

# Tech Topics

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Michigan Tech's Faculty-Staff Newsletter

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## Community College Days April 11–12: Attracting Transfer Students to MTU

Michigan Tech faculty and staff interested in recruiting community college graduates for MTU degree programs are welcome to attend Community College Day talks on Wednesday–Thursday, April 11–12.

In addition to MTU representatives, officials from the following five regional community colleges will be attending: Delta College, Gogebic Community College, Bay Mills College, Bay College, and Northwestern Michigan College.

"This is a chance for faculty and staff to meet representatives from community colleges, strengthen partnerships, and explore ways to increase the number of underrepresented students who transfer here from two-year programs," said **Madeline Mercado Voelker**, coordinator, Latino/Hispanic outreach.

Betty Jones, the vice president of instruction and learning services at Delta College, will give a talk, "The New Landscape of Opportunities for Partnerships between Community Colleges and Universities," on Wednesday from 2:15 to 3:00 p.m. at the Super 8 Motel.

Pam Martell, a consultant with the Michigan College/University Partnership Program and the King-Chavez-Parks Initiative, will join Voelker in giving a talk from 4:15 to 5:00 p.m. at the Super 8.

On Thursday, Martha McLeod, president and vocational education director at Bay Mills College, will discuss "Tribal Colleges—Their Concept and Future," from 1:00 to 2:00 p.m. in Memorial Union Ballroom A. She will be followed by Joyce Seals-Former, an education analyst for the King-Chavez-Parks Initiative, who will present "Community Colleges: Builders of a Strong Foundation."

For more information, contact Voelker at 487-2920 or e-mail [mmvoelker@mtu.edu](mailto:mmvoelker@mtu.edu).

Community College Day is sponsored by the Michigan College/University Partnership Program, the King-Chavez-Parks Initiative, and the Department of Career Development. It is hosted by the Outreach and Multiethnic Programs in Educational Opportunity.

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*The first and great commandment is,  
Don't let them scare you.*

—ELMER DAVIS

## April Is Enrollment Month for Sick Leave Pool

April is open enrollment month for the Voluntary Sick Leave Pool (VSLP).

The Voluntary Sick Leave Pool was formed to help alleviate some of the hardships employees face when they are unable to work because of a catastrophic illness or injury to themselves or to a qualified immediate family member.

To participate, eligible employees donate three days of accrued sick leave to the pool. Then, if you face a major illness or injury, you may apply to "withdraw" sick days from the pool, up to 100 days. Since the pool was formed in 1993, participants have only had to make one donation of three days to keep the pool in the black. Employees who are eligible to participate in the pool and who aren't already members have been sent VSLP

information via campus mail.

Twenty-six employees with cancer, heart attacks, back injuries, severe accidents, and major surgeries have been helped since the sick leave pool was formed. They have received a total of 1,891 days off to cope with their illnesses and injuries.

Currently, there are 1,541 sick days banked in the VSLP program.

"Everyone who has donated should be very proud because you have helped a Tech community member in need," Assistant Director for Benefits **Ingrid Cheney** (Human Resources) said.

If you have any questions about the VSLP, call the Benefits Office at 487-2517 or e-mail [mawilcox@mtu.edu](mailto:mawilcox@mtu.edu) or [iecheney@mtu.edu](mailto:iecheney@mtu.edu).

## Nominate Excellent Employees on the Web

Nominations for the 2001 Employee Excellence Award are now being accepted. Forms are available on the Staff Council Web site, [http://www.admin.mtu.edu/staff\\_council/nomination](http://www.admin.mtu.edu/staff_council/nomination)

Using the Web, you can either submit a nomination electronically or you can print out a copy of the form, complete it, and return it through campus mail to Bev Auel, Educational Opportunity, by Monday, May 7. Nominations received after May 7 will not be considered. You may also receive a nomination form via campus mail; contact Bev Auel at 487-3539.

The Employee Excellence Award recognizes outstanding ability, performance, and service among the staff members of Michigan Tech. The University recognizes three employees each year, nominated and selected by their peers, for their contributions to the University's educational, research, and public missions.

The Selection Committee will choose three individuals, one from each of these groups: Administrative/Professional, Clerical/Secretarial/Non-Exempt Clerical, and Crafts/Food Service/Technical/Maintenance

Each winner will receive a \$1,500 cash award and a framed certificate. Nominees must be regular full-time or part-time employees of Michigan Tech and cannot have won the Employee Excellence Award within the last five years. Self-nominations will not be considered.

If you have any questions, please contact Bev Auel (487-3539 or [blauel@mtu.edu](mailto:blauel@mtu.edu)) or Patti Myllyoja (487-2400 or [pamyllyo@mtu.edu](mailto:pamyllyo@mtu.edu)).

## Dean of Engineering Performance Review Committee Named

The members of the Dean of Engineering Performance Review Committee have been named. The committee plans to survey faculty and staff by the end of spring semester.

Professor **Martha Sloan** (Electrical and Computer Engineering) is the committee chair, with Associate Professor **Madhukar Vable** (ME-EM) serving as associate chair. Other department representatives are Professor **Sue Beske-Diehl** (Geological Engineering and Sciences), Assistant Professor **William Cooke** (Biomedical Engineering), Assistant Professor **Richard Gertsch** (Mining and Materials Processing Engineering), Lecturer **Brett Hamlin** (Engineering Fundamentals), Assistant Professor **David Miller** (Chemical Engineering), Director **Terry McNinch** (LTAP), Professor **Karl Rundman** (Materials Science and Engineering), and Assistant Professor **Thomas Van Dam** (Civil and Environmental Engineering). Other members and their nominating organizations are Professor **John Williams** (Chemistry), University Senate; Director of Administration **Paula Zenner** (ME-EM), Staff Council; graduate student **Geoffrey Roelant**, Graduate Student Council; and undergraduate **Karyn Dibb**, Undergraduate Student Government.

## FIRST Robotics Team Goes to Nationals

Submitted by the News Bureau

The FIRST Robotics Team of Michigan Tech returned from the Great Lakes Regional competition with trophy in tow. The special judges award entitled "Passing on the FIRST Torch" was given to the team in recognition of their efforts to involve local high schools in the program and for their elementary and middle school outreach programs.

The MTU/CCISD (Copper Country Intermediate School District) team achieved an 18th out of 63 finish. Competitors had to place 12-inch and 30-inch balls inside and on top of a seven-foot goal, and could earn extra points by completing additional maneuvers. The team of four high school students and five MTU students plans to attend the national competition, which will be held at the EPCOT Center in Orlando, Florida.

The team is supported by the Office of Student Activities and the Parents' Fund of the Michigan Tech Fund.

## Geo Seminars April 5-6

The Department of Geological Engineering and Sciences is hosting the following two seminars as part of its 2000-01 Seminar Series.

Don Herron of BP/Amoco will present "Interpretation of Reflection Seismic Data from the Gulf of Mexico," from 3:00 to 5:00 p.m. on Thursday, April 5, in Dow 642. He will discuss common problems in interpretation of reflection seismic data as conducted in the oil and gas industry, illustrated with seismic data from the Gulf of Mexico. Herron's visit is sponsored by Michigan Tech and the AAPG Visting Geologist Program. Anyone interested in meeting Herron may contact Charles Young at 487-2072 or [ctyoung@mtu.edu](mailto:ctyoung@mtu.edu).

Richard J. Blakely of the US Geological Survey in Menlo Park, California, will present "Location, Structure, and Seismicity of the Seattle Fault Zone, Washington" on Friday, April 6, at 4:00 p.m. in Dow 642.

# MichiganTech

Bill Curnow, executive director, University Relations  
Marcia Goodrich, *Tech Topics* editor  
*Tech Topics* Web site: [www.mtu.edu/level3/ttopics.html](http://www.mtu.edu/level3/ttopics.html)

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- By e-mail to [ttopics@mtu.edu](mailto:ttopics@mtu.edu)
- By campus mail, send typed copies to *Tech Topics*, University Relations.

Each week, the deadline for submitting information is **Friday at 5:00 p.m.** for publication the following Friday.

## WebCT at MTU

Center for Teaching, Learning, and Faculty Development



By William Kennedy, director

For the longest time, the Rosetta stone for proponents of the use of computer-based instructional technology has been evidence that it actually improves program quality. There has been little doubt that distance delivery methods, often enabled by such technologies, have extended the reach of higher education into the workplace and made higher education available to new student populations. But finding some tangible benefit that goes beyond that achieved in the classroom has been a rather elusive endeavor.

Last week, a panel of MTU instructors shared their experiences in using WebCT at a luncheon of more than fifty faculty and staff. I was surprised to hear the consistent theme emerging from these panelists that computer-based instructional technologies were letting them connect more frequently, albeit asynchronously, with more of their students. One instructor commented, "I'm now available to my students twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week as far as they are concerned. They are quite shocked when they pose a question to me on Saturday, and I happen to have responded by the next time they log in. They love it, and I love being able to help them, too."

More than one instructor described being at home in the evenings or on the weekends and fielding student questions and giving feedback using WebCT. A math professor uses a wireless networking arrangement that allows her to monitor her WebCT account while doing other tasks, working, or relaxing anywhere around the house or yard. Others talked about logging into their MyWebCT Web page while attending professional meet-

ings and exchanging ideas with their students or pointing them to some relevant information on the Web. Another instructor said that her students have come to depend on her being there to help them along if they get stuck on a problem or if they need some feedback on some of their work. Most said that checking their WebCT account is as easy as checking their own e-mail. One said that she doesn't consider checking e-mail or WebCT a great burden. In fact, she said, it's something she routinely does in between more intensive work periods to take a break.

One instructor noted that she regularly uses a WebCT function that allows students to offer anonymous feedback about the course or other matters. She said several students have given her feedback that has been very helpful in refining her class to meet her goals and the students' needs.

Although the panel described their experiences with several WebCT applications, by far the most positive benefit reported by the group was that this technology was enabling them to get in touch with more of their students as individuals, which improved the classroom experience, as well. Go figure!

The panel suggested that new users ease into using WebCT slowly, using only the tools that will provide the maximum benefit for the effort, and then gradually integrating other tools into the course. They also encouraged instructors to monitor student responses to the technologies. For example, many found that transferring large amounts of material from paper copies onto the Web can be very time consuming, with little benefit to the students.

The session was called WebCT on Trial. We concluded that the jury may still be out, but the evidence for the benefits of using these technologies was quickly mounting.

## Faculty Invited: Business News Database Workshop

The J. Robert Van Pelt Library invites faculty to a free introduction to ABI/Inform Global on Tuesday, April 10, from 2:05 to 2:55 p.m., and again on April 11 from 10:05 to 10:55 a.m. The sessions will take place in Room B-002 on the ground floor of the library.

The ABI/Inform Global database, offered through the JRVP Library's Web page, provides citations and articles on business and industry topics from magazines, journals, and newspapers. Faculty will be able to evaluate how this database might be integrated into their teaching and research.

To register, call 487-2507 or e-mail [dbetzotte@mtu.edu](mailto:dbetzotte@mtu.edu) by noon April 10.

## New Staff

William Mitchell has joined the Facilities Management staff as supervisor of building operations. He was previously employed by the Air Force Base Conversion Agency at K. I. Sawyer AFB and has a BS in Mechanical Engineering from Michigan Tech. Mitchell's wife's name is Diane, he has two children, Bill and Anne, and lives in Hancock. He enjoys golf, tennis, and bowling.

## Chemistry Seminar April 10

Thomas P. West of the South Dakota State University Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry will present a seminar, "Production of the Biopolymer Pullulan," on Tuesday, April 10, from 1:00 to 2:00 p.m. in Chemical Science and Engineering 102.

## Free Film Fest Features

### Fancy Footwork

Submitted by University Cultural Enrichment

This year's Memorial Union Board Tech Arts Festival is built around dance, and so are its three free movies—two old favorites featuring disco, tap, and a little ballet; and one contemporary Japanese feature about a shy accountant's infatuation with ballroom dancing. All are lighthearted and thoroughly entertaining. Movies are free and open to MTU students, faculty, staff, and their guests.

### Saturday Night Fever

Tuesday, April 17, 8:00 p.m., Fisher 135

*Saturday Night Fever* (1977) was Gene Siskel's favorite movie, and he watched it at least seventeen times. This was the movie that rocketed John Travolta to stardom with his brilliant creation of the character Tony Manero. This cocky, disco-loving, young punk with aspirations to escape to the big city, Manhattan, forgets all his problems on the dance floor. All decked out in his classic white disco suit, with the Bee Gees on the soundtrack, Tony is the king of the dance floor. The young Travolta preening in front of his mirror with his hair carefully styled, zipping up his disco pants, is an image that fans have carried with them for two decades.

### An American in Paris

Thursday, April 19, 8:00 p.m., Fisher 135

In 1951, *An American in Paris* won Oscars for Best Picture and in all the major technical categories. Starring the great singer and dancer Gene Kelly and Leslie Caron in a romantic love story, the movie has terrific production numbers set in Paris. It's particularly famous for an eighteen-minute dance sequence at the end of the movie, which won one of the Oscars.

### Shall We Dance

Tuesday, April 24, 8:00 p.m., Fisher 135

*Shall We Dance* is a Japanese movie about a shy accountant who becomes infatuated with ballroom dancing and signs up for lessons to escape the monotony of his life. In a country where, according to the opening titles of the movie, couples don't go out hand in hand or say "I love you," it is a shocking breach of etiquette for the conventional Shohei Sugiyama to learn the fundamentals of the waltz and the foxtrot. "Japan is still a Victorian society," says Roger Ebert. "Repression, guilt, and secrecy are splendid aphrodisiacs." When Shohei comes home, his wife smells unfamiliar perfume on him, and his daughter catches him rehearsing late at night. They both wonder if he is having an affair. Shohei is slowly introduced to ballroom dancing competitions hugely popular in Europe and just catching on in Japan. The sequences at the crowded dance studio, the off-beat characters, and Shohei's instructor make this a very entertaining movie.

## Chaos and Comedy April 7 at the Rozsa

Submitted by University Cultural Enrichment

They're smart, funny, innovative, and totally original, and they spread chaos and consternation wherever they can. They are the Upright Citizens Brigade (UCB) of Comedy Central. Matt Besser, Matt Walsh, Amy Poehler, and Ian Roberts will be bringing their special brand of humor to the Rozsa Center on Saturday, April 7, at 8:00 p.m., courtesy of the Student Entertainment Board. Tickets are available from Rozsa Center Ticketing Services (487-3200; Monday–Friday, 8:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.; Saturday, noon–5:00 p.m.) and on line at <http://www.tickets.mtu.edu>.

UCB premiered over two years ago with the highest-rated debut of any original Comedy Central series ever. They are, of course, anything but upright. A self-styled underground organization with unlimited resources and no government ties, they manipulate the world. From their inner sanctum deep beneath the Earth's surface, they monitor their progress by way of a global network of surveillance cameras. Highly efficient subversives, they are a self-styled secret government, a think tank that investigates extraordinary conspiracy theories. They are dedicated to "undermining the status quo through the proliferation of chaos."

Their style of sketch comedy is simple. They take ordinary circumstances and complicate them, adding twists and turns that at first seem believable, and then later, after

many levels of added craziness, seem totally bizarre and hilarious. Unlike *Saturday Night Live* and other TV sketch comedy shows with a string of unrelated sketches, UCB's sketches flow seamlessly into one another, with clever and unexpected connections that build to a hysterical conclusion. The plot lines are sometimes offensive and sometimes politically incorrect, but always funny. Members of the group are frequently not on stage, but cozily tucked in amongst the audience, heckling, interrupting, and generally keeping the audience on its toes and helpless with laughter.

The four actors are very talented writers and performers who met at Second City in Chicago where UCB began. They had already achieved success with such critically acclaimed shows as *Virtual Reality*, *Conference on the Future of Happiness*, and *Thunderball*. In 1996 they moved to New York, where they mounted several new shows, including *Punch Your Friend in the Face*, *Big Dirty Hands*, and *Saigon Suicide Squad*. Although they plan to stay in television, they are dedicated to keeping alive the Del Close improvisational technique called "Harold" that they learned at Improv Olympic Theatre, where all four were students. Del Close was a guiding force at Second City, the training ground for many of today's top stars.

For more information about the UCB, visit their Web site at [www.uprightcitizens.org](http://www.uprightcitizens.org).

## Master Class April 29 with Parsons Dance Company

Submitted by University Cultural Enrichment

Attention area dancers! Dance is the theme running through this year's Tech Arts Festival, which includes a master class offered by the Parsons Dance Company. One of America's leading contemporary dance companies, Parsons is acclaimed internationally.

Don't miss a great opportunity to dance alongside and learn from some of the best dancers in the country. The Parsons Dance Company, will be visiting Michigan Tech on Sunday, April 29, and will perform at 7:00 p.m. at the Rozsa Center. The master class is scheduled for 2:15 p.m. in the MTU Student Development Complex Dance Room. Open to all area dancers over the age of 12, the cost is \$7 for Michigan Tech students and \$10 for the general public. Pre-registration is required. Parents or guardians of non-Michigan Tech students are required to sign a release. Interested dancers should call Rozsa Center Ticketing Services at 487-3200 to reserve a place in the class or to purchase tickets for the evening performance. For information about the class, call 487-2844.

## MTU Notables

Several members of the School of Technology were recognized by the Michigan Society of Professional Surveyors at its annual meeting, held in February in Lansing. Professors emeriti **Charles Hein** and **Walter Anderson** received the Ralph Moor Berry Award, which honors individuals who have been instrumental in surveying education. Hein, who retired in 1995 and lives in Calumet, was recognized for his efforts to establish the surveying curriculum at MTU. Anderson, who was director of the School from 1984 to 1988, was honored for his role as a member of the Board of Licensure when MTU's BS in Surveying degree was established.

In addition, Associate Professor **Jerry Taylor** was recognized for his efforts to deliver the surveying curriculum via distance education.

A paper coauthored by Assistant Professor **Brent Lekvin** (SBE) received the Best Paper Award in the derivatives category at the Midwest Finance Association meeting held March 29 in Cleveland, Ohio. The paper, "Binomial Option Pricing Biases and Inconsistent Implied Volatilities," was coauthored by Ashish Tiwari of the University of Iowa Department of Finance.

# Students Prepare for Concrete Canoe Competition

by Rachel Pobocik

A team of twenty-nine Michigan Tech civil engineering students are preparing for the annual Concrete Canoe Competition.

The competition is part of the ASCE (American Society of Civil Engineers) 2001 Regional Conference, which will be held at Michigan Tech April 5–7. The MTU team will face eight other teams from Michigan, Ohio, and Ontario.

The challenge is to build and race a canoe made of concrete.

Last year, Tech's team came in second in the regionals. This year, they hope to make it to the national competition.

"I think our chances are pretty good," said **Matt Bugbee**, a student involved in the project. "We have an experienced team. Many of us have been involved in the competition for the past several years."

MTU's canoe, named *Aurora*, is made of concrete, carbon fiber, and fiberglass.

"This year's canoe is probably the best technically we've had," Bugbee said. "We are literally doing things that aren't being done in industry yet."

In addition to striving for a lightweight canoe, the team also wanted to make the design more maneuverable than in past years.

## Little Huskies Seeking Toys, Time

The Michigan Tech Child Care Center, also known as "Little Huskies," now cares for thirty-two babies, toddlers, and preschoolers of Michigan Tech parents. All these kids hope you can help them by donating some items on their wish list.

- Teachers would love more volunteers to come play and read (or share special talents) with the kids in the mornings and afternoons.
- Preschoolers would like a comfortable, homey couch for their quiet area where they read books and work on puzzles.
- Toddlers would like another full-size, clean mattress for jumping and laughing.
- Preschoolers and toddlers would love funny clothes and silly costumes for playing dress-up.
- All the kids need extra clothes to change into on messy days.
- Toddlers and preschoolers need child-friendly, regular-size kitchen utensils such as pots and pans.
- All the kids would love more books and toys, both for indoors and outdoors.

Little Huskies is located in the Good Shepard Church at 1100 College Avenue in Houghton. Please bring donations to the center or call Molly Arias at 483-2101 for more information.

"We wanted to improve our performance in the race this year," Bugbee said. "So we have to make the canoe easier to maneuver and worked on our rowing."

Since finding open water in Houghton in the winter can be difficult, the team practices weekly in the pool at the Student Development Complex.

In addition to the race, the teams are judged on a technical presentation, a written report, and a display for their canoes. "I really can't express how much I've learned from working with this project," said Bugbee, "especially skills they don't teach in classes, like people and business skills."

## Proposals in Progress

Researchers, their proposals, and their potential sponsors are

- **Walter Milligan** and **Elias Aifantis** (CAMMP), "Mechanical Behavior of Bulk Nanostructure Metals," Georgia Tech
- **John van de Lindt** (Civil and Environmental Engineering), "Investigation of the Adequacy of Current Bridge Design Loads in the State of Michigan," MDOT
- **Patricia Heiden** (Chemistry) and **Laurent Matuana** (SFWP), "A New Method for Improving Moisture Resistance and Toughness of Urea-Formaldehyde Adhesive," USDA
- **John Crittenden** and **David Hand** (Civil and Environmental Engineering), "Computer Generation of Pathway for Complex Reaction System in Environmental Engineering," NSF

## POSITIONS AVAILABLE AT MICHIGAN TECH

Job descriptions will be available at 1:00 p.m. on Friday, or by e-mail at <JOBS@MTU.EDU>.

For a complete listing of available jobs, visit <http://www.admin.mtu.edu/hro/postings/index.shtml>

The following positions will be posted Friday, April 6, 2001, at 1:00 p.m. through noon, Friday, April 13, 2001, in the Human Resources Office.

- Administrative Coordinator/Learning Specialist—Humanities (Regular, full-time, nine-month position)
- Residence Hall Coordinator—Office of Residence Life (Regular, full-time, ten-month, live-in position)
- Office Assistant N5—Office of Student Records and Registration (UAW internal and external posting)
- Custodian—Residential Services Facilities (AFSCME internal and external posting; regular, part-time position)
- Computer Support Specialist—Civil and Environmental Engineering

University employees are reminded to apply in writing prior to noon, Friday, April 13, 2001, to be considered as internal candidates for bargaining unit positions only. Applicants from the recall pool will be given first consideration for non-bargaining-unit positions only. Vacancy announcements are normally posted every Friday at 1:00 p.m. in the Human Resources Office. Complete job descriptions are available in the Human Resources Office or by calling 487-2280. More information regarding employment opportunities is available by calling the Job Line at 487-2895. Michigan Technological University is an equal opportunity educational institution/equal opportunity employer.



## April

### Fair Housing Month

- 5 Thursday**  
**10:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.**—Friends of the Library Book Sale—Memorial Union Ballroom  
**1:00 p.m.**—Barry Solomon, "Electric Power Deregulation and the Crisis in California"—EERC 214  
**3:00 p.m.**—Don Herron, "Interpretation of Reflection Seismic Data from the Gulf of Mexico"—Dow 642
- 6 Friday**  
**4:00 p.m.**—Richard Blakely, "Location, Structure, and Seismicity of the Seattle Fault Zone, Washington"—Dow 642
- 7 Saturday**  
**8:00 p.m.**—Upright Citizens Brigade—Rozsa Center
- 10 Tuesday**  
**1:00 p.m.**—Thomas West, "Production of the Biopolymer Pullulan"—Chem Sci 102
- 17 Tuesday**  
**8:00 p.m.**—Free Art Fest Film: *Saturday Night Fever*—Fisher 135
- 18 Wednesday**  
**all day**—Undergraduate Research Exposition
- 19 Thursday**  
**8:00 p.m.**—Free Art Fest Film: *An American in Paris*—Fisher 135
- 24 Tuesday**  
**8:00 p.m.**—Free Art Fest Film: *Shall We Dance*—Fisher 135