particular truth — the “truth” depends on the particular situation. Nell said studies show 75 percent of Americans apply universal truth to the situation, saying they wouldn’t lie and the friend has no right to expect their protection. However, only 51 percent of Germans studied said they would apply universal truth. The Germans were far more likely to say “it depends” on the particular situation.

In the business world, that difference can affect daily interactions, Nell pointed out. For example, the Europeans may see the Americans as being too rigid and bureaucratic, focusing only on the specifics of a contract or deal without considering variables and nuances of a certain situation or relationship. On the other hand, the Americans might consider the Germans’ attention to the relationship and situation — while ignoring the specifics of a contract — as wishy-washy or susceptible to corruption.

Nell outlined a number of other cultural issues that shape personalities and affect relationships, ranging from the way we express emotions to whether we put group interests before individual interests to whether we judge a person’s worth based on achievement versus family background. For example, Nell said, “76 percent of Americans based their view of themselves and others on what they do, putting a strong emphasis on competence and achievement. In Austria, the emphasis is on family background and hierarchy; it’s so prominent that only 5 percent of Austrians said they judge themselves or others based on achievement or what they do.

A question-and-answer session followed Nell’s brief presentation, and many businesspeople from the community discussed their specific experiences in working with Europeans.

Mark Morrow, a Danbury resident who worked for a German-owned company for a number of years and lived in Germany for 18 months, was among those who joined the discussion.

“A lot of my business dealings are with Germany,” said Morrow, who now works for a major computer company. ‘It was interesting to see somebody is out there trying to educate people about the differences. ’
**War series tackles tough subjects**

by Yvonne Johnson

Providing for national security, protecting civil liberties and preventing warfare in the first place were a few of the complex matters discussed in the fall semester as part of the School of Arts and Sciences’ yearlong “Exploring War” series.

With themes ranging from “Who is a Patriot?” to “The Psychology of War,” the program is geared toward increasing understanding of the issues related to combat. The free series, which is open to the public, will continue with a number of events during the spring semester.

“The series is meant to engage the participants and promote discussion of a very emotional topic,” said Linda Vadn-Goaz, dean of the School of Arts and Sciences.

Since September, the university has provided the forum for events focused on war in memory of Sept. 11, 2001, discussions and debates about patriotisms and civil liberties, and an exploration of war prevention among many others. Hundreds of members of the WestConn community and the Greater Danbury community have taken part in the events that include the opportunity for hearth-felt and often heartfelt — audience participation.

The series launched with the “Myths and Realities of War in Memory of Sept. 11: Open Forum.” Communications and Theatre Arts Professor Dr. William Petkanas moderated the event, which gave participants the opportunity to respond to discussions about Sept. 11, 2001, on the second anniversary of the tragedy. The participants also shared their memories of that terrible day.

Also in September, the series, in cooperation with the university’s “Psycho Cinema” film series, featured the first of three movie screenings meant to examine the psychology of war.

In the WestConn Turned its attention to “Who is a Patriot?” Students Tyler Balding, Michael Cohen, Stephen Howland and Erica Ritter, all members of the WCU Roger Sherman Debate Society, debated the topic. With some very vocal audience participation, the debaters argued whether a true patriot staunchly supports all his country does or exercises the freedoms outlined in the U.S. Constitution and questions any action that might threaten it.

Later in the month, veterans John Wekele and Dan Gaita, both WestConn students, engaged in a veterans’ debate of patriotism and war. “In the true patriots, because they fought for our country and risked their lives,” Assistant Professor of Political Science Dr. Christopher Kukl, one of the organizers of the October events, said of the veterans. “In the others, he’s a patriot but said he has serious objections to the United States’ actions in Afghanistan and Iraq.

“Can there be patriotism without fervent nationalism, even in wartime,” he said. “The balance of individual rights with national security was the focus of two additional events in October. Award-winning journalist, historian and author Todd Brewster walked participants back through time to examine what had taken priority — civil liberties or national security — during times of potential threats. Dr. Brewster said his interest in the issue was spawned by the October 2001 passage of the Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism (USA PATRIOT) Act, which gave federal and local authorities expanded powers of surveillance and investigation in the effort to combat terrorism.

In the aftermath of Sept. 11, who could deny the tug to support such tough measures?” Brewster asked.

Supporters of the PATRIOT Act say it strengthens the nation’s defense against terrorism, opponents say it eliminates the ability of law enforcement agencies to trample civil liberties. Charlene LaViole, a representative of CommunityLawyer.org, focused on some of the specifics of the legislation during her presentation, calling Dr. Brewster’s research “The passing of this act is not the best example of our shining moment as a great nation,” she said.

The series’ theme later turned to “Alternatives to and Prevention of War.” The university hosted a panel discussion on the subject in December. Dr. Averell Mames, an associate professor of political science, moderated the discussion, which featured Dr. Rick Asselta, an adjunct professor at WestConn and director of the Jane Goodall Institute’s Roots and Shoots program in Danbury, and WestConn professors Drs. Christopher Kukl, Carina Bandhauer and Oluwesil Owode.

“In my opinion, war is the politics of last resort,” said Mames, who specializes in conflict resolution. “I’m hoping people will understand there are ways to approach conflict resolution without resorting to the use of violence such as war or terrorism.”

Asselta urged the participants to take personal responsibility.

“Every one of you in this room — every one of you — has the potential to make a difference,” he said.

Before the end of the fall semester, Bridgeport-based WPKN radio pre-recorded a segment of its “Counterpoint” news show at WestConn for another event in the series. “Counterpoint” host Scott Harris, who also serves as executive producer of the nationally syndicated “Between the Lines” radio show, interviewed Bruce Shapiro, Shapiro is a contributing editor of The Nation magazine, an investigative reporter and a political analyst. Harris interviewed him for a segment focused on “Tuned In and Tuned Off: War, Democracy, Media.”

A planning committee is developing the spring events for the series. In February, “Impact of War on the Individual: Women, Children of War and Homelessness” will be the focus. “Narratives of War” will be the issue in March. “Psychology of War” will be explored in April.

For more information about the “Exploring War” series, call the School of Arts and Sciences at (203) 857-9401.

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**Writing M.F.A. to be offered (cont’d.)**

“The rest of us have to go out and do something else for a living, along with our writing,” De Los Santos added.

“Some of the true existing programs are very ‘creative’ and ‘practical’ components inherent in WestConn’s curriculum. This two-sided approach incorporates recent neurological research indicating that creative-emotional thinking and rational-logico-thinking are closely related — a departure from previously held theories.”

“Professional writers know that to write creatively they also must be logical and critical. Conversely, they must also use their emotions and creative imagination to write logically,” Briggs explained.

To develop this kind of intuitive sense about writing, WestConn’s M.F.A. in Professional Writing program will provide intense and focused study under the guidance of established professionals. It will draw upon the expertise of the university’s department of English language, comparative literature and writing faculty, in conjunction with visiting professors.

Through the use of computer technology, writer-mentor relationships will develop without the need for either the student or professor to spend considerable time on campus.

Using a combination of guided self-designed courses, mentor-assisted writing, workshops and a final thesis, students will fulfill 60 credits of intensive study during a two-year period. They also will attend four weekend-long residencies — two each year that will take place during the January intercession and the summer. The residences will include intensive five-day programs of faculty and guest lectures, writing workshops, conferences with editors and agents, public readings of faculty and student work, and development of individualized student programs. Students will have the option of attending five Writers-On-Campus daylong readings and workshops during the academic year in lieu of a week of residency.

A national search is underway for a coordinator who will orchestrate all areas of the program, with guidance and input from an M.F.A. committee comprised of the English department chairperson and two elected full-time English department faculty members. Resumes are being received and interviews will be conducted in March at The Association of Writers & Writing Programs Conference in Chicago, which several WestConn English department faculty members plan to attend.

“The is to have the M.F.A. coordinator on-board by this summer, so he or she will have a year to facilitate the remainders and details of the program,” De Los Santos said. “We want to allow the coordinator to bring his or her own vision and contacts in the publishing field into the mix.”

De Los Santos added that the preparations for the program will begin this year, and the students will follow in 2005.

Admission to the program will require a strong prior academic record that includes completion of a Bachelor of Arts degree in English or another discipline appropriate to the student’s writing specialty. The portfolio of written work to-date and a prepared personal statement. The admissions policies of WestConn’s Division of Graduate Studies also must be met.

Upon completion of the program’s requirements, students will have learned how to “adapt with confidence to an expanding range of writing disciplines,” according to the proposal. They will have authored a creative thesis in the form of a book-length collection of work and established a useful network of mentoring and collaborative relationships with other writers.

Briggs, Hagan, De Los Santos and Scrimgeour said they look forward to the selection of the coordinator and the continuation of the groundwork they began when proposing the program.

“I’m thrilled and proud to have played a small part in the formation and initial implementation of the M.F.A. in Professional Writing program,” Scrimgeour said. “It’s a major step forward for WestConn to initiate this program, and I think it will be an extremely valuable one for the university and the community for years to come.”

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