

CLAS *notes*

The Newsletter of the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences



Message from the Dean

As the University reflects in preparation for re-accreditation through its self-study themed “Living with Change,” our College affirms that while some things change regularly, even daily, our core values remain constant.

This issue highlights how we stay true to core values, including the ongoing excellence in teaching found in LAS as exemplified by Drs. Karen Magee-Sauer and Marilyn Manley, both of whom have recently received awards for these talents.

In addition, our professors are outstanding scholars who continue to be engaged in research that adds to our understanding, as with the ultracold plasma work of Dr. Michael Lim and his students.

Finally, we believe in service, and we’re glad to see that value demonstrated in the work of Stewart Miller ’97 as headmaster of a boarding school for boys with language-based learning issues, and in the dedication of Dr. Ieva Zake, who directs our concentration in women’s studies.

We are confident that Rowan will be re-accredited, and at the same time, we will stay true to the core values illustrated by these and other articles in this CLAS Notes. I hope you enjoy it.

Sincerely,
Jay Harper
Dean

Hot Research on a Cool Topic: Lim Studies Ultracold Plasma

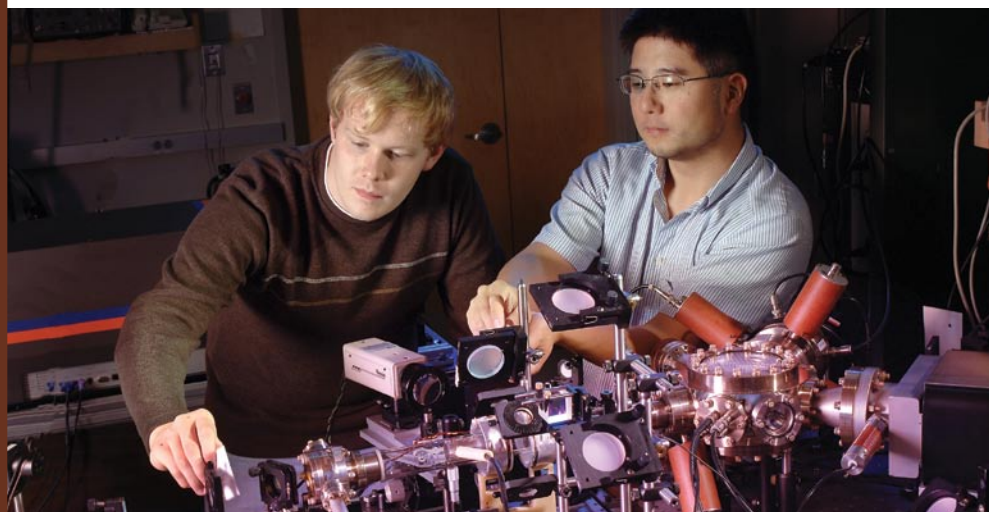
Even on sunny days, it’s always cloudy and chilly in Dr. Michael Lim’s Science Hall lab, where he and his students are using lasers to create very cold plasma clouds. Rowan undergraduates working in the lab have built a custom laser system and ultrahigh vacuum chamber to study novel plasma behavior at near absolute zero temperature.

“For the last few years, physicists have been able to make a plasma much, much colder – about 1,000 times colder – than any other laboratory plasma that came before,” said Lim, an assistant professor of physics and astronomy.

The project holds great excitement for Lucas Willis, a senior physics and math major from Bellmawr, who began working on it after his freshman year. “I’ve really seen the whole experiment come up from the beginning, and there is something incredible about being involved

in cutting edge research,” Willis said. “We have the opportunity to contribute to answering fundamental questions in physics. We’re studying ultracold plasma, a type of plasma first created in 1999.”

Jointly sponsored by the Research Corporation, the National Science Foundation and the U.S. Department of Energy, the research continues as Lim and his students study the plasma’s characteristics. “The plasma we make in the lab might behave similarly to plasmas found on neutron stars and inside gas giant planets such as Jupiter, and we will explore that possibility,” Lim said. “But our ultimate goal goes beyond the natural evolution of the plasma. We want to control the dynamics of electrons in the plasma by applying intense laser light to program their microscopic motion. We want to use this technique to discover interesting new behavior that no one has seen or thought of before.”



Lucas Willis works with Dr. Michael Lim to create ultracold plasma clouds.

Quechua in the Classroom: Manley Earns Junior Faculty Innovative Teaching Award



Dr. Marilyn Manley introduces her students to playing pan pipes as part of their studies of the Quechua language.

As a sociolinguist, Marilyn Manley recognizes that no language is inherently better than any other language.

Still, the assistant professor of Spanish in the Foreign Languages and Literatures Department has an affinity for the Quechua language. And through the creation of two new courses, Manley, a professor since 2004, has helped Rowan students appreciate the language, its culture and its history.

About 10 million descendants of the South American Incan Empire speak Quechua. And thanks to Manley's efforts, Rowan is one of only about 20 U.S. universities that teaches Quechua.

"I enjoy teaching Quechua and teaching about its culture," said Manley, whose innovative work in teaching the language recently earned her the University's Junior Faculty Innovative Teaching Award. "It's a very vibrant, complex community."

To get her students excited about Quechua, Manley goes beyond language instruction. She also teaches them traditional dances and songs, has them play pan pipes, known as zampoñas, and even instructs students in qhipu, the rope-tying communication system used by Quechua speakers during the reign of the Incan Empire. Additionally, she has hosted trips to local alpaca farms, where students learn about alpacas, widely used as domestic animals by Quechua speakers.

"One of the big motivators to learn language is culture," said Manley. "In learning the culture and the history, students learn the context of the language."

A Hispanic linguist, Manley looks to build upon her course successes, and her University-wide recognition as an innovative teacher, in the future. In the spring, she'll teach Hispanic sociolinguistics as part of her department's Special Topics Series, which she helped to create.

"I enjoy creating new opportunities for study. My work is varied. And it's always interesting and fun," she said.

Women's Studies: It's Not Just About Women Anymore

How does gender shape our lives?

That's a central question to women's studies, according to Dr. Ieva Zake, assistant professor of sociology and coordinator of Rowan's women's studies concentration.

"Women's studies developed out of the feminist movement in the 1970s," Zake said, and the Rowan program dates back to 1974. The concentration, which requires 18 credit hours chosen from 30 courses, calls for students to examine the status, perspectives and contributions of women as well as interaction between gender and other social identities.

"We want to make the concentration more diverse as to the many ways of thinking about gender."

Jose Luis Posos, a junior psychology major from West New York, N.J., is one of about 40 students taking the women's studies concentration.

"I decided to take women's studies because I am extremely committed to the issue of social justice," Posos said. "Through the courses I have taken in women's studies, I have obtained a broader understanding of gender issues and women's issues. Moreover, the concentration not only discusses women's issues but, also, other minority groups that have been oppressed and discriminated against."

A focus on diversity is one of the goals of the women's studies curriculum revision, which Zake hopes will be in place next fall. "We've looked at courses that haven't been looked at in a while to be sure they have retained gender analysis and perspective," she said. "We want to make the concentration more diverse as to the many ways of thinking about gender."



Dr. Ieva Zake discusses the Rowan women's studies concentration with her colleagues.

Lindback Award Inspires Magee-Sauer to Reach for Even Higher Heights in Her Classroom Teaching

Receiving Rowan's highest teaching award was a great honor for Karen Magee-Sauer. But accepting the Lindback Distinguished Teaching Award has also spurred her on in the classroom.

"One thing I really do care about is teaching well," Magee-Sauer said. "The award gives me a source of renewed inspiration. I'm hoping that when students look back they'll think I was a really good teacher."

The professor of physics and astronomy takes different approaches to make her course material understandable to her students, such as small groups and peer learning to help them integrate knowledge. She also encourages students to take an active role in class.

Magee-Sauer involves students in her primary research, which focuses on the composition and behavior of comets.

"Students learn best in a research-rich

environment," Magee-Sauer said. "Taking what students learn in class and giving them problems to apply it to makes it real." Her group uses data from two telescopes in Hawaii, and through her research funding by the National Science Foundation, she has traveled with her students to the site.

Her approach to teaching and working with students led physics professor Dr. Sam Lofland to nominate Magee-Sauer for the Lindback, which is given to full-time permanent faculty. "She is dedicated to ensuring that students of all levels and abilities succeed. She not only gives students the tools to excel, she motivates them to do so," Lofland said. "Students who take her classes come away with an in-depth understanding of physics and astronomy, as well as skills to help them throughout their academic careers and beyond."

Magee-Sauer said she will donate



Dr. Karen Magee-Sauer accepts the Lindback Distinguished Teaching Award during the University's annual Convocation ceremony.

part of the \$4,000 from her Lindback to liberal studies math and science students who would like to conduct science education research.

Stewart Miller '97 Makes a Difference at Greenwood

While still a senior English major at Rowan, Stewart Miller '97 could tell from his first visit that the Greenwood School in Putney, Vt., was the right fit for him. And now, a decade later, Miller is the head-master of the boarding school for 9-15-year-old boys with language-based learning disabilities.

"I grew up professionally here at Green-

Stewart Miller '97 (back row, middle) and his wife **Melanie '97** work with students at the Greenwood School in Putney, Vt.

wood," said Miller. "After my first visit, I knew that's where I wanted to start my career. I was just so blown away here by the students' strengths, their struggles, and how specialized teaching can empower them to realize their outstanding academic, social and creative potential."

Three years ago, Miller became headmaster. He recalls that he wasn't even present when his appointment

announcement came on graduation day. Instead, he was with his wife Melanie '97, also a Rowan alum. "My son was born on graduation day," he said.

While Putney is hours away from Glassboro, Miller vividly remembers English classes at his alma mater. He recalls Dr. Nathan Carb shouting Shakespeare from the top of tables and desks, and being turned on to modern poetry by Professor James Haba. "I believe the best teachers I had in my life were English professors I had at Rowan," Miller said. "They inspired me, and I also saw how much joy and satisfaction they were receiving from their jobs."

Miller still has a passion for modern poetry, although he has little time for study given his school responsibilities. But, Rowan has helped there too. "College further taught me how to manage time, how to approach long-term assignments, and to become more effective expressing myself in writing," Miller said. "These are skills I use each day at Greenwood."



Klapper Examines Experiences of Nation's Youngest Immigrants

In *Small Strangers, The Experiences of Immigrant Children in America 1880-1925*, history professor Dr. Melissa R. Klapper illustrates the crucial role immigrant children played in the shaping of America during the Progressive Era.

"The book looks at children across cultures," Klapper said. "Children became really important as people and as symbols. The success of immigrants was measured not only by their success, but also by that of their children."

Klapper, who teaches American, Jewish and women's history courses, noted that her book, which she discussed on WHYY's "Radio Times" this summer, is part of the American Childhoods series published by Ivan R. Dee Publishing. The series examines children's experiences in different times and locales.

Small Strangers began with the help of former students Jen-reen Abed '05, who compiled a bibliography on immigration, and Krystle Gnatz '05, who, after graduation, tracked down photographs and secured permission to use them in the book.

"Both the initial research and later photographic assistance were essential aids in the timely completion of *Small Strangers*," Klapper said.

Klapper already has another book in the works. While on sabbatical this semester as a Brandeis University scholar, she has started on a book about American Jewish women's role in the suffrage, birth control, and peace movements before World War II.



Dr. Melissa Klapper signs a copy of her new book during a reception in the Rowan bookstore.

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Jay Harper
Dean

Patricia Mosto Cindy Lynch
Interim Assistant Dean
Associate Dean

Barbara Baals Cicely Enright
Editor Writer

Traci Belli Craig Terry
Designer Photographer

Contact:

(856) 256-4850
(856) 256-4921 (fax)
www.rowan.edu/las

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College of Liberal Arts
& Sciences
c/o Editor – CLAS Notes
Rowan University
201 Mullica Hill Rd.
Glassboro, NJ 08028-1701



College of Liberal Arts & Sciences
201 Mullica Hill Road • Glassboro, NJ 08028



Rachel Kelly '07 is the third Rowan LAS graduate in the past two years to earn a prestigious Fulbright award. Read about her experiences teaching English to children in South Korea at thewanderingbatross.blogspot.com.

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