

News

Have You Seen This Missing Package?

The Michigan Tech AIChE Chapter is missing a package from Radio Shack, addressed to the chapter c/o Michael Via, 203 Chem Sci.

If you have seen this package, contact Alexis in the Department of Chemical Engineering at 487-3132 or aesnell@mtu.edu.

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Stream, Wysocky Earn CoSIDA Academic All-District

by Wes Frahm, director of athletic marketing and communications

Two Michigan Tech women's basketball players have been honored by the College Sports Information Directors of America. Juniors Sarah Stream (Ishpeming/Westwood) and Katie Wysocky (Whitefish Bay, Wis.) were both named to the ESPN The Magazine/CoSIDA Academic All-District IV Second Team.

The Academic All-District teams are part of CoSIDA's Academic All-America program sponsored by ESPN The Magazine. Each nominee must be a starter or key reserve and possess a 3.30 cumulative grade point average or higher. CoSIDA members vote in each district, with the all-district first team selections earning spots on the Academic All-America ballot.

Stream, with her 4.0 GPA in exercise science, averages 9.8 points and 4.5 assists per game. The 5-7 guard was selected to the Preseason All-GLIAC North Division Team and earned GLIAC Player of the Week on Jan. 26. She is just 12 points shy of 1,000 for her career.

Wysocky is a business administration major with a 3.92 GPA. She leads the team in scoring (14.5 points per game) and rebounding (9.7 per game). The 6-0 forward earned Preseason All-GLIAC recognition and GLIAC Player of the Week laurels twice (Dec. 22 and Feb. 2). She scored her 1,000th career point on Jan. 10 and moved into third on Tech's all-time rebounding chart with her 700th on Feb. 12.

Stream is the Michigan Tech women's basketball program's fourth individual to earn CoSIDA Academic All-District honors. Wysocky was a third-team selection a year ago. The others are Andrea Novak (second team in 2002-03 and first team in 2003-04) and Laurel Aamodt (second team in 1996-97).

Michigan Tech, which holds a 19-4 record and a No. 16 national ranking, will host its final two regular season home games this weekend. The opponents are Findlay Thursday, Feb. 19, and No. 5-ranked Hillsdale Saturday, Feb. 21.

Bagley Named President-Elect of Society for Industrial Microbiology

by Marcia Goodrich, senior writer

Susan T. Bagley, professor of environmental microbiology in the Department of Biological Sciences, is the new president-elect of the Society for Industrial Microbiology (SIM).

Bagley is an associate editor of SIM News and serves on the editorial board of the Journal of Industrial Microbiology and Biotechnology. She has been program chair for the society's annual meeting and has convened and presented at numerous meeting sessions.

"It's quite an honor, both for her and the department, as well as for Michigan Tech," said John Adler, chair of biological sciences. "She has become quite well known in her field, and we're very pleased that she and her work have been recognized by her colleagues."

Bagley will serve a three-year term, with the first year (2008-09) as president-elect, the second year as president (2009-10) and the third year as past-president (2010-11).

The society is a nonprofit, international association dedicated to the advancement of microbiological sciences, especially as they apply to industrial products, biotechnology, materials and processes. Founded in 1949, SIM promotes the exchange of scientific information through its meetings and publications and serves as liaison among the specialized fields of microbiology. Membership is extended to all scientists and companies in the general field of microbiology. The society has approximately 1,500 members worldwide.

Tech Secures Research Support

Shalini Suryanarayana, executive director of Educational Opportunity, brings good news from a recent meeting of the Michigan Space Grant Consortium (MSGC) in Ann Arbor.

She reports that Tech did a first-rate job in securing faculty research grants and graduate and undergraduate student fellowships.

Tech faculty received eight of 11 awards; students received 13 of 33 awards--all in all, nearly \$100,000, more than any other university in Michigan.

Suryanarayana is Michigan Tech's representative on the MSGC, which fosters awareness of, education in, and research on space-related science and technology in Michigan. The consortium is an initiative of NASA.

Four Michigan Tech Hockey Players Named WCHA Scholar-Athletes

by Ian Marks, assistant director of athletic communications

Four players on the Michigan Tech hockey team have been named WCHA Scholar-Athletes for 2009. Three of the selections, senior Derek Kitti, senior Mike VanWagner and junior Eli Vlasisavljevich, were named to the team for the second time. Sophomore Bennett Royer was also selected to the team for the first time.

"This is a great honor for these student-athletes. They work extremely hard both on the ice and in the classroom," said athletic director Suzanne Sanregret. "The four players honored also speaks to the emphasis that both the Athletic Department and the University place on academics at Michigan Tech."

To earn recognition as a WCHA Scholar-Athlete, a conference-member student-athlete must have completed at least one year of residency at their present institution prior to the current academic year and must also have a grade point average of at least 3.50 for the previous two semesters, or the student-athlete must maintain an overall GPA of 3.50 for all terms at the institution.

Entertainment and Enrichment

Student Leadership Society Sponsors Three Speakers Next Week

The Michigan Tech Circle of Omicron Delta Kappa will host Leadership Week from Monday, Feb. 23, through Friday, Feb. 27, highlighted by three speakers.

Speakers come from both within and outside of the Michigan Tech community and will speak on aspects of and lessons learned in leadership.

On Tuesday, Feb. 24, Michigan Tech alumnus and Lt. Col. Otha Thornton will speak on servant leadership at 6:30 p.m. in the Memorial Union Ballroom.

Thornton, formerly a leader of Tech's Army ROTC program, earned a master's degree in rhetoric and technical communication from the University in 2001.

He was commissioned in 1990 and serves as the White House Communications Agency director of human resources and presidential communications officer.

His many awards and decorations include two from Tech: the 2003 Michigan Tech Outstanding Young Alumni Award and the 2001 Michigan Tech Parting of the Water Faculty Service Award.

On Wednesday, Feb. 25, Robert E. Mark will speak at 6 p.m. in the Memorial Union Ballroom. His talk is titled "You Can't Send a Duck to Eagle School and Other Simple Truths of Leadership." Mark is a professor of practice in marketing and entrepreneurship in the School of Business and Economics. He has an entrepreneurial background as well as military service as an officer.

On Thursday, Feb. 26, Terry Smythe will speak at 2 p.m. in the Memorial Union Ballroom about leadership in a team and team dynamics.

Smythe is the founder and volunteer coach of the Michigan Tech Rowing Club. An accomplished rower, she has competed worldwide, including at two Olympic Trials. In 2006, she won five gold medals from the Masters World Rowing Championships.

Smythe is the fitness director for Aspirus Keweenaw and has collaborated on several Senior Design projects in the biomedical engineering department.

She has received numerous awards locally and nationally for her work in promoting fitness and rowing in the community, including membership in the Michigan Governor's Council on Physical Fitness, Health and Sports.

For more information about Leadership Week, contact Roxane Gay, publicity chair, Omicron Delta Kappa, at 487-3275 or rgay@mtu.edu.

African Cultural Week Events Feb. 23-26

A series of events commemorating African Cultural Week is scheduled for next week. All presentations are free and open to the public.

"Celebrating Africa: A Cross-Continental Tour of Major African Celebrations"

by Linda Manenkeu and Lota Ilogu

Monday, Feb. 23

noon-1 p.m.

Memorial Union Alumni Lounge A

"Tales from Lesotho: An Account of a Former Peace Corps Volunteer"

by Professor Blair Orr (SFRES)

Tuesday, Feb. 24

noon-1 p.m.

Memorial Union Alumni Lounge A

"Taking Inventory: Africa's Mineral and Agricultural Resources and Their Impact in Today's Global Economy"

by Haki Kiema

Wednesday, Feb. 25

noon-1 p.m.

Memorial Union Ballroom B1

"Beats of Africa: African Drumming and Dance Lessons"

by Nana Manteaw and Kingsley Iduma

Thursday, Feb. 26

6:30-8 p.m.

Memorial Union Ballroom B1 and B2

Seminars and Workshops

Exercise Science Candidate to Give Presentation Monday

The Department of Exercise Science, Health and Physical Education will host a one-hour seminar, "Motor Skill Acquisition in Young Children and Older Adults," Monday, Feb. 23, at 2 p.m. in Walker 108. Presenter Jin Bo, postdoctoral fellow in psychology/kinesiology at the University of Michigan, is a candidate for a faculty position in Exercise Science.

RSI Seminar Monday

Nicole Riemer, of the University of Illinois, will present "Effect of Aerosol Mixing State on Optical and CCN Activation Properties in an Evolving Urban Plume" on Monday, Feb. 23, at 4 p.m. in M & M U113 as part of the Remote Sensing Institute

Seminar Series. For an abstract, visit www.phy.mtu.edu/~cantrell/RSIseminar.html .

Seminar Today on Globalizing Engineering

Sharnnia Artis, human factors engineer at Aptima Inc., will give a seminar today, Friday, Feb. 20, 3-4 p.m. in MEEM 111, "Self-Globalization: Strategies in Engineering Education, Research and Practice."

This presentation will focus on successful methods and strategies used to globalize engineering research, education and practice. Artis received a bachelor's, a master's and a doctorate in industrial systems engineering from Virginia Tech.

Regular Features

Teaching at Tech: What About Heterogeneous Students?

by William Kennedy, director, Center for Teaching, Learning and Faculty Development

In his recent visit to Michigan Tech, U of M professor of complex systems Scott Page argued that diverse teams of problem solvers of varying abilities are most often likely to outperform homogeneous teams of experts.* Why? 1) People from different backgrounds encode reality differently. 2) Differential encoding leads to the creation of different predictive models. 3) Different predictive models manifest themselves in a wide variety of problem-solving toolsets. 4) The application of a variety of toolsets to a given problem lessens the likelihood and frequency of the group getting locked up at the same point in the problem-solving process. Voila! More and better solutions from diverse teams.

As I listened to Professor Page, my mind focused on the inevitable clash between what I call the "tyranny of the expert" against what James Surowiecki calls the "wisdom of the crowd."** Surowiecki differentiates between wise crowds and unwise crowds. The attributes of wise crowds include 1) diversity of opinion, 2) freedom to think independently, 3) idiosyncratic encoding based on experience and 4) an ability to turn private opinions into group decisions.

Factors that would compromise the wisdom of the crowd include 1) forced homogeneity (say, through schooling), 2) centralization, 3) inability to interact (say, through technologically enabled isolationism), 4) pressure for conformity (say through mass media) and 5) excessive emotional fervor (say, through delayed maturation).

Ever pondering the implications of everything that I experience in terms of its impact on teaching and learning, I wondered, "If diverse teams make better problem solvers, wouldn't diverse classrooms yield richer learning experiences?" U of M argued "yes" all the way to the Supreme Court. On Nov. 7, 2006, 58 percent of those who voted on Proposal 2--the Michigan Civil Rights Initiative--said "no." Michigan's universities were told that they couldn't use preferential admissions techniques to compose student bodies that would reflect the ethnic, racial or gender diversity of the populations that they serve. Michigan voters chose the benefits of test scores and high GPAs over the benefits of diverse life experiences. Admissions should be determined solely on the basis of ability, they said; ability as determined by SAT/ACT and high school GPA.

What clashed in my head was Page's suggestion that teams of bright, diverse people outperform teams of bright, homogenous people. I literally hate the word "bright." It's one of those snooty code words that suggest the speaker is in some self-appointed position to judge another's mental worth based on some presumably obvious behavioral characteristics. Page argues that "once you get to a certain threshold," standardized test scores don't tell you much. My argument is that what it takes to get to that "certain threshold" probably tells you a great deal about the life experience and opportunities enjoyed by the test taker, and not much else. After all, the number one predictor of ACT and SAT scores is father's income. Look for yourself! Can we learn anything from people who we do not routinely deem as bright? I wonder, for example, if we could learn anything from so-called indigenous people around the world. I wonder if innovation and creativity are truly within the exclusive realm of those who've been processed and certified as "the brights" through some mass education process. Perhaps, it's quite the opposite. It can't be both.

*"The Difference," Princeton University Press, 2007

**"The Wisdom of the Crowds," Random House, 2004