TUES. 2 Painter Roger Reyce will discuss his work at 11 a.m. in room 025 in White Hall on the Midtown campus. The event will be free and open to the public and will be presented as part of the university’s Master of Fine Arts (M.F.A.) side lecture series. For more information, call (203) 837-8540.

WED. 3 The WCSU Symphony Band and Wind Ensemble 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) 837-8520.

THURS. — SAT. 4–6 & 11–13 The communications and theatre arts production of “Twelfth Night” will be performed at 8 p.m. Thursdays through Saturdays in the Berkshire Theatre in Berkshire Hall on the Midtown campus. For tickets and other information, call the theatre box office at (203) 837-8752. [See story on page 4.]

THURS. 4 Tanya Meck, chairwoman of the Connecticut Commission on the Permanent Status of Women, will discuss women in politics from 5:25 to 6:25 p.m. during a political science class in Room 024 of White Hall on the Midtown campus. The discussion will be free and open to the public. For more information, call (900) 219-2146, ext. 129, or (860) 545-3521.

THURS. 4 WestConn will host a 6 p.m. planetarium show, followed by telescope viewing of Jupiter at approximately 7 to 9 p.m. at the Westside Observatory on the Westside campus. The event will be free and open to the public. Call (203) 837-8672 for more information.

SAT. 6 WestConn Assistant Professor of Music Dr. Russell Hirshfield will perform a free piano recital at 2:30 p.m. at the New York Public Library, 20 West 53rd St. in New York City. The public is invited. For more information, call (212) 621-0620.

TUES. 9 Robert Gusiti, one of America’s best-known illustrators, will discuss his work at 11 a.m. in room 025 in White Hall on the Midtown campus. The event will be free and open to the public, and it will be presented as part of the M.F.A. lecture series. For more information, call (203) 837-8410.

WED. 10 WestConn will host the 28th annual Beatrix Nemerz Symposum from 3 to 4:30 p.m. in room 201 of the Student Center on the Midtown campus. Dr. Nancy Humphries, director of the department of Advancement of Political Social Work Practice at the University of Connecticut School of Social Work, will address “Politics of Poverty.” The public is invited. General admission will be $10. Students and people who are unemployed will be admitted free. Thursday, March 4, is the deadline for registration. Call (203) 837-8078 for more information.

WED. 10 The School of Professional Studies (SPS) will host its first Adjunct Appreciation Ceremony and Reception to recognize the efforts of SPS adjunct faculty members from 4 to 6 p.m. in Warner Hall on the Midtown campus. The event will be free, and the public is invited. For more information, call (203) 837-8976.

WED. 10 Dr. Francine D’Amico, an assistant professor of political science at Syracuse University, will discuss the issue of women and the U.S. military from 7 to 9 p.m. in the Student Center Theater on the Midtown campus. Sponsored by the School of Arts and Sciences as part of the yearlong “Exploring War” series, the event will be free and open to the public. For more information, call (203) 837-8943.

THURS. 11 The University Alpha Chapter of Sigma Theta Tau International, the honor society of nursing, will host “Advancing Nursing Knowledge Through Scholarship” from 4 to 7 p.m. in the Student Center Theater on the Midtown campus. This research- and scholarship-focused event will feature the scholarly works of WCSU nursing students, faculty members and alumns. It will be free and open to the public. For more information, call (203) 837-8893 or (203) 837-9004.

FRI. 12 Dr. Lynn Ericson, a national presenter and consultant on curriculum design in K-12 settings, will discuss “Designing for Deep Understanding and the Transfer of Knowledge: Concept-based Curriculum and Instruction” from 4:30 to 5:30 p.m. in Room 218 of the Westside Classroom Building on the Westside campus. The event will be free, and the public is invited. For more information, call (203) 837-8244. [See story on page 5.]

FRI. 12 The WCSU Jazz Combos 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. Call (203) 837-8550 for more information.

SAT. 13 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) 837-8072.

MON. 15 & TUES. 16 Rebecca Butler will discuss “Respect,” sharing her personal experiences with rape and domestic violence, from 5 to 7 p.m. on Monday, March 15. And David Sloane Rider will lecture about ways men can prevent rape from 5 to 7 p.m. on Tuesday, March 16. Both events will be in the Student Center Theater on the Midtown campus. The public is invited. Admission will be free, but donations will be accepted. All proceeds will benefit the Women’s Center of Greater Danbury. The events are part of a series of activities scheduled to provide education about violence against women and girls during Women’s History Month in March. For more information, call (203) 300-5287.

TUES. 16 & WED. 17 The Sesame Street Live “Everyone Makes Music” production will take the stage in the William O’Neill Athletic and Convocation Center on the Westside campus. For show times, cost and other information, call Ticketmaster at (203) 744-8100.

TUES. 16 Dr. Frederica Halilgan, director of the Counseling Center at WestConn, will make a presentation at 10 a.m. in the fifth floor meeting room of the Ruth Haas Library on the Midtown campus. She will discuss “Listening Deeply to God: Exploring Spirituality in an Interreligious Age” and share insights from her new book of the same name. Copies of the book will be available for sale, and a book signing will follow the discussion. The event will be free, and the public is invited. For more information, call (203) 837-8923.

TUES. 16 The department of philosophy and humanistic studies will host a “Radical Folk Music” performance at 8 p.m. in Alumni Hall on the Midtown campus. David Rovics and Amra The Stockbroker will sing original songs, play instruments and read poetry dealing with global social issues from a radical point of view. The event will be free and open to the public, but donations will be accepted. For more information, send an e-mail to flynnt@aol.com or call (203) 746-6490.

WED. 17 WestConn will host the 23rd annual “Bagpiper on the Green” to honor St. Patrick’s Day. Performances will be at 10-30 a.m. in the “Fishbowl” on the Westside campus and noon on the Quadrangle of the Midtown campus. The performances will be free and open to the public. For more information, call (203) 837-8956. [See box on this page.]

THURS. 18 WestConn Director of Cooperative Education Anthony Cifaglio will speak from 5:25 to 6:15 p.m. about the university’s work-study programs during a political science class in Room 024 of White Hall on the Midtown campus. Immediately after the first discussion, Web site designer Nick Orner will talk about the economic impact of digitization and discuss ways companies can use the Internet to attract customers. The discussions will be free and open to the public. Call (900) 219-2146, ext. 129, or (860) 354-3521 for more information.

THURS. 18 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. Call (203) 837-8072 for more information.

THURS. 25 Eminent faculty members Drs. Jean Krenzinger, James Pegolotti and Edwin Rosenberg, all senior volunteers, will be featured during an episode of “Seniors: Living a Quality Life” to be broadcast at 9 p.m. on CPTV. Visit www.cptv.org for more information. [See box on page 5.]

SAT. 27 WestConn will host a 6 p.m. planetarium show, followed by telescope viewing of the Moon near first-quarter phase and near 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) 837-8072.

SUN. 30 Lonn Dodd, one of the most influential American artists of the latter half of the 20th century, will discuss her work at 11 a.m. in Room 025 in White Hall on the Midtown campus. Part of the MFA lecture series, the event will be free and open to the public. Call (203) 837-8410 for more information.

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

Annual bagpiper event to honor Steinkras

The sounds of bagpipes, flutes and field drums again will fill the air as WestConn celebrates St. Patrick’s Day on Wednesday, March 17.

Professor of Music and Law Administration (JLA) Dr. David Machell will play the pipes and flutes, and Professor of Music David Smithl will play the field drum during the 23rd annual “Bagpiper on the Green.” JLA Professor Charles Mullaney and Dr. Michael Foley, chairman of the JLA department, will offer narration for the free events that will be open to the public.

Performances will be at 10:30 a.m. in the “Fishbowl” on the Westside campus and noon on the Quadrangle of the Midtown campus.

This year’s festivities will be dedicated to the memory of Dr. Philip Steinkras, a former vice president for academic affairs at WestConn, who passed away.

Steinkras was of mostly Irish lineage and regularly attended the annual bagpiper event during his years at WestConn. Machell explained. For more information, call Machell at (203) 837-8956. •

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Eightheenth Annual Western Connecticut State University Hall

May 1, 2004

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Owoye returns to Nigeria as Fulbright scholar
by Sheri Hill

“In Nigeria, democracy is limping,” proclaimed Western Connecticut State University Professor of Economics Dr. Oluwole Owoye at a December presentation, “Corruption in Transition Economies: A Theory of the Second-Best and the Prospects for Democracy.” At the brown-bag lecture sponsored by the university’s International Center, Owoye shared observations he made during his eight-month stay in Nigeria on a Fulbright Scholarship in 2003.

Fulbright Scholars are chosen for their academic merit and leadership potential, which is exactly why Associate Professor of Anthropology Dr. Robert Whittemore encouraged his friend and colleague to apply for the honor. While in Nigeria, Owoye conducted research on the contribution of university graduates in Nigeria to that nation’s economy, something he calls “human capital absorption rate and economic growth.” He also taught a full schedule of senior-major, graduate- and doctoral-level courses in monetary economies and macroeconomics at the University of Ibadan. The institution was founded in 1948 as an offshoot of the University of London, and was the first university established in Nigeria.

Upon his arrival in Nigeria in January of 2003, Owoye said he was treated like a dignitary, including being driven in an official motorcade from the airport to the United States Embassy. The economic realities of the country became readily apparent, however, as soon as Owoye, his wife, Vanessa; and his children, Dele, 10; and Sade, 16, began to negotiate daily Nigerian life. “When I was in Nigeria and people would ask me for bribe money, I just felt like kicking them,” Owoye said. “They expected a premium, and I refused to pay it, even as a risk to my own life.”

The kind of “premium” the professor was referring to is a pervasive way of life not only in his native Nigeria, but also in many developing African, Asian and South American countries. No matter where it happens, the results are the same: bribery, graft and kickbacks threaten to undermine fledgling democracies in these countries.

WestConn intensifies presidential search
by Dr. G. Koryo Anim-Wright

Five months after WestConn President James R. Roach announced his intention to retire in July 2004, the university is in the middle of searching for a new president.

The search formally began in November when the Board of Trustees approved the bylaws for the search process. The university then asked to establish a nine-member University Advisory Committee (UAC) made up of four academic faculty, two administrative faculty, two students and one alumnus. Connecticut State University (CSU) Chancellor Dr. William Cibes was charged with engaging a search firm to develop the criteria included in the advertisements and announcements for the presidency. Cibes also is responsible for supervising the activities of the firm.

A.T. Kearney Education Practice, based in Alexandria, Va., was selected to run the search. The firm is no stranger to the CSU System search process, it was responsible for Southern Connecticut State University's recently completed presidential search.

On Feb. 5, ahead of the Feb. 9 deadline, WestConn University Senate President Vijay Nair announced the names of the members of the UAC. They are Music Professor Dr. Daniel Goble, Math Professor Dr. Joseph Haimer, Biology Professor Dr. Howard Russock, Associate Professor of Sociology Dr. Steven Ward, Assistant Director of Public Safety and Auxiliary Services Deanna Gibsey-Schaub, Director of Information Technology Fred Zarnowski and WestConn alumnus Thomas Cruciotti. The student representatives are Fred Mudam and Shawn Dyer.

The four academic faculty members — Goble, Haimer, Russock and Ward — were elected by their peers; the administrative faculty members — Schaab and Zarnowski — were selected by Administrative Faculty Union President Luigi Marcone; and the student representatives were appointed by the Student Government Association.

“I am delighted to have been elected,” Haimer said. “I feel it is important to have input from all constituents of the university as active participants in the process. Faculty are very important in this process, and to be elected as one of the student representatives is a unique opportunity.”

“Dr. Oluwole Owoye

“How do we expect a democracy to survive if we have endemic corruption?” Owoye asked, before citing numerous examples of fraud within Nigeria’s military, economic, judicial and educational systems. “When faced with this level of corruption, citizens have two choices. They either consume less, or look for inferior and less expensive goods.”

Most opt for the latter — what Owoye calls the “Second-Best Choice.”

To illustrate his point, he described a scenario in which a Nigerian corporation might approach a local bank for a loan to purchase capital improvements. The loan, as expected, would include a finance charge or interest rate. It also would require a 10- to 20-percent kickback to the loan officer or bank manager. With only 80 percent of the requested loan proceeds, the corporation would be forced to purchase lower quality or inferior machines or products.

Owoye said similar circumstances are repeated in almost every aspect of life in these countries, where a “corruption premium” is charged by everyone from gas station attendants and police officers to university...
Note from the President

In recent years, environmental concerns have emerged onto the world stage as vitally important issues to address. Many communities are taking steps to preserve and protect the environment.

WestConn currently has a number of projects that reflect the university’s commitment to this growing concern. The Jane Goodall Center for Excellence in Environmental Studies is a unique partnership between The Jane Goodall Institute and WestConn. The Center offers interdisciplinary programs for students, educators and the community, fostering an understanding and awareness of issues surrounding the concern of our environment for the environment is the Westside Nature Preserve, a 35-acre parcel of eastern deciduous woodlands/wetlands. The primary purpose of the preserve is to maintain the locally diverse fauna and flora for future generations. It also serves as an outdoor environmental laboratory for our science programs.

The university’s $41-million science building, currently under construction, will be the first state building constructed by the Department of Public Works to seek Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design (LEED) Silver Certification. This will enable the university to construct a state-of-the-art facility that is energy-efficient and environmentally responsible. Also, we will seek LEED certification for the residence hall being constructed on the Westside campus.

We are pleased to be able to do our part to preserve the environment for our community and for generations to come.

With grant funding, WestConn targets prevention

by Sherri Hill

WestConn Vice President for Student Affairs Dr. Walter Bernstein recently announced the university is slated to receive more than $250,000 in grant funds during the next three years to develop a comprehensive prevention and education program focused on the dangers of drug and alcohol abuse.

WestConn, the three other Connecticut State University system campuses and the University of Connecticut each will receive a portion of a $2.2-million grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Connecticut is one of only three states selected to receive such funding. The grant will enable WestConn to act on several years of intensive research and planning by a campuswide taskforce.

A new Office for Alcohol and Other Substance Abuse Prevention has been created, and a drug and alcohol abuse prevention coordinator who reports directly to the vice president for student affairs has been hired, Bernstein said.

“Mentors also will be used for training, outreach to the community and an on-campus campaign that will feature programs, activities and research-based assessment of the success of any interventions. Most importantly, students now will have a person who is here to listen, and help and to make appropriate referrals either to on-campus or community resources,” he added.

“It’s not just about helping students who are in trouble — it’s also about helping empower the students who don’t partake in or abuse alcohol or other substances,” said Sharon Guck, a public health professional with more than 15 years of experience who has been hired to coordinate the university’s prevention efforts.

Guck spent the past six years as executive director of Southbury-Middlebury Youth and Family Services. At WestConn, she will develop and implement a comprehensive substance abuse program to address issues on three fronts.

First, the program will provide information and assistance to individual students who are identified as at-risk or alcohol-dependent drinkers. According to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA), strategies to engage these students as early as possible in appropriate screening and intervention services are vital.

Events such as National Collegiate Alcohol Awareness Week and National Alcohol Screening Day are good examples of ways to reach out to students by providing free, anonymous testing and health information.

Second, the program will work to affect the behavior of the student body as a whole, addressing the factors that encourage high-risk drinking, such as widespread availability of alcoholic beverages to underage and intoxicated students, aggressive social and commercial promotion of alcohol, large amounts of unstructured student time, inconsistent publicity and enforcement of laws and campus policies, and student perceptions of heavy alcohol use as the norm.

Third, Guck will establish contact with the university to form a coalition of individuals and organizations in order to change the broader environment and reduce alcohol abuse and alcohol-related problems in the long term. NIAAA research indicates that when college drinking is reframed as a community problem as well as a college problem, campus and community leaders are more likely to come together to address it comprehensively. That can result in policy and enforcement reforms that affect the total drinking environment.

There’s a perception — actually a misperception — among students that their peers are consuming significant amounts of alcohol on a regular basis. This misperception was substantiated in the spring of 2003, when a survey of 741 WestConn students showed that 96 percent thought the average student on campus used alcohol once a week or more. In actuality, 71 percent of WestConn students reported consuming alcohol in the 30 days before taking the survey, not the nearly 100 percent that was surmised by their fellow students. While the reality is better than the perception, it’s still a number that is at par with the national average and is far too high, Guck said.

“Did you know that 30 percent of WestConn students would prefer not to have alcohol available at parties?” Guck asked, quoting survey results. “What if we provided transportation to the movies, the mall or the ice rink? Many students would probably pick those options, instead of parties where alcohol was being served.”

WestConn’s program will be built based on similar information obtained from decades of research. Armed with this knowledge, Guck said, the university will reach out to residence hall advisors to professors, student interns to deans, asking for their input and support of the program.

“We have to see this as an issue that a priority on campus,” Guck said. “Everyone so far has been overwhelming helpful, happy I’m here and asking what they can do to help me facilitate this. I think they recognize there’s a need for a program like this for some time. There have been expressions of concern and attempts to address the issue in the past, but there hasn’t been a concentrated effort campuswide until now.”

Guck said her goal is to design a state-of-the-art program...
Weeklong West Coast seminar benefits Logan, her students

by Sheli Hill

WestConn communications and theatre arts (CTA) assistant professor Khalida Logan returned from her first trip to California in November, but when she talked about her experiences there, it's clear her enthusiasm hasn't waned in the ensuing months. If anything, it's continued to grow.

Logan was one of 20 individuals selected from 150 applicants nationwide to participate in a weeklong faculty seminar at the Academy of Television Arts & Sciences (ATAS) Foundation, in North Hollywood, Calif. The academy is the organization responsible for prime-time television's Emmy Awards. Its membership includes "those engaged in activities related to the production or distribution of audio visual works for national exhibition by means of telecommunications."

ATAS hosts the annual faculty seminars so professors can obtain hands-on experience, enabling them to better prepare their students for careers in the television industry. The 2003 seminar was the 15th annual event hosted by the academy's educational programs and services committee.

Logan's time in California was spent primarily at the ATAS Conference Center in North Hollywood. The academy presented a variety of seminars, panel discussions and question-and-answer sessions on topics including writing and production, finance and syndication, non-fiction production, daytime dramas, directing for television, programming, physical production and securing rights. Speakers included academy staff and individuals actively employed in the industry.

There also were group excursions. Seminar participants toured a state-of-the-art film lab at Digital Filmmaking in Los Angeles and went to the Hollywood to attend a weekly production meeting at Viacom. At CBS' Television City, they got a behind-the-scenes look at daytime dramas and sat in on a panel discussion about programming with network representatives from ABC, CBS, Fox, HBO, NBC, Showtime and VH1. A tour of Universal Studios' Hollywood theme park took place, too.

"We were treated like celebrities the entire time," Logan said. "We were given one-on-one contact and access to people who you normally wouldn't get past their secretaries. I made a ton of professional contacts with individuals I can refer my students to for internships. No matter how talented you are, you really need that first connection, 'who you know' is so important in this business."

In addition to the multitude of connections she made, Logan said the overall wealth of information she came away with was staggering. ATAS organizers had suggested that attendees take an empty suitcase to transport home all the industry directories, source books and other materials they would accumulate during the seminar. Logan was glad she took that advice to heart.

Another benefit of the trip, Logan said, was interacting with her professional peers. Some of the other seminar participants came from the University of Akron, Texas Southern University, Rhode Island College, Regent University, Ohio University, Johnson C. Smith University and St. Louis Community College. All were thrilled with the experience.

"I met people from all these other universities who teach the same things I teach," Logan said. "We shared our war stories and our passion for what we do, and we re-energized each other. It made me feel good about what I'm doing and the choices that I've made. It also reinforced that what we do is important in preparing young people to work in this field."


Owoye returns to Nigeria to teach (cont'd.)

administrators and government officials. Judges not only accept, but also expect bribes; and human resources departments in both the corporate and government sectors regularly process payroll checks for non-existent or ghost workers. Frequently, the money ends up in coded Swiss accounts.

"It's just so frustrating," Owoye lamented.

The corruption runs from the top down and from the bottom up. It's so pervasive that most Nigerians have resigned themselves not only to live with it, but also to participate in it in order to survive. Many of those who refuse end up leaving the country, in what Owoye calls "human-capital flight."

Coupled with the financial assets being diverted out of the country, this "brain drain" results in a lack of monetary and intellectual resources that contributes to the destabilization of democracy, he said.

The way to abate corruption is to cut off the inflow of funds from other countries, the International Monetary Fund and The World Bank, and to halt the outflow of capital to private bank accounts on foreign soil, Owoye explained. A system of checks and balances and accountability must be established — and it must be a system with "very strong teeth that can bite hard" in terms of prosecution and punishment for those who are found to be corrupt.

Then, Owoye said, the entire country will have to undergo a "national reorientation," where the people look back at what made Nigeria a great nation in the past — no corruption, strong values, a sense of self — and carry the successes from the past into the future. Only then will democracy begin to thrive.

Integral to that reorientation is the country's educational system, Owoye said. Students, beginning in the earliest grades, need to be taught about ethics and national pride. They have to un-learn the pattern of corruption.

"Education is the bastion of hope," Owoye said. "The teaching of values will have a trickle-down effect, and it will multiply. When people begin to realize, corruption leads to less access, to less choices, they can say no to corruption."

Presidential search is ongoing (cont'd.)

four faculty representatives tells me that my peers respect my opinion."

On Feb. 12, the group met to discuss some questions posed by the search firm. Also at that meeting, the group elected Hamer as its chair.

A scheduled meeting with the Trustee Search Committee (TSC) the week of Feb. 25 is expected to shed more light on the UAC's role in the search process.

"I think that once we meet with the TSC, we will have a much better understanding of what we are expected to do and how our input will affect the final decision," Hamer said.

"The expectation is for our voices to be heard so the president who is selected will be a strong advocate for WestConn, taking all of the positive things that have happened during Dr. Roach's tenure and continuing to move us to newer and higher ground."

Hamer thinks it will be a lot of work, but she's ready.

"The work hopefully will result in a president who will reflect the needs and wants of the university. I am hopeful that our committee will be most influential in the choice of the next president of WestConn," she said.

Chuck Bunting, a representative of A.T. Kearney, visited the campus on Feb. 12. While here, Bunting met with various members of the university community — vice presidents and deans, the UAC, senate leadership members, academic and administrative faculty, students and university staff. He also held a joint meeting with faculty, staff, students and alumni, as well as a private meeting with President Roach. Based on the conversations with campus constituents, the search firm is expected to develop a university profile for use in the recruitment of candidates.

University Senate President Vijay Nair said he is pleased with the role the Senate has played in moving the process along.

"So far, the primary role of the Senate in the search process has been to elect the faculty representatives to the UAC, to arrange the open meeting held by Chancellor Gayb last November, and, more recently, to arrange the series of meetings with the consultant on Feb. 12," Nair said.

Nair anticipates that the Senate will continue to be involved and hopes to keep the "presidential search" page of its Web site current at www.wcss.edu/senate.

"This is perhaps the most efficient way to keep the community informed, and it is my hope that the UAC will continue to share information with the Senate and the community, to the extent that it can without violating the principles of confidentiality," he said.

Nair says the process so far has been open and deliberate, but he has one concern.

"The one thing that really concerns me is the timeframe for this search. We don't even have the advertisement written, and I understand that the Board of Trustees expects to conclude the entire process before the end of this semester, with the appointment to take place in early June," he said. "It probably can be done, but I wish we had started the process last October or November instead of waiting for the presidential search at Southern to be concluded."
Glimpse behind curtain reveals bustling CTA department

‘60s-inspired ‘Twelfth Night’ to be staged in March

by Yvonne Johnson

With opening night for the communications and theatre arts (CTA) department spring production of “Twelfth Night” only days away, the department was nearly electric with energy in late February. But it’s a force that sustains and drives the department throughout the year and takes WestConn’s students and faculty far beyond the university campus.

Many WestConn students and employees, as well as members of the Greater Danbury community, are familiar with the annual fall and spring CTA productions and its trips to Scotland for the Edinburgh International Festival. Others are acquainted with the university’s theater-focused clubs or WXCI, the student-operated radio station. However, the department’s options and special projects go behind the stage curtain — and beyond the theater, actually — to offer students hands-on experience.

CTA courses range from Organizational Communication to Acting for the Camera to Effective Listening to Stage Design. The department offers students the opportunity to take the stage or work behind the scenes in various productions, develop their public speaking and writing skills, expand media production and even learn to use communication in classrooms. Whether he be a language arts teacher, Broadway performer, advertising copywriter, television producer or communication professional, CTA students quickly learn that the department and its highly accomplished faculty members are focused on applying what’s learned in the classroom to the real world, said Chairman Dr. Hugh McCarney.

“We encourage the students to get involved,” McCarney said of the various productions and special projects the department offers. “We try to provide as many opportunities as possible for students to be active, and participation is really encouraged.”

The prospects are nearly limitless — and may at times be dismissed by the casual observer. The fall and spring productions often place a number of CTA students in the limelight, but it takes a cadre of students, faculty members and volunteers working behind the scenes to make them so successful. For example, members are focused on assigning students coordinate set production, create costumes, manage ticket sales and handle any number of other technical aspects for the shows. The same goes for the annual children’s productions the department hosts each fall and spring, drawing thousands of area elementary school students.

“We work with an extremely time-consuming, demanding set of circumstances every time we put a production together,” Associate CTA Chairman Frank Herbert said.

Herbert estimated that production work, rehearsals and performances for the fall 2003 ‘Kiss Me, Kate’ show took about 10,000 hours of student time. But the community involvement, particularly with the area’s youngest, is especially rewarding, said Professor Emeritus William Walton, former chairman of the department. CTA also creates workshops and provides opportunities for WestConn students to work directly with their younger counterparts to develop the children’s writing and communication skills. And Assistant CTA Professor Elizabeth Popiel leads math and theatrical arts workshops at local schools.

“Time and time again, we find that participation in the arts sharpeners and enhances the intellectual pursuits of people of all ages,” Walton said. “These workshops and shows are a wonderful way to introduce children to the theater.”

The productions also give CTA students interested in other areas the opportunity to shine. For example, WestConn media production majors create commercials to promote various performances, such as the “Kiss Me, Kate” show, and students in a television production class created a documentary detailing the process to stage “Kiss Me, Kate.”

The university’s media production students and faculty have such a solid reputation for completing quality work that Michael Sauvageau, a CTA alumnus himself, recently came back to the university when he wanted to shoot an instructional video for Cold Student Theatre in Berkshires Hall. The video production studio where experienced show runners — who always demonstrated their skills while the cameras rolled —

Over the course of a week, Lombardi and Munn shot more than 100 hours of combined footage, which will be edited down to a double-DVD with a three-hour running time. In addition to the valuable filmmaking experience, Lombardi and Munn will be receive videographics credits on the finished product.

“Real-life experience and it was fun,” Lombardi said. “I had a good time and learned things that I didn’t know before.”

Munn agreed.

“Two of my firsts on a professional set, so it was interesting,” he added. “I’m glad I did it.”

While that particular opportunity took place on the Midtown campus, the department often gives its students the chance to shine within the community — and even outside the state. Spring off-Broadway productions and regular appearances at one of the world’s greatest celebrations of the arts in Edinburgh, Scotland, are among the more high-profile examples, but Herbert each year selects 10 of his theater production students to help model train designer Clark Dunham set up The Station, a seasonal exhibit of model trains in the Atrium of the Citigroup Center in New York City. The WestConn students get a sense of what it’s like to install something on a Broadway scale.

“And for many of our students, it’s their first professional job,” Herbert said.

The CTA focus on real-world experience for students naturally brings them into close contact with students and faculty from two other WestConn departments that share the same emphasis: the art and art departments. CTA students provide technical support for music performances, art students are involved with set and other technical CTA production work; and music students sing and play in the orchestra for theater shows. Last fall, 23 music students played in the “Kiss Me, Kate” orchestra and Dr. Fernando Jimenez, the music department chairman, served as the conductor.

“Collaboration and partnership is being encouraged within the departments to a much greater extent,” Herbert said.

McCarney said he hopes CTA will develop even stronger relationships with those departments in the future. He wants CTA to be viewed as a leadership force both on and off campus. With that in mind, the department is evaluating its offerings while planning to fill faculty positions that opened up when longtime faculty members retired last year under the early retirement package offered by the state.

“We’re taking a look at everything we teach to make sure we’re contemporary in our approach and in the content of our courses,” he said.

Those who are interested in seeing one facet of what the department offers will get a chance this month. “Twelfth Night” will be performed at 8 p.m. Thursdays through Saturdays, March 4 – 6 and 11 – 13, in the Berkshire Theatre in Berkshire Hall on the Midtown campus. The cost is $12 for students and $10 for senior citizens, children under 12 and students. WestConn students with valid I.D. will be admitted free, courtesy of a Student Government Association grant.

An adaptation that places William Shakespeare’s lighter pieces and places it in a more modern-day setting, Herbert said. “The show will be full of song and dance.”

For more information about the “Twelfth Night” production, call the theatre box office at (203) 857-8752. For more information about the department and its other offerings, call (203) 857-8250.

Prevention coordinator (cont’d.)

for WestConn, which may be used by other colleges as a model for their own initiatives.

‘We’ll pull good ideas from other programs, and we’ll set ours up in a way that we can document and up and the results,” she explained. “Resources are too scarce to use on programs that don’t have measurable outcomes and sustainability.

“It’s clear that our administration is completely on-board, which is essential,” Guck added. “And I’ll be counting on the ideas and energy of student-driven initiatives, too.”
Doctoral students, public gain insight from education experts

Just months into their pursuit, the 27 WestConn students enrolled in the university’s Doctorate of Education (Ed.D.) in Instructional Leadership program — and members of the Greater Danbury community — are gaining valuable insight from experts on the subject.

Dr. Dennis Shirley, a leader in the field of instructional leadership, outlined both the opportunities and the challenges for those who hope to improve education in the classroom during a presentation and seminar last semester. Dr. Lynn Erickson, a national presenter and consultant on curriculum design in K-12 settings, is set to share her expertise in March.

Erickson is the author of “Stirring the Head, Heart and Soul: Redefining Curriculum and Instruction” and “Concept-based Curriculum and Instruction: Teaching Beyond the Facts.” She will discuss “Designing for Deep Understanding and the Transfer of Knowledge: Concept-based Curriculum and Instruction” from 4:30 to 5:30 p.m. on March 12 in Room 218 of the Westside Classroom Building on the university’s Westside campus. The event will be free and open to the public.

With her master’s and doctorate degrees in Curriculum and Instruction and School Administration, Erickson has worked as a teacher, principal, curriculum director, adjunct professor and educational consultant during her 35-year career. A Washington state resident, Erickson now is a private consultant assisting schools and districts around the country with curriculum design and instruction. During the past several years, she has worked extensively with K-12 teachers and administrators nationwide on the design of classroom- and district-level curricula aligned to academic standards.

The day after the public lecture, Erickson and Associate Professor of Education Dr. Marta Delcourt, the interim coordinator of the program, will lead a three-hour doctoral seminar for the Ed.D. cohort. It’s the same format that Shirley followed when he made a Nov. 21 presentation at WestConn.

Shirley, professor and chairman of the Department of Teacher Education, Special Education, and Curriculum and Instruction of the Lynch School of Education at Boston College, discussed “New Roles for Instructional Leaders: A Rapidly Evolving Field” during the free public lecture.

When Delcourt introduced Shirley, she pointed out his extensive work within Boston’s public school classrooms.

“Dr. Shirley is very passionate about the good that goes on in universities and what goes on in school classrooms,” she said.

Shirley is director of the Massachusetts Coalition for Teacher Quality and Student Achievement, a consortium of seven higher education institutions, 18 public schools and five community-based organizations. He said the restructure of the relationships between schools, universities and communities is providing greater opportunities for instructional leaders.

“The future for instructional leaders is a very rich one,” he said.

However, Shirley pointed out that education reforms, such as the 2002 federal “No Child Left Behind” legislation, are the focus of a lot of “sweat, struggle and contention.”

Traditional school salary structures also have created a hurdle, he said. Many teachers leave the classroom for better-paying school administrator positions, which is a “huge structural problem for the teaching profession,” he said.

The instructional leadership model provides the tools for teachers who want to stay in the classroom while driving learning improvements on a school- or district-wide level. Shirley argued salary structures should be changed to keep top-quality teachers in their classrooms. He also advocated a number of initiatives to build teachers’ strengths and create opportunities for partnership, such as enhancing school- and community-based teacher preparation and engaging parents to improve their participation in the learning process.

Instructional leaders will be involved in “fundamentally redesigning teacher education,” Shirley said. With that, the instructional leaders will face obstacles, ranging from confusion about roles and boundary conflicts to greater demands on their time, he predicted. Shirley also answered questions that ranged from the mechanics of particular partnerships to salary issues.

Dean of Graduate Studies and External Programs Dr. Ellen Durnin said the events are being offered to give the Ed.D. students, other members of the WestConn community, and educators from the Greater Danbury region access to those who are breaking new ground in the field of instructional leadership.

Education majors ‘take a hike,’ learn benefits of eco-tour

When Department of Education and Educational Psychology professors Drs. Janet Burke, John Caruso, Marsha Daria and Edward Duncanson suggested to 45 WestConn elementary education professional semester students that they “take a hike” last fall, the students weren’t offended. Instead, they laced on their hiking boots and joined their professors for a two-hour eco-tour of the university’s 35-acre Westside Nature Preserve (WNP), led by WNP Director and Professor of Biological and Environmental Sciences Dr. Frank Dye.

On a warm autumn day, the students were divided into groups to conduct water quality tests on the spring-fed stream that meanders through the WNP. Dye shared his insights on the preserve’s history, its abundant native flora and the numerous opportunities for learning at the site.

“One of the reasons the tour is beneficial to education students is that not only does it raise the students’ consciousness about the natural world around them and raise ecologically important issues, it also greatly increases the likelihood that when these students are teachers, they will bring their students on such tours,” Dye said.

Which is exactly why Caruso, director of WestConn’s Center for Professional Development, organized the day to serve as a learning experience for the students, who soon will be teachers themselves.

“The program is an outreach activity to connect education majors to the local community and link instructional theories with field-based science,” Caruso explained. “Under the provisions of ‘No Child Left Behind,’ the State Department of Education will begin to administer content-level tests in science and social studies to students in the fifth and eighth grades. These tests, which will be similar to the Connecticut Mastery Tests for reading and math, will begin in fall 2004.”

Students learned far more than the pH level and mineral content of the stream, Burke said.

“By the time these students have reached their professional semester, they’re ready to be teachers, they really want to be out there with the children,” Burke explained. “The first thing they said after the eco-tour was ‘we’re going to bring our students out here’ — we had such a great time and learned so much. It’s wonderful that we have the WNP here in WestConn’s backyard, and it’s available to public school students.”

Daria agreed.

“The eco-tour was an enlightening experience for all of us,” she said. “Students used the information learned from the tour to create lesson plans for their teaching units, and professors gained new knowledge about the resources available to them. The trip was very educational and well worth it.”

Another eco-tour is being planned for the spring semester. In addition to Dye’s insights about the WNP, Dr. Rick Asselta, coordinator of The Jane Goodall Center for Excellence in Environmental Studies, will talk about the Roots & Shoots program in Danbury’s public schools.

Emeriti to be featured on CPTV broadcast

WestConn emeriti faculty members Drs. Jean Kreizinger, James Pegolotti and Edwin Rosenberg, all senior volunteers, will be featured during an episode of a CPTV 10-part original series that explores the issues senior citizens and their families face. The episode of “Seniors: Living a Quality Life” will be broadcast at 9 p.m. on March 25 on CPTV.

Visit www.cptv.org for more information.
Fateful events lead WestConn student to performance pinnacle

by Shari Hill

World-renowned organist Graham Steed, in anticipation of a visit to Chile, contacted his local Rotary Club in Victoria, British Columbia, to see if they could arrange for a Chilean guide during his visit to the South American country. Sixteen-year-old Juan Mesa, whose father was active in the Rotary Club in Puerto Montt, Chile, was selected to be Steed’s guide. It was a fateful meeting for Mesa, who only a few years earlier had begun to play the organ at the parochial school he attended.

“I had been curious about the organ at my school for some time,” Mesa said. “I wondered how it would sound, and one day I snuck over and played it. My father, I got permission from the priest to play.”

Like many residents of Chile, Mesa had begun to learn classical guitar at an early age and had been reading music since the age of 9. At 13, fueled by his curiosity about the organ, he began to take piano lessons. At 16, he met one of the world’s foremost organists — just by chance — when he was asked to be Steed’s guide. Steed happened to hear Mesa play and was so impressed by his ability that he invited the teenager to Canada for private lessons.

“At the time, I had no idea how renowned Graham Steed was,” Mesa said. “He was a nice, friendly man in his 80s. He taught me in his home and in local churches. Little did I know he was so famous in organ history.”

When he returned to Chile after a month in British Columbia, Mesa continued his studies at a nearby church. He also began to consider his possible education.

“I wasn’t clear about how to study organ in college, so I applied to a university in Santiago, Chile, as a music theory student,” Mesa said.

It was a very competitive program, accepting only about 20 students per year. Mesa wasn’t accepted, so he came up with “Plan B.”

“I contacted the American Guild of Organists (AGO) in New York through their Web site on the Internet,” Mesa explained. “I wrote them a message, asking for assistance in finding a college that I could attend and afford in the United States.”

The AGO forwarded Mesa’s e-mail to several organ teachers across the country. One of those teachers was East Haven resident Stephen Roberts, an adjunct professor of music at WestConn. Roberts responded to Mesa as soon as he received the e-mail.

“He was very sincere about the difficulties I would face,” Mesa said. “But he was also positive and willing to do whatever was necessary to help me. He encouraged me to apply for an academic merit scholarship, which I received. In the end, it worked out much better that I did not get into the university in Santiago, because if I did, then I wouldn’t be here.”

“It’s a great story, isn’t it?” Roberts said, smiling. “If it weren’t for the Internet, Juan wouldn’t be here. I was delighted when I received his message. “I want to build a first-rate organ class here at a time when most other schools are shutting their organ programs down,” Roberts added. “Finding talent like Juan’s contributes to the program.”

In addition to Mesa, Roberts currently has one other student, Gustavo Andrieu, an Argentinean who is six years older than Mesa. The two have become good friends.

“Both Juan and Gustavo are such nice boys,” Roberts said. “I really feel fortunate to have them as students, because they are a pleasure to teach. They’re good friends and very supportive of one another, even though they’re quite different in their styles and personalities.”

In the next few years, WestConn’s organ performance program will grow, as talented musicians from Emmaus, Pa., Buffalo, N.Y., and Siberia come to study with Roberts, who is well-respected as both a performer and teacher. A Yale graduate, Roberts is known for having his students excel at performances and competitions.

At Roberts’ suggestion, Mesa recently entered and won first place in Region 1 – New England at the (AGO)’s Quimby Regional Competition for Young Organists. Mesa also won first prize in the George Markey Scholarship Competition, sponsored by the Metropolitan New York AGO Chapter.

Chiu’s performance leaves audience in awe

It’s been said that large cats can roar, not purr; and small cats can purr, not roar. In nature it seems, it’s one or the other. That’s apparently not true of grand pianos, as renowned concert pianist Frederic Chiu aptly demonstrated during a February recital in the Ives Concert Hall.

In a program featuring the works of Russian composer Sergei Prokofiev, Chiu coaxed sounds from the ebony Yamaha grand piano at center stage that ranged from barely audible purrs to nearly deafening roars. At times, the audience had to hold its collective breath to hear the softest notes, at others, the roar generated by the instrument’s soundboard almost seemed to produce a gale-force wind in the auditorium.

Such is the inspired level of performance that has led music critics to describe Chiu as “a pianistic genius” and credit him with “reinventing a form of virtuosity … a phenomenon that must be heard.”

Before taking his place at the keyboard, Chiu offered an interesting history of the composer Prokofiev and his body of work. He then took his seat at the piano and literally let his fingers do the talking. His hands, at times, were a blur. His facial expressions changed with the intensity and the emotion of the selections he played, which included his own arrangement of Prokofiev’s Lieutenant Kije Suite, as well as Sonata No. 7 in B-flat Major, Op. 83, Selections from “Romeo and Juliet,” and Sonata No. 8 in B-flat Major, Op. 84.

WestConn’s Keyboard Club, established in 2003 to promote the study and performance of keyboard music, sponsored Chiu’s performance. Kathryn Hydinger, a senior from Brookfield, is the president of the club.

“Frederic Chiu is one of the most remarkable artists of his generation, and he has performed all over the world,” Hydinger said. “His recital at WestConn provided the community with a rare opportunity to hear this extraordinary pianist.”

A native of Ithaca, N.Y., Chiu studied at Indiana University and The Juilliard School. He garnered international attention in 1993 during the prestigious Van Cliburn Competition when he opted to play a more provocative program than the typical Bach, Mozart, Beethoven competition repertoire and lost in the semi-final round. The resulting protests inspired a prominent story in The New York Times, in which Chiu was referred to as the “Maverick American Pianist.”

While he did not win the Van Cliburn Competition, Chiu has obtained
Students, educators get tips about teaching history

by Yvonne Johnson

Sarah Hall, a WestConn secondary education major, often gets the same reaction when she tells people she is a history teacher: “People say, ‘Wow! Why would you want to teach history?’” the 24-year-old Danbury resident said.

There’s a common misconception that history is boring or irrelevant and that history teachers might be the same, but Hall said she sees history as a critical element of a solid education with history teachers playing a crucial role in the future. Students need to know and understand history to be informed citizens and members of the workforce, she said.

“Educators are trying to be more interesting history teachers,” she said. “My hope is to make history relevant and interesting for my students.”

To that end, Hall was one of the more than 100 students and educators who packed the Student Center Theater in February to hear noted historian Dr. Eric Foner, the DeWitt Clinton Professor of History at Columbia University, discuss the teaching of history. A U.S. Department of Education grant funded the free lecture. A group of Danbury public school history teachers recently received the grant to fund programs that boost their knowledge and enhance classroom instruction for the school district now is partnering with WestConn and a number of other educational institutions and community organizations to provide the programs.

WestConn Vice President for Academic Affairs Dr. Eugene Baccini, who taught history earlier in his career, praised the endeavor before Foner began his lecture.

“Teaching of American history is one of the most fabulous experiences I’ve had, and I hope you and your students can have the same experience,” he told the crowd.

Danbury Mayor Mark Boughton, a WestConn alumnus who also is a former history teacher, described Foner as “one of the most influential historians” in the United States.

“He is one of the few historians of his generation to take on the full sweep of American history,” Boughton said. Foner’s latest book, “Who Owns History? Race and Remaking the Past in a Changing World,” relates to teaching history as society evolves. He praised the public school educators for their efforts. Their enthusiasm and skill is evident when they send students who are interested in and excited about history to universities every year, he said.

“You’re a job is a lot harder than our job,” Foner said, referring to himself and other university professors.

Foner then discussed the United States and the world after Sept. 11, 2001, talking about a number of events and concepts that preceded the tragedy.

“I am a historian and historians like to look at the past more than the present,” he said, earning one of several laughs from the crowd.

Foner specializes in the Civil War and Reconstruction, slavery, and 19th-century America, so he zeroed in on the evolution of concepts surrounding freedom as an example of history’s ever-changing nature.

“Far from being fixed, the definition of freedom has been the focus of debate and controversy throughout American history,” he said.

He pointed out that protections of certain freedoms, such as civil liberties for all races, have become part of the American definition of freedom partially in response to global events or forces, including the Nazis’ persecution of Jews and the Cold War. Sept. 11, 2001, brought the definition of freedom to the forefront of discussions across the country.

“The language of freedom again took center stage in the conversations of the American public,” Foner said, pointing out that many, including President George W. Bush, identified the attacks as motivated by hatred of American freedom.

With his own lecture as an example, Foner urged the educators to make history and its complex issues relevant to their students’ lives, giving them the historical perspective to intelligently discuss and consider the subjects involved. He asked the teachers to keep history “alive” in the classroom. “We have to keep linking the past and the present,” he said.

During the question-and-answer session that followed the lecture, Foner suggested the teachers encourage a “mindset of curiosity about other places, other ideas.”

He also set aside criticism of revisionist history, a process by which historians revisit events seeking fresh evidence and exploring new areas of study.

“History is a constant engagement with the past. Historical interpretation is always changing,” he said. “Asking new questions opens up new answers, and asking new questions opens up new perspectives.”

“There is no single truth about history,” he added.

After the lecture, Hall said she plans to take a number of key points from the discussion into the classroom when she’s a teacher.

“I was really struck by his emphasis on tying what’s going on in the world today with what has happened in the past,” she said. “I’d like to use that approach to make history come alive for my students.”

Music student excels, wins accolades (cont’d.)

“Juan’s level of performing and his exposure at these events have brought him to the fore,” said Dr. Fernando Jimenez, chairman of WestConn’s music department.

Roberts agreed.

“I believe the whole key to building a department here is to give Juan and Gustavo a chance to excel, they will do great things, which then will bring attention to the program.”

“WestConn is ‘no-fills’ compared to fancy private schools, but it’s a wonderful place for students who have a lot of talent but not a lot of money. It’s a good school with low tuition, and that’s located in Fairfield County, where church organists jobs pay very well. That means the students can play their way through school,” he added.

Mesa hones his skills and supplements his scholarships every weekend at St. Teresa’s Roman Catholic Church in Woodbury, Conn., accompanying one Mass on Saturdays and two on Sundays. He will graduate in May 2005 with a degree in organ performance. After that, he hopes to pursue a master’s degree and eventually a doctorate, so he can teach at the college level.

“Juan has something like a 3.98 or a 3.99 grade point average,” Roberts said. “I think he got an A in a summer course, which keeps him happy,” he said, laughing.

He has great intellectual horsepower. Despite this, he’s remarkably modest about his abilities. I believe he will eventually teach college-level organ performance, choral conducting or music theory.”

Who could have envisioned, when he first snuck over to the organ at his parochial school in Chile, that Mesa would now have the skill to sit down and play on some of the most beloved organs in the world? Mesa described the Newberry Memorial Organ in Woosley Hall at Yale University one of the largest organs in the world. He also spoke highly of the organ at the St. Joseph Memorial Chapel at the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, Mass. Without question, however, his most memorable experience came when Mesa got to play the Grand Organ of Saint Sulpice in Paris, France.

“This is the dream organ of anyone who plays,” Mesa said. “It’s an incredible instrument. It’s the organ Monsieur (Marcel) Dupré played. I was able to play for a little while, and the sound was beautiful.”

The 1862 organ consists of seven divisions and is the largest instrument built by famed organ builder Aristide Cavaillé-Coll. From 1934 until 1971, world-renowned French musician Dupré served as Saint Sulpice’s principal organist. Dupré, an idol to students of the organ, was a good friend of Mesa’s first teacher, Graham Steed.

In a way, playing the massive organ at Saint Sulpice brought Mesa’s story full-circle. His youthful curiosity about the organ, that chance meeting with Steed, their private lessons, his e-mail request, and his studies with Roberts at WestConn all led Mesa to France to play the Grand Organ of Saint Sulpice. They were all part of his larger musical journey, and now Mesa clearly is where he was meant to be.

Chiu captivates audience (cont’d.)

many other noteworthy awards, including the Avery Fisher Career Grant, the Petscheck Award and the American Pianists Association Fellowship. He resides in Paris and has performed in most of the major European cities, as well as in Asia and Africa. In keeping with his passion for the “seldom-played repertoire,” Chiu has released more than 20 original recordings of rarely performed sonatas to rave reviews.

[16]: Vice President for Academic Affairs Dr. Eugene Baccini, Eric Foner and Clare Barnett, director of social studies for Danbury public schools