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Graduate Gazette (GSG Newsletter)

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Your GSG: The Year in Review

The Graduate Student Government had a very busy and productive year. The Outreach and Development Officer, Jennifer Hooper, worked hard with the Social Committee to bring a lot of great activities and professional development workshops to graduates. Jennifer also created a Twitter account and added links to the GSG Facebook and Twitter pages on the GSG website. Thomas Parr, the Grants Officer, created a more consistent system to prepare, categorize and evaluate grants applications. The Grants Committee put in a lot of time to make sure grants were fairly judged and money was quickly distributed. President Maureen “Mo” Correll kept the GSG involved with relevant issues, such as graduate student insurance. A vote was held at the final GSG meeting on April 17th to continue with the current plan with CHP. Charles Rodda stepped into the Vice President position a few months into the 2012-13 term, and did a great job organizing this year’s GradExpo, moving the venue to the new IMRC building. Brianna Hughes worked tirelessly on keeping everyone informed and involved with the Performance-Based Funding situation and the K-12 Initiative. Charles “Chuck” Hastings, the Treasurer, researched GSG investments to make sure GSG funds are managed with the best care and profitability, and he will work with the incoming Treasurer, Anna Breard, so that the 2013-14 GSG can make the most informed decisions on the funds. Secretary Peg Killian headed the Constitution Committee, who updated the GSG Constitution and Standing Rules, and as editor of the GSG Newsletter, the Graduate Gazette, worked with the Newsletter Committee to bring the GSG news and activities to all of UMaine. This year, much of the website maintenance was outsourced to the BioMediaLab, but website updates were still overseen by the Secretary. The 2012-13 GSG Senators were crucial in bringing GSG news to their department constituents, and discussed ways to improve the effectiveness of communication from them to their departments. They also brought a lot of vital insight and suggestions to GSG meetings and worked hard as members of the various committees. For more detailed information on the news and activities of this past year, please visit our website at www2.umaine.edu/gsg/about/meetings and click on the links for the agenda and minutes. Thank you!

Thesis Crisis, Dissertation Disintegration:

*Improve your writing habits with UMaine’s Writing Support Resources*

by Aleksandra Swatek

The graduate academic work that happens in the many disciplines at this university is very diverse. If you ask a graduate student what is the most exciting work that they engage in, you might hear an answer that lists national and international trips, laboratory research, work in the fields with insects, or engineering projects that include building prototypes etc. However, one thing that all graduate students share is the act of writing. Whether we are analyzing fiction writing, doing a research project on blueberries or studying lobsters, our writing, doing a research project on blueberries or studying lobsters, our writing, doing a research project on blueberries or studying lobsters, our writing, doing a research project on blueberries or studying lobsters, our writing, doing a research project on blueberries or studying lobsters, our writing, doing a research project on blueberries or studying lobsters, our writing, doing a research project on blueberries or studying lobsters, our writing, doing a research project on blueberries or studying lobsters, our writing, doing a research project on blueberries or studying lobsters, our writing, doing a research project on blueberries or studying lobsters, our writing, doing a research project on blueberries or studying lobsters, our writing, doing a research project on blueberries or studying lobsters, or they simply need support. Students, which was set up by Prof. Dylan Dryer, an assistant professor in the Department of English. The Studio is a UMaine Graduate School and College of Liberal Arts and Sciences-supported program that engages small, interdisciplinary groups of graduate students in structured peer review and feedback on drafts of their thesis or dissertation projects. Thesis and Dissertation Studio invite applicants to join every semester. Both groups meet 4 times in the semester for two-and-a-half hour sessions. As a faculty-in-residence in Stodder Hall, Dr. Dryer decided to support the graduate students in their struggles with writing. This was no coincidence; Dr. Dryer is a composition researcher, which means that his work is focused on how writers work across disciplines, how teachers teach writing and everything in between.

There are various reasons why Ph.D. candidates decide to join the Dissertation Studio: they might have lost their enthusiasm for the subject they are writing about, they don’t know how to get unstuck at a certain point in their writing, or they simply need support. This support, as Dr. Dryer says, is essential. (Continued on page 6)
This year’s new venue, the newly-remodeled IMRC building, gave us an exciting showcase of the graduate studies at the University of Maine. The Expo began Thursday morning with the oral sessions in Natural Sciences and Physical Sciences. The maze of Intermedia displays and science posters had visitors curious to see what was around the next corner. Posters presented in Social Sciences included research in Human Development by Meagan McCready: “Building on the relationship between mindfulness and couples' satisfaction.” Meagan’s research looks into the theory that mindfulness can improve a couple’s romantic relationship satisfaction by encouraging the creation and maintenance of healthy relationships. Social Science poster presentations also included the disciplines of Psychology, Communications and Journalism, Economics, and Higher Education. The new venue gave the Expo a great setup to display the graduate work by our Intermedia students. Many different projects filled the Expo, bringing a different experience with each artist. Using the mediums of watercolor and photography, S Julie Riley’s “Silent Communication” showed the emotions associated with human gesture. “fourSQUARE: Death by Pop Song” was an interactive display that visitors were allowed to enter a black lit room and play a game of foursquare. Players beware; too much time in this room could cause some damage, thanks to Sally Levi and Johnny Sullivan. The oral presentations in Natural Sciences had speakers on the drying processes of nanocellulose and insulating nanofoams. Yucheng Peng presented “Drying Nanocellulose: In Search of a Suitable Method.” This presentation focused on four different drying processes for cellulose nanofibrils it is a challenge is to obtain dry cellulose nanofibrils while maintaining their nano dimensions. Recommendations were made in favor of spray drying to dry the cellulose nanofibril suspensions. “Nanofibrillated Cellulose (NFC) Insulating Foams,” presented by Nadir Yildirim discussed using nanofibrillated cellulose for insulating buildings. As the cost of energy increases, the benefits from this research can be great. Thursday afternoon held poster sessions which included research topics from “Abnormal Cardiovascular Development in Cofilin Morphant Zebrafish,” by Vanessa Beck to “Preparation and Characterization of Electrically Conductive Papers with Bacterial Cellulose” by Esra Erbaş Kiziltaş. Oral presentations in Natural Sciences and Physical Sciences continued and the evening ended with a showing of the move PhD Comics along with popcorn and tasty cotton candy.
President's Research Impact Award: Alison Mitchell, student, and Jennifer Middleton, teacher, on Examining child protection outcomes for a cohort of opioid-exposed infants

Dean's Undergraduate Mentoring Award (two recipients): Katrhine Ruskin, on Testing for Stability in the Sharp-tailed Sparrow Hybrid Zone; and Alper Kiziltan, on Natural Fiber Blend – Nylon & Composites


Dean's Photo Contest - Graduate Student Life: 1st, José Carrasco. 2nd, Amy Pierce. Tied for 3rd, Jocelyn Runnebaum and Jincy Joseph.

Foster Center for Student Innovation Commercialization Award, Science & Technology: Hari Prasanth Palani.

Foster Center for Student Innovation Commercialization Award, Intermedia: Heather Perry.


Intermedia Competition: 1st, Heather Perry, Queen for a Day. 2nd, Benjamin Burpee, Spaz.lab. 3rd, Tara Law, Enchanted.

Humanities/Social Sciences Poster Competition: 1st, Stacy Doore, Movement Matters: Using state longitudinal mobility data to improve school policy, intervention and academic outcomes. 2nd, Bridie McGreavy, Resilience in Collaboration. 3rd, Chris Bennett, Non-Visual Graphical Accessibility.


Physical Sciences & Technology Oral Competition: 1st, Silas Owusu-Nkwantaah, Novel approach to controlling layer-by-layer polyelectrolyte multilayer (PEM) formation & application as sensor. 2nd, Bess Koffman, Centennial-scale shifts in the position of the Southern Hemisphere westerly wind belt over the past millen-nium. 3rd, Dalia Massey, Use of Diffusive Gradients in Thin Films (DGT) as an Assessment Tool for Bioavailability of Mercury Species in Sediments.

Natural Sciences Poster Competition: 1st, Richard Luc, The Role of Caveolin in the Toll-Like Receptor Signaling Pathway. 2nd, Brianna Hughes, Effect of Rigor Status during High Pressure Processing on Absolute Texture and Color. 3rd, Luke Groff, Hibernation ecology of Lithobates sylvaticus in Maine’s montane landscape.


People's Choice Award - Overall Winner: Roghaiyeh Ebrahimi Kalan, Surface Modification of Mesoporous Silica in Supercritical CO2.
From the analysis, I am determining optimal orders to teach the associated topics. Q: Are there any professors here you would like to give credit to, regarding mentorship? A: Neil Comins is a professor of introductory astronomy here at the University. His research interests include studying misconceptions about astronomy. His insights, along with the analytical techniques that I have learned through professor Geoffrey Thorpe in the Department of Psychology, have provided me with substantial experience with studying the persistence of astronomy misconceptions held by college students.

Student Misconceptions About Astronomy and the Best Order of Teaching Astronomical Concepts
Andrei Favia, Neil F. Comins, and Geoffrey L. Thorpe
University of Maine, Orono, ME 04469

Graduate Exposition provides a unique experience for graduate students to present their work in a variety of forms, including poster presentations, oral presentations, and through various showcases special to the event. Much like several of the projects presented at the Graduate Exposition, my research project is rather unique. By presenting my poster, I received encouraging feedback from faculty and staff at the event who found my research subject matter interesting. Q: Can you describe your specific research areas a bit? A: I am looking at some groundbreaking statistical techniques used to analyze astronomy misconceptions held by college students, including how much the misconceptions persist with the students.

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On April 3rd, the Graduate Student Government held elections for next year’s Executive Committee. The results were:

**President:** Richard Luc, Molecular & Biomedical Sciences

**Vice President:** Robin Arnold, School of Earth & Climate Sciences

**Grants Officer:** Amamihe Onwuachumba, Electrical & Computer Engineering

**Treasurer:** Anna Breard, Food Science & Human Nutrition

**Outreach & Professional Development Officer:** Elisa Sance, Modern Languages & Classics

**Board of Trustees Representative:** Charles Rodda, School of Earth & Climate Sciences

**Secretary:** Abigail Jones, Communication & Journalism

All GSG meetings are open to the public. For continuing graduate students who wish to participate, please contact your school or department’s graduate coordinator to see if your department will need a representative for the coming year. Not only do you gain a great awareness to the UMaine graduate community, but you get to influence policy, be informed on the issues, and your regular attendance allows grad students in your department to be eligible to apply for GSG grants!
sentiment at the time of their academic career when the timelines they have used to structure their work, such as 15 week schedule and deadlines in courses, are taken away. The main way in which the studio provides this scaffolding for writers is the peer group. The members of the group become accountable to each other after they decide how many pages they have to submit before the deadlines they negotiated upon. This is what really helps the students submit work, even if it is still a draft. The same work structure is in place for the Thesis Studio.

The interdisciplinary character of the studio allows the students to focus on their writing, rather than the content issues that they might discuss with their advisors. Dr. Dryer explains that the students in other fields are far enough removed from your own discipline and that allows them to focus on questions of readability, organization and structure and ways of dealing with other researcher’s work. Thesis or dissertation works are actually genres that require sustained research and ways of dealing with other writer’s perspectives were extremely helpful in helping me with my thesis work this semester. The Thesis Studio run by Dr. Dryer was an incredible help to me as I finished up my thesis this semester. The group I was part of came from four different disciplines, and the different perspectives were extremely helpful in addressing the challenges of writing a huge document outside of the support offered by seminars. I really appreciated the chance to look over other people’s writing. It helped me figure out how to be a better reader of my own work. I would strongly encourage anyone writing a thesis or dissertation to apply to be part of this studio.

I would like to thank Prof. Dylan Dryer and Prof. Harvey Kail for agreeing to be interviewed for this article.

Testimonials from graduate students who participated in the Thesis Studio.

Avi Rude, MS - Spatial Information Science and Engineering. Graduation date: May, 2011.

I joined the Thesis Studio (TS) after long-standing frustration with starting to write my thesis. The TS was helpful because it helped me understand that the process of writing is iterative, involving several versions of editing and collaboration. Before TS, I read research publications in my field (Information Science) and thought that what I was writing was very different in style. My writing read like a personal letter whereas papers I was reading felt like objective and factual reporting. When I discussed this with the facilitators at TS, they assured me that what I was reading went through a lot of editing and not to worry about the narrative style in the first draft. It helped me to know that writing the first draft was hard for most other participating writers and they acknowledged that allowing one to write that first draft was the most important step. Editing was an easier step. With this understanding, I started sending rough drafts of my writing to my advisor who gave me edits. Soon, a few pages of edited writing turned into chapters. As I wrote, my advisor started seeing gaps that needed to be written about and filled. Once we had enough material, it became a question of organizing the material. It helped me to work with other writers.

The fact that they were reading and commenting on my writing in-person during TS sessions spurred me to write. I would get most writing done as the TS meeting sessions approached. The deadlines set during the TS material exchange helped me immensely. Emily Rasely, M.A. candidate in English.

Emily Rasely, M.A. candidate in English.

Student Spotlight: Matt Jones

Q: What is your program, and a brief background on how you arrived here?  
A: I’m in EES, and I wanted to work with Frank Drummond on applied insect ecology research. Frank offered me a position with very broad research parameters which really attracted me, and here at U. Maine our former entomology department got folded into the more interdisciplinary program.

Q: What is the focus of your research?  
A: I study insect mediated predation and scavenging in the Maine lowbush blueberry agroecosystem. My greatest research interest is in the interaction between dung beetles and pathogenic E. coli in agricultural systems.

Q: Can you tell us about your recent discoveries?  
A: The most exciting findings, in my opinion, were regarding these dung beetle/pathogen interactions. We found that wildlife in Maine can carry pathogenic E. coli into this agricultural system, via fecal contamination. However, dung beetles feed heavily on this (potentially) contaminated feces, and utilize it as a food resource. In addition to feeding on this feces, we also found that dung beetles have the ability to reduce the persistence of the pathogen in the soil, without vectoring it to the fruit. These factors indicate that dung beetles may be, to some extent suppressing pathogens in our food system and acting as a natural biological control of pathogens.

Q: What impact do you hope/intend your research to have?  
A: I hope that growers will recognize the importance of this ecosystem service and that producers, processors, and policy makers might one day reference this work when placing “good agricultural practices” on growers.

Q: What are your plans for after you complete this program?  
A: I will be working on a few supplementary experiments in collaboration with Frank and Dr. Vivian Wu (Food Science) this summer before heading west to begin a PhD program at Washington State University.