Communitas

MVCC Faculty/Staff Newsletter

Week of May 23, 2011

Rahn saw MVCC through students' eyes

Like other retiring faculty and staff members, Dennis Rahn can bear witness to the many changes which have occurred over the past years - 41 years, in his case. But even more than many of his co-workers, Rahn has witnessed these changes through the eyes of the students.

As the College's Director of Student Engagement, Rahn has been on the front lines of working with students in support of clubs, organizations, and student self-governance. With Rahn's guidance, student leaders have risen to the task of developing club charters, formulating budgets, and creating governance with the vision of making the student body successful.

"The most enjoyable thing has been working with student leaders and developing a student leadership program to the level where they are active within the organizations," said Rahn. "Each year presents its unique challenges, but the consistent challenge has been how to best help these emerging leaders to learn and develop the skills they will need to be effective leaders."

Rahn attributes the dedication of the faculty and staff advisors for helping clubs and organizations achieve this level of independence and success.

In June of 1970, Rahn started in the College Center Office which was responsible for the operations of the Auxiliary Services, the game room, The Pub, food services, and with the scheduling and operational end of student clubs and organizations.

"There was a lot going on back then. When I first came here, some of the challenges I ran into were student apathy toward extra-curricular activities and a big problem with behavior by some members of the Greek organizations," said Rahn, who previously worked as the Student Manager at the Strebel Student Union at Utica College. This experience fit his new role at MVCC the evening and weekend supervisor of the Alumni College Center.

Rahn's duties expanded to include oversight of The Pub and he recalls when Taco Bell was opened in the Alumni College Center. Throughout his career, he has always been in the confidence of the students. In the early 70's one "unofficial" duty was to keep his ear to the ground and let the Dean of Students know if there were rumblings of demonstrations relative to the anti-war movement.

"There was a real fear of the anti-war movement as there was potential for it to negatively affect us. But it never created a big problem on MVCC's campuses," said Rahn. Along with worrying about the anti-war movement, there were other ripples in the water as Student Congress controlled the budget for athletic programs. Tensions mounted as the budget process pitted athletic teams against clubs.

"We had to make sure the students approving the budget had an understanding of the needs of student-athletes," added Rahn. This tension persisted for years until the issue was resolved in the late 1970s when athletics became a separate budget line.

Rahn began to see a change in students' interests during the

1980s as student activity fees began to support the education programs in the form of specialized clubs. This persists today with such groups as the Photography Club, Welders Among Community, the Chemical Dependency Club and many others. Students are now activley seeking faculty advisors who can enhance what is being taught in the classroom.

"Many of the organizations are tying their activities to learning and what they are seeing in the classroom. Clubs are going on trips to see real-world applications of what is being taught," said Rahn, who has been teaching history courses as an adjunct for 20 years. "When I first started, students thought of going to college as their job and full-time occupation. Over time student see their education as something they fit into their lives, particularly the adult students who are dealing with spouses, jobs, children, households."

Some of Rahn's accomplishments during his career include helping to create a co-curricular transcript, assisting in writing the grant which funded the first Adult Student Services Office, and working to organize funding of the College's Culture Events Counsel with student activity fees.

As he heads into retirement next week, Rahn is planning on visiting his family along with continuing to teach as an adjunct.

"The College has given me a tremendous opportunity to meet a lot of people and help them realize their dreams. We have a great institution here," said Rahn.

BioBus helps make learning science fun

MVCC's Collegiate Science and Technology Entry Program (CSTEP) students helped promote the Green Movement this week by arranging to have the Cell Motion BioBus pay a visit to JFK Middle School in Utica and then the Utica Campus to wrap up the day.

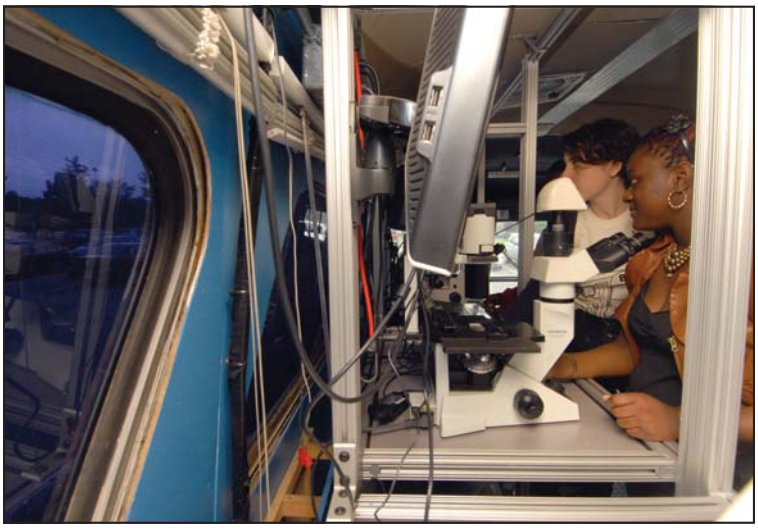
The BioBus is a mobile science laboratory and the brainchild of Benjamin Dubin-Thaler, Ph.D., who earned his doctorate in cell biology from Columbia University.

"Response to the Biobus has been amazing. Students come on who haven't even considered science as a career and they actually see science as something fun. Other students who are already interested in science get excited because it is the first time they able to use research grade equipment," said Dr. Dubin-Thaler, whose organization is based out of New York City.

The idea of bringing the BioBus to Utica was cooked up by Christy Stephenson, STEP Project Specialist, as a way for a trio of STEP and CSTEP students - Michael Fernandez, Valerie Riveria and Tiffany Cabarera - to fulfill their Day of Service requirements.

"The fee to have the BioBus come to Utica is for the entire day. Christy and the students thought it would be great if the local middle school could take advantage of its services," said Kim Overricker, Director of School and Community Outreach.

The BioBus is carbon neutral as it features four solar panels and a windmill to generate the electricity to run the computers and scientific equipment which has all been donated for this project. There is a garden growing on the roof of the bus to demonstrate how rooftop vegetation helps to lower building temperatures during the spring, summer and fall months.



BUS LAB - Deonasia Abel, a junior from Proctor High School, learns about science on the BioBus which visited the MVCC Utica Campus and JFK Junior High School this week. The BioBus visit was part of MVCC's CSTEP initative.

The engine of the BioBus is powered with recycled vegetable oil collected from restaurants. Keeping in the message of renewable fuels, the bus is heated by a pellet stove. The design of the BioBus includes a lab in the front of the bus and a lecture area in the back of the bus.

To learn more about the BioBus, visit www.biobus.org.

MVCC, Sheriff launch new police training program

MVCC President Randall J. VanWagoner and Oneida County Sheriff Robert M. Maciol signed an agreement this week to establish a partnership for aspiring police recruits to receive training before securing a position on a police force.

MVCC will begin offering a Police Pre-Employment Training Program on July 30 on the Utica Campus. It is a quick-start alternative to traditional police academies, which require that a cadet be hired as a police officer before beginning training. MVCC's Police Pre-Employment Training Program does not have such a requirement.

The nine-month program is a collaborative effort of MVCC's Center for Corporate and Community Education and the Oneida County Sheriff's Office.

"I am honored to be partnering with Mohawk Valley Community College for the Police Pre-Employment Training Program. Those who succeed in this program have the potential to become elite candidates for employment with a law enforcement agency, while at the same time, providing a substantial cost savings to that agency," said Oneida County Sheriff Robert M. Maciol.

Classes will meet Monday and Wednesday evening as well as on Saturday. Pre-Employment students will receive 85 percent of the basic training required to become police officers in New York State, including emergency vehicle operation, defensive tactics, basic patrol tactics and procedures, as well as an educational foundation in law, all taught by law enforcement officials and MVCC adjunct faculty. Additional training to complete the Basic Course for Police Officers can be obtained after a student has been hired by a police agency as a sworn police officer.

"MVCC has had a successful partnership with area law enforcement through the Mohawk Valley Police Academy for more than 40 years. The latest collaboration with the Oneida County Sheriff's Department continues with cutting-edge training and education for area law enforcement professionals. Our partners' work will not only benefit people who want to start careers in law enforcement, but also provides a cost-effective means for agencies to employ the best trained officers," said Dr. VanWagoner. For information, call at 315-731-5728 or e-mail phase1@mvcc.edu.

HELPING TO TRAIN POLICE OFFICERS - President Randall J. VanWagoner and Oneida County Sheriff Robert M. Maciol sign a memorandum of understanding with Oneida County Executive Anthony Picente Jr. looking on. This new program allows future law enforcement officials to receive training before securing a position within a police department.

Gov. Cuomo brings 'People First Campaign' to Utica

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo visited MVCC's Utica Campus this week as part of his "People First Campaign," where he outlined his legislative priorities for a property tax cap, ethics reform in Albany, and passing a marriage equality bill.

This is part of Governor Cuomo's statewide tour to speak directly to the people of New York. Governor Cuomo said all of these issues must be addressed during the current legislative session and urged New Yorkers to call their legislators into action.

"Real reform begins with the people, and that is why my team continues to travel the state to bring our message to as many New Yorkers as possible as we build a coalition for change," Governor Cuomo said. "If we work together and speak with one voice, we can bring true change to New York."

"We appreciate the Governor's visible commitment to serving citizens across the state, including speaking directly with people here in the Mohawk Valley. MVCC is proud of its role as a venue for public discourse, so we welcome today's conversation about legislative issues of importance for the people of our community and all of New York State," said Randall J. VanWagoner, Ph.D., President of MVCC.

For more information about the People First tour, visit www.NYPeopleFirst.com.

Chuck Hendricks - Bernie Raynor - Jason Yager

Networking Team presented Wings of the Hawk award

The Educational Technologies Team nominated the Networking Team of Jason Yager, Bernie Raynor, and Chuck Hendricks to be the next Wings of the Hawk award recipient.

The Wings of the Hawk award is given to a department or office on the Utica or Rome campuses at the conclusion of each semester for demonstrating the ability, desire and initiative to go beyond daily responsibilities in order to better serve the College community and those who attend MVCC.

The Networking Team has shown exceptional teamwork within its department as well as with every department on at MVCC. Their operation is vital primarily for the phone system, printers, and network connections along with many other tasks.

"The way in which the team carries out its duties efficiently, effectively, and with a spirit of customer service is an example to be followed by other departments," said Jim Lynch, Director of Educational Technologies. "They work closely with our department and always have a spirit of cooperation and teamwork. It is with great pleasure and admiration we nominate Jason and his staff."

Yager is the Director of Network and Workflow Systems at the College while Hendricks is the Assistant Network Coordinator and Raynor is the Technical Assistant.

Make a Wish Foundation benefits from basket raffle

The Spring Celebration of Success was once again a huge hit with a record number of faculty and staff attending the event in the Information Technology Building. This year's basket raffle raised $695 with those in attendance selecting the Make a Wish Foundation to receive the proceeds.

According to Marie Kohl, Coordinator, Annual Fund & Alumni Relations, who helped organize the raffle, there were 20 baskets donated from across the College. The Employee Recognition Committee wanted to thank the following offices for "basket" donations:

1. Center for Arts and Humanities; 2. Center for Life and Health Sciences; 3. College Outreach; 4. Educational Technology; 5. Marketing and Communications;

6. Institutional Advancement; 7. Math Department; 8. Great American Irish Festival; 9. Learning Center; 10. Business Office;

11. Admissions; 12. President's Office; 13. Professional Association; 14. AMVA; 15. Associate VP/Deans Office;

16. Center for Social Sciences, Business and Information Sciences; 17. Placement testing/Advising; 18. Adult Learner Services/Counseling and Career and Job Placement; 19. Innovation Team; 20. Facilities Department

Dr. Schafer's mother passes away in Florida

President Emeritus Michael Schafer's mother, Goldie Lilian Schafer (95), recently passed away at her home near Ft. Myers, Florida. Her life will be celebrated at a private family funeral in Del Ray Beach, Florida where she will be buried next to her husband Bill Schafer.

At the request of Dr. Schafer and his family, contributions can be made in her name to the MVCC Foundation in lieu of flowers.

CONGRATULATIONS CLASS OF 2011