April 9th marks a special day for CMU. Thanks to the focused efforts of Professor Marcel Just (shown in foreground above) and many others, we will receive a giant magnet and brain imager capable of advanced mind-reading, telepathy, lie detection, and world peace. Nearby, Tank the Roboreceptionist knows that his punchy responses are nothing compared to the talents of our new Siemens 3T Verio scanner. What can this scanner do? It's got an advanced mind-reading module capable of reading human and dead salmon thoughts. It can predict if you are going to think a noun (which was so 2008) or a verb. Can you believe it, verbs too! A built-in electric shock device also sends a zap if you think a dirty thought (Ken, you are warned). All of this, and the entire center is run on wind power. It's an exciting time to be working at the frontiers of functional neuroimaging.

As it stands now, the scanner will arrive on April 9th, followed by several weeks of testing, and it may be available for diabolical schemes and participant testing in May and June. Visit the Center's new website for more information: http://ccbi.cmu.edu/BrainImagingCenter/index.html
Naturally the PLB is interested in how investigators will use the new Center for Brain Imaging. The PLB surveyed the faculty for their plans and ideas, which we print here (in no particular order):

1. An NIMH Center grant proposal is currently pending to use the CMU Neuroimaging Center's capabilities to expand the study of the brain activity of dead salmon to halibut, tilapia, lobster and other tasty creatures. In related news, "Fish Fry Fridays" at the CMU Neuroimaging Center will offset the cost of computers no longer covered by direct costs.

2. Discounts will be offered if brains are brought in bottles.

3. First professor's brain found to be missing areas involved in useful thought.

4. For just 299.99 you can drag bring your boyfriend to the Mind Reading Center to find out whether he'll ever pop the question! Enjoy a 25% discount on subsequent visits!

5. The imaging center can be used to run a study examining 'small mindedness' at Central!

6. I think we should stop giving tests and do our assessments with brain scans. We combine assessment with cortical mapping and discover new areas of specialization. Effects of learning signal detection theory should show up in a signal detection circuit, etc. Maybe we could have an exit exam for all of our grads to test the "Psychology lobe's" growth. Grades are easily determined by the subject's (oops, I mean student's) position in the relevant distribution.

7. Sheldon Cohen: will scan cats to determine what commands his feline overlords wish him to obey.

8. Brooke Feeney: will scan Berkeley to prove that Berkeley really does understand more English words than "breakfast" and "dinner."

9. Anna Fisher: will scan Russians to try and finally learn their moon language.

10. Laurie Heller: will scan people to see if they still think that she is Mike Tarr's sister. Which, just to be clear, she is not.

11. David Plaut: will scan other faculty members to learn what they think is in that fanny pack, and then refuse to tell them if they're right.

12. David Rakison: will put babies in scanner with spiders and snakes and see which ones are scared.
Michael & Ken took a trip to CMU-Qatar (above) and Effat College, see the highlights on the next page.

Grad visiting weekend was a success! One of the highlights was playing RockBand in the Plaut-Behrmann Basement.

David went to his first Olympic Games in Vancouver, BC. Seen here with friend Apolo Ohno and coach Patrick Wentland.

Bobby’s new research project. Any guesses on what she’s up to?

Kotovsky shows off his new little baby squirrel. He’s now breeding squirrels? Stay tuned.
Many people around the department have been wondering about Michael and Ken’s trip to the Middle East. Did they do anything to embarrass us? How can we foster new ties with CMU-Qatar and Effat College? Were they able to fix some of the damage caused by Erik Thiessen’s teaching at CMU-Qatar two years ago? Well, we can start answering these questions.

Michael and Ken made two stops: Effat College in Jeddah, Saudia Arabia, and CMU-Qatar (a 2 hour plane ride away). Here are some of the pictures and highlights from their trip (in Ken’s words):

*There was an amazing presence of English in Jeddah- road signs and store signs/banners were in Arabic and English. Many of the people we ran into (drivers, waiters, store owners/workers) spoke English.

*The hospitality was terrific! The people associated with Effat took great care of us.

*There was a real restaurant-based nightlife in the city. They explained that w.o. movies, plays, etc. restaurants were “it” for nightlife.

A walking tour brought them to a market, look at all those spices!

They visited the Islamic Art Museum in Doha, wow
entertainment. They had a very European feel to them--they tended to fill up later in the evening and people spent a sizable amount of time eating and socializing. We ate at an Italian, a Chinese and a middle-eastern restaurant and they were all good, with the Chinese probably being the fanciest Chinese restaurant I've eaten in and with superb food.

*The overall feel of Jeddah was of a somewhat raucous big city that was not at all affluent. There were wealthy people around but the feel of the city was not of one overflowing with wealth.  

*I've driven in some crazy places (Italy, Madrid, etc.) and enjoy aggressive driving, but Jeddah(where we were driven around) was unlike anything i've seen--they change lanes by edging the front of their car in front of one in an adjacent lane and kind of forcing their way in--at the same time that someone else is doing it to them on the other side, so they're often driving with cars within a few inches of them on either side and everyone changing lanes! Or they make their own lane out of something the width of a bike lane here--pretty exciting! They laugh about it-one person told us that the only way to enjoy the ride is to not look at what's happening outside the car!

*The students we met with were very impressive--really strong identification with psychology and a thirst for psychological knowledge....and at least some of them read our website!
Grad Student of the Month: Colleen Davy!

Colleen and her dad skiing in Jackson Hole, Wyoming

PLB: You’ve recently taken over the editorship of the Grad Talk section of the PLB. Have there been any nasty editorial battles over content with your co-editors (Matt and Alan)?
CD: I guess I could make something up, but actually no, we really don’t. So far we’ve pretty much just each come up with some idea and run with it, then dumped them all in an issue. It’s been really fun reading what they come up with— they’re funny guys and their ideas really crack me up. The only disagreements we’ve had are Matt telling me I should probably keep the profanity and graphic depictions of violence and depravity to a minimum. I’m kind of kidding, but Matt definitely does make sure we (well, mostly I) maintain a certain level of decency.

PLB: Tell us a little about yourself.
CD: I’m originally from a suburb outside Columbus Ohio, but I did my undergrad at Pitt, and I really do consider Pittsburgh home now. Ultimately I ended up at CMU because I decided I wanted to continue working in the Pittsburgh Science of Learning Center community. As an undergrad (and post-baccalaureate), I worked on a bunch of different projects but ended up working primarily on a project that studied fluency development in ESL learners. At the time I thought to myself that this would be a nice project to get some experience and money before grad school, where I could study things that were at the time more interesting to me (phonetics and/or the neuroscience of language). But by the time I actually applied for grad schools, I found myself fully invested in the PSLC’s goals and wanted to continue to do education research. So the PIER program, and the opportunity to continue being involved in the PSLC, eventually made up my mind for me. And of course I was also excited to work with Brian, whose work I had been interested in since my conversion from a generative linguist to a cognitive linguist (hey, I was a Linguistics major first), and who served as an advisor on at least half of the various projects I worked on in undergrad.

PLB: What do you study in your research?
CD: Very broadly I’m interested in second language acquisition and education. My research specifically looks at how second language learners develop oral production skills, and how teachers can help students develop those skills inside and outside of the classroom. Right now I’m developing a task to help students practice their speaking skills through listening to and repeating sentences while looking at pictures that represent those sentences, with the goal that eventually they will be able to practice by producing the sentences on their own. Through this task I hope to look at how students are able to generalize what they’ve just practiced to new contexts, and see whether different types of practice can sup-
Colleen Davy Interview (continued)

Port more generalizeable learning.

PLB: What do you think of Pittsburgh?
CD: I absolutely adore Pittsburgh. I feel like I was a Yinzer before I even moved here- I even put French fries on my sandwiches as a kid. As a proud Pitts-burgher, I suppose my two main interests are sports (watching, not playing) and beer. I also tend to like most of the things listed on the Stuff Pittsburghers Like blog (stuffpittsburgherslike.wordpress.com), such as Complaining, Giving Bad Directions, Playoff Beards, and Hating Cleveland (seriously- I'm from Ohio and I hate Cleveland).

I also like really boring physical activities, like running. I generally hate playing sports and doing other physical activities that people like, but for some reason I really do like running. Surprisingly, I also love skiing. I started when I was pretty young and it's pretty much the only physical activity I'm good at. I also do other boring, repetitive things like knitting and crocheting. I like crocheting better but hate the way crocheted things look, so I'm constantly on the lookout for things to make that I won't hate. For instance, I made my fiancé a beard hat, which turned out so well that I also made one for myself.

PLB: What has been your favorite PLB article?
CD: Given my propensity for rambling, probably not this one.
A representative from GWS stated that “It’s not that we’re prudes or anything. We just don’t think we should have to open up our e-mail first thing in the morning and see pictures of stress balls. In fact, we shouldn’t have to see pictures like that any time of the day.”

Graduate students let out a collective “ew” last month upon the receipt of February’s PLB containing a feature section on well-respected faculty member Sheldon Cohen’s endorsement of “stress balls”, including a prominent picture of the item in question.

“Yeah, it was kinda weird.” said Amelia McFakename, a totally real graduate student in the department, “I mean, I didn’t even read the article- I just saw the picture of the… um… ‘stress balls’… and decided it was time to move on.”

In response to the article, the activist group Grads With Standards (GWS) planned a protest outside PLB headquarters (i.e., David Creswell’s office) but, upon finding the room empty, decided that he was “probably in a meeting or something” and disbanded before campus police could arrive on the scene.

A representative from GWS stated that “It’s not that we’re prudes or anything. We just don’t think we should have to open up our e-mail first thing in the morning and see pictures of stress balls. In fact, we shouldn’t have to see pictures like that any time of the day.”

Grad Students Find Pictures Of “Stress Balls” Uncomfortable, Creepy
Op-Ed Contributor:  

**Hi, Do You Have a Minute?**

**BY A STUDENT IN THE CLASS YOU TA FOR**

Hey, I hope I’m not interrupting anything. I know your scheduled office hour is actually tomorrow but coming then would be a minor inconvenience for me, so I decided it was easier to majorly inconvenience you instead.

I wanted to talk to you about my exam. Even though I didn’t study, I didn’t get as many points as I wanted, so I’m going to put you in the awkward position of either looking like a total push-over or a complete jerk. You understand it’s nothing personal. This is just a standard step in the grading process. First I do a poor job, then you give me a low grade, and then we compromise. Well, that’s how it was done in all my other classes, none of which graded as strictly and arbitrarily as this one, just so you know.

So, let’s talk about question 7 first. I didn’t get any points on that one. I know I didn’t write anything down, but that’s just because I ran out of time. I totally knew the answer, so I think I should at least get partial credit. And on question 15, I know that I just wrote down a free association brain dump that didn’t in any way address the topic, but I think all these unrelated vocabulary words prove that I did the reading and understand the material. I don’t know why I lost 10 points on that one.

I think I would have done better on this exam if I weren’t so stressed out from this whole health care reform debate. Plus it was really hard for me to study over the break because my family went on vacation and accidentally left me at home by myself and I had to set up all these traps to catch a couple of burglars that were trying to break in. What? No, I haven’t seen the movie *Home Alone.* Anyway, I’m sure you understand.

Alright, thanks for your time. Now, regarding the next exam, what do we need to know? Okay, I know you can’t tell me exactly what’s going to be on it, but I’m just going to read off a list of every topic in the book and just scratch your ear if it’s going to be on the test. You know what? I’m going to send you an email with three dozen questions at 3 am the night before the exam anyway so it’s not a big deal.

Oh, one last thing before I go. What do we need to know for the next exam?

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**Advice Column: Some Tips for Better Grades**

**BY A TA IN YOUR CLASS**

Shortly after midterm grades, many underperforming students ask “How can I do better in this class?” It’s a reasonable enough question. Too bad I’m not sure of the answer, and I think it would be more useful for you to discover what I do know for yourself. I didn’t get a crib sheet when I took this class, so you’re not getting one either. Besides, it’s our job (in part) to help prepare you for life, and there’s no “laundry list of success” for that! Clearly, you’ve seen too many productions of *How to Succeed in Business*...
Without Really Trying.  However, as I would prefer to procrastinate from analyzing my year-end project data, I took a minute to provide a few suggestions.

Exams
I hate exams with essays too. They take forever to grade, and it can be hard to cover all the material. If you’d like to help make my grading experience more efficient, please consider the following:

1) Write legibly in larger than this—was—written—by— a—lawyer—who—doesn’t—really—want— you—to—read—this—because—it—could—cost—the—party—he—or—she—represents—a—lot—of—money size. I once gave a student a “C” for his essay on action potentials. It wasn’t a bad essay per se. I couldn’t read it, so I couldn’t tell. I just guessed from how long it was.

2) Saying “I don’t know” when appropriate. The buckshot approach to essay writing makes for long essays and confused TAs. Alternatively, you could use the space provided to tell a joke. Efficient, no… but after reading 40 other responses of (sometimes widely) varying quality, the break will be appreciated.

3) Using blue or black pen ink only. It is a good idea to dig out the lemon chiffon when filling in the flowers on your prairie pastoral pen sketch for design class. Please use blue or black when sketching the modal model or a Gaussian distribution.

Email
I’m just as transfixed to my portable web-enabled device as you are. I know mine is less trendy than yours. This is all the grant I’m on will cover. In any case, please find the self-control to put your PDA away during the lecture so as not to feel compelled to send me “I don’t get _____” messages on the lecture while sitting in the lecture.

Also, wait a minute before sending any message, especially after 1am. A follow-up message saying “Nevermind, sorry to bug you ;-) “ when the answer comes to mind moments later is not an apology; its bugging me twice. Don’t worry, I used to do this too, but Mail Goggles 2 helped. Please wait at least 24 hours for a response from the instructor or TAs. Probably we’ve read your message 2-3 times by then and are talking about you behind your back or procrastinating. Probably I wouldn’t forward your message addressed to Dr. Suchandso to me after he/she “never got back to you”. We weren’t awake and tied to our iPhone when you sent it the first time.

Sorry for being verbose. Its part of academic training you see. I hope these suggestions are helpful, at least for one of us.

Recommended Reading
2 http://gmail-blog.blogspot.com/2008/10/new-in-labs-stop-sending-mail-you-later.html
Staff Council (SC) Notes--- March, 2010
Notes for meeting held 3/18/10

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

March 31, 2010

THIS ISSUE:

- Rep elections
- Officer nominations
- Staff survey
- Et cetera
- Constitutional matters
- Save the Date
- Notes, Open Forum with President Cohen

Representative Elections
Staff Council runs an annual elections process in late spring to elect Divisional and At-Large Representatives. Reps are elected bi-annually in alternating years. In 2010, reps are sought for At-Large representation. This means you can vote for a candidate regardless of whether they’re in your division or not. See Save the Date below for when nominations & voting will be open. The highest possible number of reps in SC at any time is 68 (34 divisional reps [two per each division]; and 34 ‘at-large’ reps [can be elected from any division]).

Officer Nominations
We submitted nominations for next year’s officer positions. The following individuals were nominated and stood up at the meeting to introduce themselves. The candidates are: For VICE CHAIR: Dolores Matthews (Tepper) and Adam Rauf (Finance), for SECRETARY (running unopposed): Cathy O’Domes (Student Life); and for TREASURER (running unopposed): Barb Price (Tepper). Ms. Price is a former SC treasurer and former Chair. Reps will choose next year’s Vice Chair at either the April or May meeting.

Staff Survey
A staff survey was conducted 5-6 years ago about awareness of and perceptions about Staff Council; about 1,800 people responded. SC will launch another (anonymous) SurveyMonkey survey soon, to gauge changes in awareness of what we do. A CMU sweatshirt will be raffled off as a prize for participating; the winner will be escorted by an SC rep to the CMU Bookstore, where they can pick out a style and size of their choice.

Et Cetera
HEALTHCARE: Guest Josh Zorich (Payroll Services) spoke for a few moments about the ethical issues concerning HealthAmerica’s denials of paying for experimental treatments of children with rare diseases, and his attempts to correspond with President Cohen to share his concerns with HealthAmerica’s relationship with CMU. Guest Barbara Smith (HR) replied in the discussion after his remarks that staff seemed to be fairly happy with their care from them. Among other remarks, I said I was concerned that the desire to cover a variety of illnesses & treatments should be balanced with an awareness that the more an employer covers, the higher everyone’s premiums will rise, and that these decisions (cutoffs for what’s covered and what’s not) should ideally be made on a rational, not emotional, basis -- and on a national level, not at an employer, individual, or insurer level. FOOD SERVICE: Dolores Matthews is the SC liaison with the CMU Dining Committee. She provided data recently collected about customer satisfaction with the new campus vendor, CulinArt. For results & raw data, Dolores is glad to take your inquiry at doloresm@. GREEN PRACTICES: Barb Kyiz and rep Julie Mull sought ideas for expanding & improving participation in recycling on campus. Pitt recycles approximately 22% of its waste whereas CMU only recycles about 14% annually. CMU performs similarly dismal compared to peer institutions, as may be seen by visiting http://www.recyclemaniacs.org/index.htm (2010 campus competition results to

Visit and bookmark http://www.cmu.edu/staff-council/ for more about Staff Council
be released 4/16). I suggested that the Green Practices Cmte. lobby PA legislators for a bottle/can redemption bill as exists in Michigan (my former state) and many other states. Bottle bills are supremely effective. I also suggested that the committee look into labeling recycling receptacles with instructions in multiple languages, so that international campus members use them more often & correctly.

Constitutional Amendment wording change
There was a first vote on a minor change in the Constitution addressing the issue of how to delineate campus units/divisions for elections purposes. The gist is to improve representation fairness, and for logistical reasons. As you’ll recall from last month, the Constitution dictates that 2 individuals be elected per division. There are about 29 divisions as delineated by HR, illustrated in the CMU org chart in the former hardcopy telephone directory, now online. However, HR recently rearranged the org chart in ways that prohibit reasonable representation. For example, a rep noted that Faculty Senate was given its own division – and has a single staff member. Therefore, the HR org chart was tweaked slightly by the elections committee and SC officers, and will be displayed on the SC website. The SC website version will be used to delineate divisions for the purposes of future elections. All reps minus 1 abstention voted yes.

Save the Date

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date &amp; Time</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Contact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parking Open Enrollment</td>
<td>April 5-23, 2010</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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Recycling competition results become available</td>
<td>April 16, 2010</td>
<td>Online</td>
<td><a href="http://www.recyclemania.org/index.htm">http://www.recyclemania.org/index.htm</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff Council Elections: Nominate A Coworker for Office</td>
<td>April 19-30, 2010</td>
<td>Online</td>
<td>Joe Imbimbo, at joci@andrew or 8-5033</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take Our Daughters &amp; Sons to Work Day (TODSW)</td>
<td>Registration begins: 4/1 Event: Thur. 4/22/10</td>
<td>Various locations on campus; registration online</td>
<td>Gloria Gruber, ggruber@andrew or 8-9685 or Kenneth Chu, kchu1@andrew or 8-4949 <strong>VOLUNTEERS NEEDED</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff Council Representative Elections for 2010-2012 term</td>
<td>May 17-21, 2010</td>
<td>Online</td>
<td>Joe Imbimbo, at joci@andrew or 8-5033</td>
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Notes, Open Forum with President Cohon (on 3/24/10)
Dr. Cohon took questions about various issues of interest to the CMU community, news largely covered in previous university communications. CMU is still in the process of trying to get money back from the Westridge fraud. Partly due to a need-blind admissions policy, students are being given more financial aid nowadays due to the poor US economy. Contrarily, the international campuses are thriving. The 10-year facilities plan, combined with recent land acquisitions along Forbes near Craig St., is still in an early conceptual phase. I stood up & asked a question about whether CMU is thinking about requesting a city zoning variance in order to build higher (more stories) in any new buildings to better address the space crunch; Dr. Cohon said the planning’s not at that stage yet. There will be raises this year; the amount is TBA. I asked if CMU has an official position for or against Mayor Ravenstahl’s desire to raise the annual EMS tax (from the current $52 to $144) currently charged to anyone with a job in the city earning over $3,000 a year. Dr. Cohon said he’s in favor of doubling ($104) or tripling ($156) the tax, to fill the city union employees pension fund hole. At the same time, Dr. Cohon acknowledged that the tax is regressive especially toward lower-paid CMU staff. (Regressor means, for example, that those earning $25 K annually and those earning $250 K pay the same amount; n.b., regressivity is also frequently cited by opponents of a national value-added tax [VAT]).