February 2008

In This Issue
- Holiday party Pics
- Staff Retreat Pics
- Poster Session Pics

A feast for the senses. At least, the senses that like pictures.
The cover of the first edition of Sensation & Perception, by Jeremy Wolfe, Keith Kluender, Dennis Levi, Linda Bartoshuk, Rachel Herz, Roberta Klatzky, Susan Lederman, and Daniel Merfeld featured a lightness illusion by Bart Anderson and Jonathan Winawer based on their report in Nature (2005). Perhaps something of yours could grace the cover of the forthcoming second edition. We are having a contest to determine the new cover. Send us your ideas; either your images from your research or a creation for the occasion. You do not need to include the title or authors. Indeed, if you do, it is likely that the publisher will modify the design for the final cover.

The authors will choose the winning image. The winner will receive a $500 honorarium and a copy of the book as a reward and there will be a blurb in the front of the book describing the image and its authors.

To submit your image(s) please email a version of modest size (ideally less than 1MB) to spcover@sinauer.com. Submissions must be received by July 1st, 2008. The winner will be notified by email no later than August 1st, 2008.

While the submission should not be a huge file, the winning image will need to be available as a high resolution image, suitable for printing at 8.5” x 11”. The publisher reserves the right to use a portion of the image or to adjust the colors as necessary unless expressly forbidden by you in the email submission of your image. The image should be yours to give (meaning there are no other potential copyright holders) and you will be required to sign an agreement with the publisher, Sinauer Associates, Inc., giving your permission to use the image on the book, the company and book websites, as well as on any marketing or ancillary materials created for the textbook.
As many of you know, the university has changed the format of course evaluations in recent years. Prior to 2004, course evaluations were administered in class, using paper and pencil. Then the university switched to an online form that required approximately 40 minutes to complete, for each class. For Fall 2007, CMU adopted a much briefer online form. How have response rates looked with these different forms? The PLB compared the data from some of our larger courses over the past few years.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semester</th>
<th>85-100</th>
<th>85-102</th>
<th>85-211</th>
<th>85-219</th>
<th>85-221</th>
<th>85-241</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2002</td>
<td>36.7%</td>
<td>(NA)</td>
<td>55.6%</td>
<td>58.8%</td>
<td>74.3%</td>
<td>79.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring 03</td>
<td>(NA)</td>
<td>60.7%</td>
<td>75.6%</td>
<td>(NA)</td>
<td>77.9%</td>
<td>72.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2003</td>
<td>34.5%</td>
<td>(NA)</td>
<td>69.1%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>55.8%</td>
<td>74.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring 04</td>
<td>(NA)</td>
<td>60.5%</td>
<td>79.7%</td>
<td>(NA)</td>
<td>60.1%</td>
<td>57.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[average]</td>
<td>[35.6%]</td>
<td>[60.6%]</td>
<td>[70%]</td>
<td>[69.4%]</td>
<td>[67.1%]</td>
<td>[71.1%]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Switch to Original (Long) Online Form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semester</th>
<th>85-100</th>
<th>85-102</th>
<th>85-211</th>
<th>85-219</th>
<th>85-221</th>
<th>85-241</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2004</td>
<td>36.2%</td>
<td>(NA)</td>
<td>44.7%</td>
<td>51.9%</td>
<td>43.8%</td>
<td>47.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring 05</td>
<td>(NA)</td>
<td>33.9%</td>
<td>46.2%</td>
<td>(NA)</td>
<td>34.6%</td>
<td>34.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2005</td>
<td>36.1</td>
<td>(NA)</td>
<td>42.3%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>43.7%</td>
<td>35.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring 06</td>
<td>(NA)</td>
<td>29.3%</td>
<td>39.3%</td>
<td>(NA)</td>
<td>24.7%</td>
<td>29.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2006</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>(NA)</td>
<td>40.2%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>30.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring 07</td>
<td>(NA)</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>25.4%</td>
<td>(NA)</td>
<td>28.7%</td>
<td>19.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[average]</td>
<td>[32.8%]</td>
<td>[29.4%]</td>
<td>[39.7%]</td>
<td>[36.7%]</td>
<td>[34.8%]</td>
<td>[32.8%]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Current (Short) Online Form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semester</th>
<th>85-100</th>
<th>85-102</th>
<th>85-211</th>
<th>85-219</th>
<th>85-221</th>
<th>85-241</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2007</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>(NA)</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Too long/didn’t read Summary:
With the paper and pencil form, response rate was around 60%.
Under the long online form, it was about 33%.
Response rate with the new online form is a bit above 40%
Holiday Party Pictures

Less than 11 months ‘til the next Holiday Party, people. Hopefully these pictures will help you get in the mood for it!

As ever, there was much jollity at the holiday party, with much chatting and, er, wishes to live long and prosper.

But there was a novel twist this year - a quiz hosted by David and Lori, who are wise in the ways of trivia.

Lori advised each team to carb load before the beginning of the match, as the competition would be grueling...
...and, yes, beer does have carbs.

There was a competitive buzz in the room, but I think Ken and Mike misinterpreted it as a competition to see who could get the most buzzed.

Mysteriously, this table did not do all that well in the quiz competition.

Sensing that his table was in a bit of trouble, Ken tried to recruit this baby to help out.

He probably should have tried to recruit the Pelphreys instead. Let’s just say that if the department’s future ever hinges on encyclopedic knowledge of Britney Spears’ lyrics, I know who my go-to couple is.
Students’ ratings of their peers for popularity, sexual activity, intelligence, and artistic talent vary quite a bit by school.

Anna and Mike sampled the snacks... er, the research.

Kevin Chang and Storm Walden show off some of their results and materials for developmental research methods.

Lauren Burakowski and Katherine Farner look like they had a good time making the stimuli for this experiment.
Each year, the Rakison and Thiessen lab come together in a fierce, hotly contested contest of skill, valor, and determination. But this year, the bowling alley was reserved, so we had to go somewhere else to determine which developmental lab had bragging rights for the year. We settled on Dave and Buster’s at the Waterfront.

Members of both labs warmed up before the main event...

... a no-holds barred one-on-one game between Mssrs. Rakison and Thiessen. Which game? To paraphrase Lennon, you know everyone wants a Dance Dance Revolution.
First, Shelly and Gabe showed us how it was done

Then we stepped onto the dance floor and prepared to bust a move, or possibly even more than one, should the situation require it.

Finally, the game was afoot! Or, perhaps more appropriately, afeet. As in, four left feet. After a grueling dance marathon, the game graded our performance.

And both of us received an F.

It seems like it’s going to be a while before either of us is ready for a cameo on Lori Holt’s favorite show, *Pants Off Dance-Off*.

I think it must have been an editor who said a picture is worth 1000 words. Because they can fill up so much space! Effort: low. Page count: high.
A building with as much history and character as Baker Hall sometimes needs to be touched up a bit. Here are some of the improvements you might have noticed over the past weeks.

Emilie’s office (aka “The Fishbowl”) got a new roof and carpet, so Emilie moved to 342D for a few weeks.

And speaking of roofs, the one by the Coke machine started to leak. Fortunately, someone deployed buckets quickly.
CK: [Knocks on door]
ET: Who can it be now?
CK: Oh, it’s me, Charles Kemp. I thought you were expecting me.
ET: Sorry. I forgot to check my calendar. It’s a mistake I sometimes make.
CK: Well, that’s all right.
ET: One of my jobs in the department, other than being second in burliness to David Rakison, who is practically 6 foot 4 and full of muscles, is to edit the PLB. I wanted to ask you a few questions.
CK: Go right ahead.
ET: Do you come from a land down under?
CK: I’m sorry?
ET: Do you come from the land of plenty? Where women glow and men plunder?
CK: That’s a very strange question.
ET: [Just smiles and gives Charles a vegemite sandwich]

PLB Cultural Outreach Division Presents:
A conversation between Charles Kemp and Erik Thiessen: Two Men at Work in the Department

Faculty Senate Report

According to Anna, the Faculty Senate had a very interesting meeting in January. Someone finding the Faculty Senate interesting is almost news in and of itself!

The excitement occurred because Peter Lee came to the Senate to discuss an initiative by the Saudi Arabian government to create six education centers along the Gulf coast. MIT has already agreed to partner with Saudi Arabia on one of those education centers. There are 18 finalists for the other 5 centers.

CMU - specifically, the math department - is one of those finalists. If chosen, CMU would receive “lots of money.”

The Senate was concerned that partnering with Saudi Arabia is not inconsistent with various CMU policies and beliefs. For example, Israeli citizens wouldn’t be allowed to participate in the education center, and Saudi Arabia’s treatment of various minorities isn’t consistent with CMU’s diversity policies.
Pictures from the Staff Retreat

Photo Credits: Emilie Renduliac

Our computer support staff is looking sharp here!

Apparently Kathy, Tisha, and Michelle stay pretty focused even when they’re away from the office.

Am I the only one who finds it confusing that the Pennsylvania Athletic Association looks so nice? Where are the racquetball courts? The sweaty people after a workout?
Sports!

PLB Discovers Bob Siegler’s Fitness Secret!

Not a day goes by when someone doesn’t ask the PLB “If there were 13 psychology faculty members at a faculty meeting, would it be proper to refer to them as a Baker’s Dozen, given the name of the building?” But, another question that the PLB is often asked is, “How does Bob Siegler stay in shape?” We admit, we were curious, too.

At first, with all of the hubbub around the Mitchell Report, we expected to find Bob’s name mentioned as a potential steroid user. It would explain how he’s still running so fast! No such luck. But, with a bit more digging, the PLB’s investigative reports believe they are on to something:

A gift card for Brawndo, the thirst mutilator, found on Bob’s desk! It’s got electrolytes.

The remains of a 24 pack of Brawndo was found in the trash outside of Bob’s office. These cans were intact. But the majority were crushed, as though against someone’s forehead.

Could this mysterious energy drink be what’s giving Bob the energy to run so fast? The Brawndo corporation (www.brawndo.com) is being very close-lipped about the ingredients in Brawndo. When the PLB asked what electrolytes were, their only reply was that electrolytes “Are what plants crave!”

Fantasy football final report

Congratulations to Jill Roxberg, whose team, the Tabby Cats, won the official PLB Fantasy Football League.

Beating Erik Thiessen’s team, The Constraints, in the championship game fulfilled a long-held mission for Jill. Five years ago, Erik beat Jill because he gave her some “bad advice” about what to do with her team before the championship game in 2002.

There is a saying where the PLB is from: Revenge is a dish best served cold. Just like bread pudding. And there is no doubt that Jill is enjoying hers.
Open Forum with President Cohon
Bring your Q (and you may receive an A) to the Open Forum on Feb. 11. President Cohon will be taking questions from the entire campus community. Everyone is welcome to attend - students, faculty and staff. More details below.

Where in the World is the SC VP?
The VP of Staff Council (Jen Cox) departs for Qatar Feb 1. Qatar staff have expressed interest in both forming their own Staff Council and addressing benefits and other concerns unique to their circumstances as employees in another country. (We currently have a Qatar rep appear via video-conference at our monthly meetings. It’s kind of neat. Although not for him. It’s about 7 or 8 p.m. Qatar time!) Because CMU is becoming a ‘global university’, with multiple international campuses, how to best accommodate and address the needs of offsite CMU staff will demand much more attention in the future. Other universities besides CMU have a presence in Doha, Qatar, and one goal of the trip is for Jen to gather intel on how their HR departments have dealt with these complexities. Making matters even more complicated is that Americans working at CMU-Qatar are assigned different job classifications than Qatarians (?) working there. And non-US, non-Qatar workers are subject to a THIRD job classification. Salaries, healthcare and other benefits vary meaningfully between classifications. As a result, Qatar staff have raised concerns about fairness and equity.

Elections
The elections system for Staff Council is changing with the next election this spring. I’ve written about some changes for electing SC regular members in previous columns; the upcoming FOCUS newsletter gives you a recap. A lot of discussion in the January meeting revolved around how to make electing SC officers (Chair, VP, Secretary etc.) more stringent or rigorous, largely due to pressing upcoming issues like the Qatar thing. For example, should a member serve on SC for X years before being eligible to be an officer? Should a member have Oracle access and skills to run for Treasurer? And so forth. The idea is to get these guidelines, job descriptions, job requirements (once decided) down on paper, or into our Constitution.

Desperate Call for Volunteers
If you like working with kids, please (PLEASE!) consider volunteering for Take Our Daughters & Sons to Work day (TODASW). Our longtime organizer stepped down recently and SC could really benefit from some extra sets of hands. Send me email at conser@andrew.cmu.edu and I’ll hook you up with the organizer of this popular April event. C’mon, it’s for the kids!

Upcoming Events
Open Forum with President Cohon
*Monday, Feb. 11, noon, UC, Peter-Wright-McKenna Room  SECOND FLOOR*

Nominations accepted for Staff Council
*Mar. 31 – Apr. 11*

Staff Council Election
*Apr. 21 – May 2*

New Members Announced
*May 15*

For more on staff council, visit [http://www.cmu.edu/staff-council](http://www.cmu.edu/staff-council)
Plaid Brain shirts selling like hotcakes. Delicious, cotton, wearable hotcakes.

PLB Shout-Out

This month’s PLB Shout-Out goes out to Erin Donahoe (if only I had some sort of picture of her in the PLB’s files...), for her hard work compiling the “grad applicant spreadsheet” as well as helping Dr. Rakison keep the grad review process organized.

Also, she’s doing an excellent job organizing the department’s Super Bowl Points Pool. It’s only two dollars a pop, people. Be there or be square. Or rather, be there to procure a square.

That’s All, Folks!
Tune in next month for another exciting issue of: The PLB*

*All publication times are approximate. As ever, the PLB is once a month, every month, unless it’s not.