Welcome Prospective Graduate Students!

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Snow and More Snow in February!
Ken Kotovsky: Squirrel Hunter

The PLB has more breaking squirrel news...

Kotovsky continues to add to his arsenal of squirrel removal techniques. Since winter has set in, Ken has gotten a little stir crazy and is now experimenting with more aggressive practices. Meet Ken’s new house pet, a 2 year old female hawk.

Ken has taken up the ancient practice of hawking in Squirrel Hill. Ken had a lot to say about his new hobby: “Hawking is the oldest sport in the world. In medieval times the hawk you flew was a mark of status and degree, and said as much as the type of car you would drive today. My hawk is way better than my Prius in terms of squirrel kills, by the way.”

Ken reports that his hawk isn’t the “ideal” housepet. His hawk has been known to attack his wife and houseguests, but Ken claims it’s worth it. He advises new hawkers to avoid flying their hawks near power lines or in their attics.

Some may find it ironic that Ken is wearing a t-shirt “Squirrels for Peace” in his faculty profile picture—given his new hawk. When asked about the t-shirt, Ken said not to worry, his hawk ripped that shirt to shreds months ago. He’s now wearing a t-shirt with a picture of his hawk on the front and the words “Peace through superior firepower” emblazoned across the back.

Stay tuned for more squirrel news.
Sheldon Cohen Endorses Stress Balls

Sheldon Cohen has received a lot of lucrative offers from private companies over the last couple of years. Johnson & Johnson, Kleenex... but he’s got something new, something he claims is going to pay for his retirement... stress balls. That’s right, Sheldon believes in the transformative power of squeezing soft squishy balls.

In an email statement, Sheldon says: “You underestimate the efficacy of stress balls. They are inexpensive, you can put your company logo on them, and they reduce stress. There is accumulating evidence that those who use stress balls are at lowered risk for morbidity and mortality and have high quality of life. Stress ball users are also more likely to get tenure.”

Sheldon does not know what his role will be in promoting the product at this time. But he tells the PLB that you can bet he’ll be squeezing his balls next time he’s on the Today Show.

Dept Welcomes Prospective Grad Students

We are excited to meet a new group of prospective graduate students. These students will have the opportunity to meet with faculty and graduate students, and learn more about our program. Welcome, we are so delighted to have you! The picture (right) was taken at the Behrmann-Plaut residence last year during our graduate recruitment/interview weekend.

Who will fill these shoes this year?!

Thanks to Erin Donahoe and David Rakison for organizing the weekend, and thanks to our current graduate student hosts (and numerous others) for making the visit a success.
Message From the Editors

Dear readers:

Imagine our surprise when we learned last week that we had been formally nominated (read: appointed) by a panel of our peers (read: Blair and Bryan) to the esteemed Grad Talk editorial board. The previous editorial board has chosen to end their tenure for unspecified reasons (read: they ran out of ideas) and have enthusiastically passed the torch to us.

We want you to know that we do not take this responsibility lightly and we consider your entertainment our highest priority. Clearly, the previous editors have set the bar pretty high. A quick review of the previous three issues highlights the breadth and subtlety of their comedic sense that the Grad Talk section has come to exemplify: pictures of faculty members' faces on other people's bodies, drawings of faculty members, and pictures of faculty members' faces on elves' bodies.

So, continuing the illustrious tradition of the PLB as a place where once funny jokes go to die, we present you, dear readers, with just a sample of the many features we have planned.

- Pictures of grad students' faces on other people's bodies
- Pictures of faculty members' bodies on other people's faces
- Pictures of faculty members' faces on their own bodies
- Ken Kotovsky something something squirrels

Clearly, this is going to be exciting year.

Your loyal editors,
Alan J., Colleen D., and Matt W.

Special Section: Prospective Students Visit Pittsburgh, Protests Planned

This special issue of Grad Talk is devoted to the visiting prospective students, whose wide-eyed optimism sickens all of us to no end. We know that familiarizing yourself with a new city can be a daunting task and you may have many questions: "What are some good nearby restaurants?", "How can I get around?", "Where should I look for apartments?" Geez, you never shut up; ever heard of Google? Anyway, here's some fun facts about your future home.

Transportation

Do you like riding subways, but hate how they take you places? Well, you're in luck! Pittsburgh is the home of the shortest Metro system anywhere! So should you somehow find yourself downtown and wanting to ride a subway without the hassle of ending up anywhere NOT DOWNTOWN, just hop on! And then, two minutes later, hop back off, two blocks from where you started. Continued on next page.
Continued from previous page.
(Okay, so in the name of full
disclosure, the underground subway
system DOES turn into a light rail
system that will take you to various
places in the South Hills, so if you
happen to live up there it may
actually be useful, especially if you
work downtown).

This is just for show.

But, should you want your
transportation to take you
anywhere, there are also plenty of
busses going all around the city.
Especially if you live in Shadyside
or Squirrel Hill, there are at least six
busses that will take you there. And
with so many buses, they probably
come pretty frequently, right? Well,
in theory, this is true. But really
what happens is that instead of
getting one bus every 5-10 minutes,
you get nothing for 20-30 minutes
and then 6 buses ALL AT ONCE.

But you know what? They’re
buses. They take you where you
want, and you (as a CMU student)
can ride them for free.

Artwork

On your way in this morning, you
probably noticed the Walking to the
Sky installation. In fact, you
probably tried to ask one of the
statues on the ground next to it for
directions.

Walking to the Sky is, according to
the artist Jonathan Borofsky, "a

They should at least put a hamburger or
something up there.

Om nom nom.

celebration of the human potential
for discovering who we are and
where we need to go." With that in
mind, it is pretty inspiring to notice
that the students are walking up TO
NOTHING. So just keep that in
mind, prospective students: you too
have the potential to reach for the
sky, and then get up there to find
yourself plummeting back to the
ground.

Robots

Carnegie Mellon is well-known for
its robotics. Fun fact: the first
robots were created here! So we
are very proud of our robots, no
matter how creepy they may seem.
Hence, we love Tank, the robot
stationed just inside Newell-Simon
Hall, whose creepy computer head
follows you as you pass by, and
who greets you in his disturbing
computer-generated voice. You can
ask him all sorts of questions, like
where different classrooms are in
the building. We’re sure he can tell
you other things, but frankly we’re
too creeped out by him to ask. But
if you prefer adorable robots,
Pittsburgh has those too. In
particular, CMU researchers made
a grass-clipping sheep robot named
Moe (HA! Get it?!), designed to
reduce the amount of gardening
maintenance needed outside Phipps
Conservatory. Through July of last
year, Moe wandered the grounds of
the conservatory munching on
grass and amusing spectators.
Continued on next page.

Grad Libs

At Grad Talk, we want every issue
to be entertaining and interactive.
And so, we offer these Grad Libs as
an alternative to Facebook
stalking while waiting to go home or
to Mardi Gras or someplace warmer
this weekend. Fill the blanks below.
Then plug them in to the numbered
blanks in the story. Enjoy!

1. noun
2. adj.
3. pl. noun
4. adv.
5. -ing verb
6. time of day
7. course name
8. store name
9. adj.
10. cafe chain
11. beverage
12. verb
13. pl. noun
14. time units
15. room name
16. noun
17. noun
18. verb
19. group of
people
20. same as #1
Grad Libs Continued

Graduate Student Life at CMU

A student of (1) _________ here has many (2) _________ (3) _________ for which to look forward. However, this does not come (4) _________. Gone are the days of (5) _________ on Thursday nights, pulling all- (6) _________ers to study for (7) _________ exams, and running to (8) _________ at (9) _________ hours. Instead of hanging out at (10) _________, you will get your (11) _________ to-go, off to (12) _________ diligently on (13) _________.

You will also spend countless (14) _________ in your (15) _________ without (16) _________ or (17) _________. It is all worth it in the end though, as you will be able to proudly (18) _________ before colleagues, (19) _________, and family as a (20) _________ expert!

Continued from previous page.

Sports

Whether you actually enjoy sports, or just partaking in the ensuing riots, Pittsburgh has got a great outlet for you. From the 6-time Super Bowl Champion Steelers, to the recent Stanley Cup winning Penguins, Pittsburgh truly is the City of Champions.

And if sports really aren't your thing, you can at least gain one new hobby: watching Pirates fans slowly come to the realization that once again, this is not, in fact, the year that the Pirates are going "all the way, baby". And of course, no sports town is complete without....

Beer

Now, if you ask around, a lot of people here will tell you that the bar scene is pretty lame. And maybe that's true. But ask yourself two questions: 1. Do you like beer? and 2. Do you like drinking for cheap?

If you answered "yes" to either of these questions, you should feel at home here.

French Fries

We're not sure why (maybe because it's delicious?), but Pittsburghers can and will put French fries on FRICKIN' EVERYTHING. In particular, Pittsburgh is famous for its Primanti Brothers sandwiches. To imagine this sandwich, picture your standard sandwich--nice, tasty bread, a layer of meat and cheese--then add enough fries to feed your entire family, and top it off with a 3-inch thick pile of cole slaw. No we're not kidding. Yes, it's delicious.

But in case you're saying "I dunno, Grad Talk, that sounds a little heavy for me, maybe I'll just have a salad" never fear, because you can get FRIES ON THAT TOO! Again, no, we're not kidding. Again, it is delicious.

And just in case you prefer your potatoes in dough form, pierogies are also readily available in Pittsburgh. If you're not familiar with pierogies, just imagine ravioli, only instead of being filled with cheese, they're filled with potatoes. And sauteed. In butter.

The David Variety Pack

With David Klahr, David Rakison, David Plant and David Creswell, the Psychology department will never lack for Davids. If one of them breaks, you've got three backup Davids to get you through.

Next Month...

A special highlight issue in which we reflect on the "best of" Grad Talk in 2010. You won't want to miss it.
Staff Council (SC) Notes--- January, 2010
Notes for meeting held 1/21/10

By Ellen Conser, H&SS Staff Council Rep 2006-2010
conser@andrew.cmu.edu

January 26, 2010

THIS ISSUE:
- Campus Masterplan up for revision
- Parking updates

Campus Masterplan
We viewed an interesting presentation by CMU Director of Design Robert Reppe. It covered the history of land use and building on campus, and visually displayed the growth of the geographical footprint over time. He said that a new land use plan for the next decade or so is in very initial stages, without providing a lot of detail. He explained that some boundaries preventing spread will be there for the long term (e.g. Schenley Park), and that renting/buying space on Craig St, as well as filling in unused/underused space on campus are options. I asked a question about whether we can get zoning such that the city will allow CMU to build upward (more stories in any new buildings) since this seems an obvious way to create more space. Mr. Reppe also mentioned that some people have been looking into building additional, underground parking but that the costs are more prohibitive than surface or garage parking. I asked about whether instead building a camouflaged garage like the one next to the UC would work. Mr. Reppe said that future plans for the Morewood lot and other parking are in flux, depending on projected future demand and funding. It was agreed by both Mr. Reppe and Staff Council that it would be good for him to visit us again in future when he has more details.

Parking updates
Michelle Porter (Manager, Parking Services) made one of her periodic presentations to SC. This year is the last year of parking Open Enrollment. Next year, they’re going back to Automatic Renewal. Another change for this year is that they’re going back to in-person pickup of parking hangtags (at the UC). This is due to numerous problems with the snail-mail process. Rates are rising slightly but the exact amount is TBA. The new campus masterplan may or may not eliminate Morewood Lot, but numerous user complaints have prompted Parking Services to plan to repave & repurpose it this spring, despite Ms. Porter’s concern about spending additional funds on a lot that may be removed at some point. Concerns were shared (again) by SC reps about break-ins at the main garage. Ms. Porter said cameras were installed and patrols are done, but that these are experienced thieves and they get in and out really quickly, so basically the only effective prevention is to hide all items that might be attractive to them. She mentioned that preventive efforts at other universities’ garages (e.g., Duquesne) have been similarly ineffective. The Gates Center garage opens Feb. 1.

Save the Date
(Staff Council and other events of interest to staff)

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<td>Open Forum with President Cohn</td>
<td>Wed. 3/24/10, noon</td>
<td>UC; room TBA</td>
<td>Melanie Linn Gutowski, <a href="mailto:melanie@andrew.cmu.edu">melanie@andrew.cmu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parking Open Enrollment</td>
<td>4/5/10 – 4/23/10</td>
<td>Online &amp; in person</td>
<td><a href="http://www.cmu.edu/parking/">http://www.cmu.edu/parking/</a> or send email to <a href="mailto:parking@andrew.cmu.edu">parking@andrew.cmu.edu</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Take Our Daughters &amp; Sons to Work Day</td>
<td>Thur. 4/22/10</td>
<td>Various locations on campus</td>
<td>Wayne Oglesby, <a href="mailto:wlo@andrew.cmu.edu">wlo@andrew.cmu.edu</a></td>
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Visit and bookmark [http://www.cmu.edu/staff-council/](http://www.cmu.edu/staff-council/) for more about Staff Council
Dept Holiday Party A Success! Pub Quiz Stumps Many

Record numbers of faculty, staff, and students showed up for the Department Holiday Party. Department Head Michael Scheier gave a short speech and everyone enjoyed some food and drink before the main event... that’s right, 7 rounds of Pub Quiz! We got to travel on the Holt and Rakison manic internet-fed random-factoid express— it’s like Trivial Pursuit on drugs. Success depended on your mastery of genres such as world cat breeds, secret spots in Pittsburgh, and the Cockney dialect. Half of the questions may have been Rakison telling porkies, we’ll never know.

Thanks to all who attended!

Pub quiz quizmasters Lori Holt and David Rakison standing with the prizes

1st Place Winners!

2nd Place Winners!

Kotovsky Prize Winners!

Kotovsky Prize Runner-Up!
Graduate Student of the Month: Meredith van Vleet

PLB: Where are you from and what made you decide to come to CMU for your PhD?
Meredith: I’ve spent pretty much my entire life in Grand Rapids, Michigan so I have plenty of experience wearing snow-pants and unflattering winter hats - all skills which have come in handy with our recent snowstorm. I chose to come to Pittsburgh because I felt that CMU, and particularly Brooke, were a good fit for me. I really like the idea of employing multiple methodologies to investigate social support dynamics within close relationships. I think it’s the best way to get a more complete picture of what occurs in intimate relationships.

PLB: What do you study in your research?
Right now I’m most excited about studying how couple members support one another during independent exploration, such as when pursuing a job promotion, beginning a new hobby, etc., and how this support impacts the recipients’ well-being.

PLB: What types of things do you do in your free time? What do you think of Pittsburgh?
Meredith: When I lived in Grand Rapids I spent my free time sifting through LP’s in the local record stores, going to concerts, and dancing in a university club. If anyone knows of any dance organizations or places with a good selection of vinyl, I’m all ears. Since moving to Pittsburgh, I’ve really enjoyed browsing through the several mod furniture stores around town, exploring Frick Park, going to concerts, learning how to play the bass (guitar), reading, and watching The Office obsessively- I challenge anyone to Office trivia. I really like Pittsburgh, there’s always something to do. Plus, who can’t love a place where salads come equipped with cheese fries and steak?

PLB: I know that you recently attended a social psychology conference in Las Vegas, along with your mentor Brooke Feeney. Any funny stories to report from Sin City? What happens in Vegas, stays in... the PLB.
Meredith: Hmm... Well, I can’t disclose all the savory details of SPSP, but I have to admit I did not fully realize Brooke’s celebrity star status until our stay in Vegas. On our way to dinner Saturday night, Brooke suavely mentioned to the concierge that we needed transportation to dinner at the Venetian. We were then escorted to a private entrance where we were greeted by a stretch-limo tailored to her specifications- complete with neon lights, strobes, and gangsta rap music videos on plasma screen TV’s. Only the best would do for Dr. Feeney.

Meredith’s advisor, Brooke Feeney, seen here in a Las Vegas limo after a crazy night of gambling, fuzzy navels, and stripclubs