Connections

Fall 2023 COLLEGE OF LETTERS AND SCIENCE www.uwsp.edu/cols

A Reimagined Museum of Natural History

A museum's collection is valuable for the historical record it represents. Yet, it's even more valuable when its story can be shared. Staff, curators, and volunteers have been preparing over the past two years to make a home for the UW-Stevens Point Museum of Natural History in the Science Building on the main campus. When the museum shuttered in Albertson Hall due to its planned demolition, thousands of artifacts were laboriously wrapped and labeled, then placed in storage until new exhibit spaces could open.

Junior Scientist participants worked in partners to create cup towers.

Leading those efforts to reimagine the museum space is outreach specialist, Brigid Ferkett. Ferkett tapped into her experiences working in nature centers, zoos and libraries. She visited with directors of other Wisconsin museums and worked on logistical plans for the first phase in the relaunch, opening rooms along the south corridor, A wing first floor, near the Hansen Lobby.

Empty rooms once used as university classrooms have been reimagined as learning and display spaces. From late summer through the fall semester, flooring was installed, walls painted, and staff began to install shelving, and wheeled in carts and racks to host artifacts. Herpetology and Ichthyology club members set up habitats to house live animals in the museum Welcome Center.

While that progress in the physical space continues, thanks to funding approved for staff from the Student Government Association, Ferkett has hired the first museum staff to create and coordinate interactive educational opportunities for the public.

"I enjoy working with the students and staff on all the pieces that must be brought together for the relaunch. My student workers have dived right into implementing programming and I'm so proud of them," said Ferkett.

The part-time staff hosted biweekly Story Time in the Collins Classroom Center to give families a chance to connect and learn. This fall semester, staff presented the popular Junior Scientist programming on Thursday nights in a space across from the new museum. Senior Olivia Sykes, a history and social studies education major, led lesson plans on animal habitats and ways that animals partner together for survival. These early revamped programs drew over 200 participants eager to experience the museum even if it was by gathering in a temporary space.

"I love working with kids and getting to see them flourish in a different type of learning environment is very rewarding. I think the biggest highlight of working with them in the developing space is showing them all the changes being made, as they are just as excited as we are!" Sykes said.

Although the former museum's beloved dioramas remain in storage, visitors will be able to browse fossil, rock and mineral specimens and enjoy hands-on interactive exhibits. Community members will be able to access the spaces in early 2024.

Meanwhile, plans continue to design areas within the space where

Children who attended the Junior Scientist program on Nov. 9, 2023 collaborated to build a model dinosaur.

Continues on page 2

Inside

- Celebrating a Press Milestone
- Sustainable and Resilient Communities Series Plans
- Alumni Spotlight: Rachel Seevers
- New Faculty and Staff
- Message from Dean Joshua Hagen

DISCOVER YOUR PURPOSE

Continued from cover

families can create projects, read and explore learning stations together in the museum's Discovery Center. An online giving campaign launched this past Homecoming successfully raised $20,000 to help secure the materials and equipment needed for developing the Discovery Center's new interactive spaces.

Support the Museum!

You can help donate specifically in support of the Museum of Natural History as part of the Giving Tuesday initiative at uwsp.edu/givingtuesday. Your gift directly advances the work of the museum.

COLS Series Examines Challenges in Designing, Sustainable Planning for Climate Change

The ecological issues facing Wisconsin communities related to climate change resiliency will be addressed in three upcoming 2024 presentations in the College of Letters and Science Sustainable and Resilient Communities series. The community engagement series is sponsored by the Tommy G. Thompson Center on Public Leadership and presented by the Department of Geography and Geology. The College's annual community lecture series is open to the public. The series will culminate April 9, 2024 with a panel of local mayors and administrators to consider the opportunities and challenges in implementing sustainability and resilience policies locally and regionally.

Upcoming Events

- Feb. 6, 2024: Geospatial Solutions director Janet Silbernagel Balster, will bring her expertise to a presentation that touches on the challenges of successful design for sustainability and resilience.
- March 12, 2024: Great Plains Institute's Brian Ross, vice president of renewable energy, will address environmental justice considerations and ways communities are navigating fairness in clean energy policy and planning, consensus building, decarbonization, and local government implementation.

Secure your free ticket(s) through the UWSP Ticket Office.

Department of Geography and Geology Chair, GIS Instructor Doug Miskowiak presents on his watershed outreach work for the Sustainable and Resilient Communities Series on Oct. 10, 2023.

Visit www.uwsp.edu/SRC to learn more, watch the presentation on livestream or to view on demand videos.

SAVE THE DATE!

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You're Invited

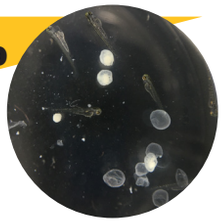
We have a story to tell! In celebration of the 40th anniversary of the Cornerstone Press, UW-Stevens Point is planning a special celebration, welcoming back past authors and staff to mark the milestone with a gala. From its beginning in 1984, our UW-Stevens Point independent student-staffed press has provided training in every facet of publishing.

Former and current directors/publishers of the press, Chancellor Thomas Gibson, and invited guest speakers will share their journeys working for and in support of the Cornerstone Press and what led to its exciting growth over the past 40 years. The April 5, 2024 event will be held in the Dreyfus University Center on campus in the Alumni Room featuring refreshments, appetizers, cash bar and a book sale. Secure your free ticket(s) through the UWSP Ticket Office. You won't want to miss the announcement of a press first—a new book award—to be announced at the gala!

LOCATION:
Dreyfus University Center Alumni Room

DATE/TIME:
April 5, 2024
6:30 p.m.- 9:00 p.m.

Grant funds WInSTEP workshop expansion



A grant award from the Science Education Partnership Award (SEPA) program will allow for the expansion of a partnership between UW-Stevens Point and UW-Milwaukee focused on providing more opportunities in science education for rural central and northern Wisconsin schools. Students in rural areas often face barriers to STEM learning.

Since 2021, Dr. Krista Slemmons and Dr. Perry Cook have hosted workshops teaching how to perform classroom-based research with an environmental health focus. The middle school module for pre-service and in-service high school teachers examines how earth worm behavior is affected by toxins. They present a module for high school students to examine normal embryonic development in a zebrafish, *shown in above image*.

SEPA's announcement of a $140,000 grant over two years for the Wisconsin Inquiry-based Scientist-Teacher Education Partnership (WInSTEP) program funds the two yearly workshops on the UWSP campus as well as for the two branch campuses. The grant allows for necessary supplies, equipment, substitute teacher pay, and the hiring of a part-time program coordinator and animal care technician.

A key to the success of the UWM SEPA program is its commitment to providing teachers with extensive support during the school year to implement the experiment modules.

College of Letters and Science Arrivals

Raquel Adams – CBB Stockroom Manager

Jane Christenson – Chemistry Instructional Specialist

Viktoriia Emelianenko - Fulbright Language Teaching Assistant, World Languages and Literatures

Brigid Ferkett – Museum Outreach Specialist

Amanda Gilman – Major Gifts Officer

Cory Haala– Assistant Professor for Public History, History and International Studies

Vadym Ianaiev – IAS for Biology Department

Freesia McKee – Assistant Professor for Poetry, English

Patrick Miller – IAS for Humanities, Philosophy and Religious Studies

Gerardo Ramos – IAS for Spanish, World Languages and Literatures

Minyo Rau – Fulbright Language Teaching Assistant, World Languages and Literatures

Stephanie Stella – IAS for Written Communication, English

Andy Thompson – IAS for CNMT

Jacob Weisbrod – Campus Support Team Specialist

Kyle Yenter – CBB Building Manager

Yui Zuge – IAS for CNMT

WINTER COMMENCEMENT - DEC. 16, 2023

Message from the Dean

Dear Friends of UW-Stevens Point's College of Letters and Science,

It is a pleasure to share our fall newsletter highlighting a sampling of good news, activities, and achievements from across the college. It is an exciting time to be on campus, with lots of positive energy and momentum this fall, including the return of the college's Community Engagement Series focusing on the theme of sustainable and resilient communities, an important upcoming milestone for Cornerstone Press, and the partial relaunch of our Museum of Natural History in its new home in the Science Building.

These examples, which highlight the impact of our students, faculty, and staff to educate and enrich our communities and the central Wisconsin region, are only a small piece of the great work happening across the college.

Thank you for all your support, and I wish you a wonderful fall!

Joshua Hagen

College of Letters and Science
University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point

Alumni Spotlight: Rachel Seevers

UWSP Graduation: 2008

Degree: B.S. Psychology: Human Services

Current Position: School Counselor
Nekoosa School District

University of Wisconsin Stevens Point
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Over the past 12 years working as the Nekoosa High School school counselor, '08 alumna Rachel Seevers is driven to provide the type of wide-ranging support her 360 students might not otherwise have.

Seevers mediates when needed in student crisis situations, helps students navigate the college and scholarship process, and celebrates college and career wins with her students. She said her staff provide incredible support helping to prioritize help for students with pressing needs.

The compassion she can show and access Seevers can give all students is a vital bridge connecting some students to resources and support outside of traditional private therapy. Growing up impoverished, she said she understands the pressures some families might have for basic needs and that access to mental health services might be out of reach.

As a UW-Stevens Point undergraduate, Seevers said she strongly connected with her psychology faculty. Dr. Jeana Council was her adviser who recommended she explore the research side of the field. That led to Seevers' work in Dr. Patrick Conley's lab and research trials, where she would later get published in an academic journal.

Seevers said she remained set on making a difference in a school environment through her undergraduate studies. She earned her master's degree in 2010 and began work as a long-term sub, remaining in touch with a cohort from grad school along with UWSP professors such as Council.

In fact, each semester Seevers visits with students in psychology courses to discuss aspects of her training and profession. To provide majors with a realistic vantage point of what working as a school counselor can offer, Seevers has supervised more than 20 interns from UW-Stevens Point in senior year field placements.

"I know how impactful it was in my own decision, it helps them grow," she said.

SAVE THE DATE!

UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM

MAY 3, 2024 | Chemistry Biology Building | 1:45- 4:00 pm

The Undergraduate Research Symposium is a highlight of our year when we get to shine the light on the inspirational, creative accomplishments of our student scholars. The day of student presentation features projects in the humanities, natural sciences, math, computing, and the social and behavioral sciences. Students showcase their research through poster and oral presentations during the annual event as a culmination of their research experience.

Students presented in a fall symposium for the School of Biology, Chemistry, and Biochemistry on Nov. 17, 2023. Many will present updated research work for the 25th Annual COLS Undergraduate Research Symposium.

PARTNERS IN DISCOVERY

Your Gift Makes a Difference!

Gifts in *any* amount will help increase research symposium involvement, provide for achievement awards and guide meaningful student work for the next decade. Thank you for your consideration!

You can partner with us, select COLS Symposium Support Fund:
give.uwsp.edu/cols-give-now

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