Marshall to Host WebCT Conference

A conference which will focus on the use of WebCT, a long distance software learning program, will be hosted by Marshall University on April 3-4 on the South Charleston campus. Approximately 100 people are expected to attend the sessions which will feature a day of presentations followed by a day of hands-on training.

The conference, which is being co-sponsored by WebCT, will bring together professionals in the field of distance learning in addition to WebCT officials who will conduct training sessions.

After two years of using WebCT in classes, Dr. Rudy Pauley and Dr. Michael Cunningham, faculty members in the Graduate School of Education and Professional Development, are enthusiastic users of the software package, which, they say, has allowed Marshall to be on the cutting edge of distance education. Pauley, who is assistant professor of Elementary and Secondary Education, was in fact, featured last fall in a full page WebCT advertisement in the Chronicle of Higher Education. The ad also appeared in several other publications.

In fact, Cunningham says, WVNET, the state-wide computer network, has been so impressed with the results of WebCT courses, it recently ordered site licenses for all higher education institutions in West Virginia. One of the objectives of the conference, he says, is to provide training for the personnel at those institutions who are new to using the software.

Currently Marshall is offering 500 courses through WebCT with 150 courses offered by the Graduate College. That adds up to 9,700 students university-wide with over 2,000 of these students engaged in graduate work, Pauley says.

But it didn’t start out that way, Pauley and Cunningham say. Initially they were skeptical, expecting yet another cumbersome software package, difficult to use and not particularly suited to the needs of the part-time professional students who make up the majority of Graduate College students. They had tried other packages which promised much but didn’t deliver. Because Marshall was an early signer with the new company, the pair did a lot of trial and error work, working without the aid of a manual before fielding a single class in the spring of 1998.

Even then, they still remained skeptical. “But the students loved it,” Cunningham said “They told us overwhelmingly they wanted to do more courses this way so that was the beginning.”

WebCT was started in 1996 by two faculty members at the University of British Columbia who were searching for an easy-to-use and more versatile way of delivering courses via the Internet. Popular with users from the beginning, it now has six million users worldwide. Last June the two sold their company to Universal Learning Technologies, which has now officially assumed the WebCT company name. According to Pauley and Cunningham, Marshall had the foresight to get in on the

(continued on page 4)

Executives in Residence to Lecture

The Elizabeth McDowell Lewis College of Business will showcase its three Executives-in-Residence as they give presentations March 28-30 in Corbly Hall Room 105.

Dr. Angus E. Peyton, a partner in the law firm of Brown & Peyton in Charleston; Earl Ray Tomlin, president of the West Virginia State Senate; and Charles M. White, Global Chief Information Officer of KPMG, will speak to students about their businesses and how their careers have developed successfully.

“This program serves as a motivator for students,” Dr. Robert Alexander, MU distinguished professor of management, said. “When students are able to see how successful some graduates are, they realize they can do it too.”

Additional information on the three presenters may be obtained by contacting Dr. Alexander in the school of management office at ext. 2614.
Anne Spenser, Poet, to be Portrayed at MUGC

Although Anne Spenser was known as a Harlem Renaissance Poet, she never lived in Harlem and didn’t become known for her work until she was 40 years old.

Now through Marshall University Graduate College’s Brown Bag Diversity Dialogue Series Spenser will come alive in a characterization by former MUGC faculty member and Minority Faculty Fellow, Brucella Jordan. The free presentation is scheduled for March 28 from 11:45 a.m. to 1 p.m. in Room 137 of the administration building in South Charleston. Everyone is invited to bring a brown bag lunch and drinks and snacks will be provided by the MUGC Foundation. Free parking is available on site.

Jordan, who has been portraying the poet for six years, first performed as Spenser when she was asked to participate in a Black History Conference at Marshall in Huntington. Her characterization proved to be so popular she has continued to perform it before groups ever since.

Spenser, who was born in 1882, started writing as a teenager but it wasn’t until the 1920s that her writing was recognized and published. A native of Virginia, she lived for a time in Bramwell, West Virginia, and in fact wrote her first poem while a teenager living there.

The Harlem Renaissance, Jordan explains, was a period of 10-15 years stretching from 1920 into the early 30’s that saw a large body of literature produced by African American writers. Spenser was among the poets of that period whose work became known to other people. She had poems published in several anthologies and her life is the subject of a biography, “Time’s Unfading Garden.”

And although she produced a fairly large body of work, only about 45 poems have survived, Jordan says. “Her poetry isn’t really typical of the poetry written during that era because many of those writers focused on problems associated with African Americans of that time—discrimination, segregation, lynching. Her poetry is rather characterized as nature poetry, coming from her own experiences. She was an activist in her own way and she protested many of the conditions but that really didn’t come out in her writing.”

Other upcoming Brown Bag topics include “A Buffet of Jewish Literature: Short Creative Selections,” presented by Dr. Anne Fishkin and Dr. Bob Rubenstein on April 12 and “Biracial Identity: An Exploration of Issues” by Dr. Mike Burton and Lorinda Roberts on April 19.

Jordan’s presentation, a West Virginia Humanities Council Program, is being hosted by the MUGC Committee on Social Justice and Cultural Diversity and is supported with additional financial assistance from the Office of the Secretary, West Virginia Department of Education and the Arts.

Upcoming Music Recitals

Several recitals and music programs have been scheduled by the MU department of Music during the first part of April. The events are held in the Smith Recital Hall and are free and open to the public. They include:

Hiro Saito, violin, 3 p.m., April 2; Joseph Dangerfield, composition studios, 8 p.m., April 2; Mike Brown, percussion, 8 p.m., April 3; Latin Jazz concert, 8 p.m. April 6; Nevelson Duo Concert, 3 p.m., April 9; Ami Gray, flute, 8 p.m., April 9; Wind Symphony Concert, 8 p.m., April 12.

Other music programs include Day of Percussion, April 8, with registration at 10 a.m. and a concert in the Don Morris Room at 7:30 p.m. Ticketed events are the Choral Union concert at 8 p.m., April 8.
Profile: Janis Winkfield
A series on interesting Marshall University people.

Janis F. Winkfield loves learning, helping people, and Marshall, and although it’s been a lot of work, she’s found a way to put them all together in one neat package.

Winkfield, whose title is Financial Aid Officer II, and Marshall have a long history together, going back to when she was an undergraduate student pursuing a Board of Regents degree. Once she completed it, she continued taking classes until she received a master’s degree in Adult and Technical Education. And still wanting to learn more, she quickly enrolled in yet another degree program, this time pursuing the Ed.S. in adult education, which she expects to complete in May.

And along the way she has found time to work with the Big Green Association and the MU Athletic Department, acting as a hostess in charge of assisting donors who contribute to the Athletic Department and the Big Green Foundation. In fact, Winkfield oversees events in the Big Green Room, ordering food, working with the caterers, and generally overseeing the myriad details of these events. She also finds time to teach a class for University 101. She’s been an active member of the classified staff as well, having served as the staff’s representative to the MU Institutional Board of Advisors last year, and is currently serving as a member of the Classified Staff Council. And juggling a very crowded schedule, she’s also heading up the Black Alumni Association, serving as president this year.

“I love to work and I love learning,” the soft-spoken Winkfield says enthusiastically. Born in Greenbrier County, the youngest of 10 children who were reared by a single mother, Winkfield combined both her passions while working her way through Marshall as an undergraduate. She held a variety of jobs, working in campus food services and as a waitress for Marriott food service, where she proved to be so efficient and so skilled in dealing with people she was promoted to head waitress, an experience that proved valuable to her in future jobs. She worked for four years in campus residence halls before landing a job in the MU library, where she remained for five years before accepting her current job in financial aid.

“I like the areas of public relations and customer relations and I use them in both financial aid and my dealings with the Big Green Association. Our job in the financial aid office is to assist students and their parents in filling out forms and doing whatever is needed to help them find a way through Marshall as an undergraduate. She combined both her passions while working her way through Marshall as an undergraduate. She held a variety of jobs, working in campus food services and as a waitress for Marriott food service, where she proved to be so efficient and so skilled in dealing with people she was promoted to head waitress, an experience that proved valuable to her in future jobs. She worked for four years in campus residence halls before landing a job in the MU library, where she remained for five years before accepting her current job in financial aid.

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Marshall Staff Get Opportunity for Coaching in Writing

Marshall administrators will have an opportunity on March 31 to attend a two-hour language skills session featuring the writing coach of the Dallas Morning News.

In a session scheduled from 1 to 3 p.m. in the Alumni Lounge of the MU Student Center, Paula LaRocque, whose advice on writing is published each month in The Quill magazine, will discuss common problems and solutions.

The free event is provided by the W. Page Pitt School of Journalism and Mass Communications. The program caps off a week during which LaRocque will be on the Huntington campus as part of the Newspaper-in-Residence program.

LaRocque will be the last of six morning News editors and staff members who spent a week at Marshall as part of a program sponsored by the Association of Schools of Journalism and Mass Communications and funded by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation. Marshall was among 10 schools nationwide to be selected for a $12,000 grant.

Those planning to attend should call Dr. George Arnold, professor of journalism, at 696-2729, or e-mail him at arnoldg@marshall.edu.

Faculty and Staff Achievements

Victor Fet, Associate Professor in the Department of Biological Sciences, published an article, “Biodiversity, Genetic Diversity, and Protected Areas in Turkmenistan,” in the Journal of Sustainable Forestry, 9 (1-2): 73-88, in coauthorship with several U.S. and Turkmen researchers. He also published an article, “First DNA Phylogeny of the Genus Euscorpius (Scorpiones, Euscorpiidae) and its Bearing on the Taxonomy and Biogeography of this Genus” in the journal, Biogeographica (Paris), 75: 59-72 in coauthorship with Swiss molecular biologists.

Five Marshall chemistry professors have been selected to present their scientific papers at the American Chemical Society National meeting in San Francisco on March 26-31.


Summaries of the papers to be presented or more information about the conference may be obtained by contacting the chemistry department at ext. 2430.
WebCT
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ground floor of the new technology when they purchased a site license more than three years ago.

“WebCT is a group of tools that pulls a lot of Internet tools together...so that when a student needs it they have everything together in one package,” Sherri Ritter, instructional technologist at the Graduate College says. “Students can have e-mail, chat rooms, bulletin boards, places to put up web pages and places to work together. There are places for instructors to put all the content of the course, and places for students to communicate with each other—with the entire group at one time, or on an individual basis—so that it mimics a classroom where students can talk among themselves or talk with the instructor. Faculty members can use as few or as many of the tools as they like and each class is personalized by the instructor. It really is just like a classroom except everything is on-line.”

One of the features that sets it apart from other software programs is that once learned, it can be used with consistency in any course, without students having to re-learn basic techniques. “Once a student learns the mechanics and format of WebCT it is pretty much universal and transferable from course to course,” Pauley says.

That’s a change from previous times when students had to learn how to use an Internet package every time they took an on-line course, Ritter says. “They could spend a good deal of time just learning how to do the mechanics of the course and not the actual coursework,” she notes.

“One real plus is that the student doesn’t have to download any software,” Cunningham says. All the software resides on the MU server and each student has an account. They have Internet access from anywhere in the world. We’ve had students go on vacation to the beach, use a library in the vicinity, do their assignment, and then enjoy the rest of their vacation. If someone wants to work on their assignments at 2 a.m., they can do that as well. It’s totally flexible.”

To make it easy for students to use the software, MUGC has instituted a “Super Saturday” training session just prior to the beginning of a new semester. Students come to the South Charleston campus where they are given a day’s training. Bookstore personnel, academic counselors, and registration staff also participate.

WebCT has world-wide implications, Pauley says. “It has opened our eyes as to what we can do. We have a student in Italy who is working on a degree and she may never be here but she can complete her degree.”

And he credits the MU library facilities as being a key factor in the success of distance education. “One of the things that makes WebCT work for us is our library. It is totally interactive and electronic. The student in Italy needed 17 research articles which she requested and which were promptly sent to her. She was so impressed she called to thank me,” he says.

Pauley and Cunningham did a series of surveys to determine students’ opinions of their web courses, and the results of one was the subject of the ad that appeared in the Chronicle of Higher Education last October. The results were enlightening, according to Pauley. Students indicated overwhelmingly that they wanted an average of three “live” classroom meetings during the course of a semester. Responding to this information, most Marshall WebCT courses meet at the beginning, middle, and end of a course. Ninety-one percent reported that they would be willing to take another WebCT course; 93% said they would recommend such a course to others; and 80% indicated they had received instructional value equivalent to a traditional graduate course.

“It lends itself to the very motivated, self-directed adult learners and that is who our students are,” Pauley says. “Our average student is 38 years old, employed and after working all day, has an alternative to driving to class and sitting in a classroom for three hours.”

Recently Cunningham and Pauley made a presentation at a WebCT conference in British Columbia, laying out their success with the program.

“We had the opportunity to see what other schools are doing with distance delivery and very few of them are doing any better than Marshall,” Pauley notes. “That’s a powerful message. At the conference there were 350 people representing over 100 institutions and we were certainly ahead of the curve. We’re very well respected nationally. We should be very proud of our distance learning.”

The next regular issue of We Are Marshall! will carry an issue date of April 14, 2000. Deadline is April 7. Articles or other materials for consideration should be sent to Pat Dickson, editor, at the South Charleston campus or by e-mail to pdickson@marshall.edu.

Janis Winkfield
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funds...to attend college. Also, while working with the athletic department you meet and greet people and make sure that everyone is well accommodated.”

Attending Marshall is very much a Winkfield family affair. Four of her sisters attended the university. Her oldest sister, Vickie Smith, was the Cabell County Teacher of the Year four years ago and also was the recipient of the prestigious Milliken Award which is given annually to outstanding teachers.

Winkfield began working with the athletic department 13 years ago and still loves what’s she doing there. “I consider the people who come back to Marshall and give back to the university to be very special. It’s an interesting job, and it’s a rewarding job. I’ve come in contact with a lot of different people, organizations and groups,” she says.

And she adds, “I owe all of my accomplishments to God, who is the center of my life and I know with him all things are possible, and to my mother and the rest of my family who have always encouraged me to set my goals high and to strive for the best and most important.”

WVU Tuition Waiver
Applications Taken for Summer

The Graduate Dean’s office is accepting applications for WVU tuition waivers for the Summer 2000 terms. These waivers are available to benefit-eligible faculty and staff who have been admitted to West Virginia University. A maximum of six credit hours may be requested for the two summer sessions combined.

Application forms are available in the Graduate Dean’s office (Old Main 113) or by calling extension 2816. The application deadline is Monday, March 27.