Cultivating Connections

Art and technology meet in collaboration between artist and future manufacturing engineers

As the sole proprietor of Kim’s Valley Arts, Kim Falk, a UW-Stout graduate, is always on the lookout for opportunities that will enhance her business and her art. Falk, a professional watercolorist and teacher, recently chose to make use of the resources at her alma mater.

Falk pointed out that nearly one-fourth of her students come to the first class with inappropriate palettes and must improvise. She hopes to purchase her own thermoformer to manufacture the palettes on her own. “This is not the first time Falk has collaborated with students and faculty at UW-Stout. A graphic arts production class printed her watercolors as limited edition prints and greeting cards.”

According to Walker, Falk’s design improvements included identically sized wells that rise slightly so the paint would not bleed out. “Kim also wanted the bottom of the wells and the center mixing area to lie flush with whatever surface it is sitting on, so the plastic is supported,” noted Walker.

Falk said she always has a positive experience with the students and instructors she works with. “They treat me like a client—like we are all in this together to get the best possible product,” she remarked. She was also impressed with how supportive and excited the deans, associate deans and department chairs were about the project and how willing they were to use resources interdepartmentally.

The center originated in 1999 to promote activities that address real-life, contemporary ethical issues to foster moral decision-making and stronger moral leadership. Unlike many academic ethics centers that focus on research and publication, UW-Stout’s center is interested in reaching out to the community and identifying practical applications for ethics discussions.

“‘We think this is the right approach to take at Stout, because we want to get things done,’ said Tim Shiell, center director and staff member in the department of English and philosophy. ‘The longer I have been here, the more I feel that push to make a difference.’”

Currently, the center is seeking Stout alumni ethics stories, real moral dilemmas, to take into UW-Stout classrooms. According to Shiell, they want two types of stories. First, they are requesting personal accounts that illustrate difficult work-related or personal decisions. Second, they want anecdotes about moral heroes, people who do the right thing, and, although it was difficult to do, the decision benefits them.

“Whether it is in a classroom or in a workshop, these two types of stories about real people who attended Stout carry more impact with students than some hypothetical situation,” noted Shiell.

After they receive a story, the center will determine what classes will benefit from it, Shiell explained. For example, a personal account about a management dilemma would be incorporated into UW-Stout’s management classes.

According to Shiell, the ethics center plans to eventually organize and submit a grant that will allow them to target these stories in a systematic manner. “But for now, we wish to open the door to getting them less formally, which will help us figure out how we intend to approach the project,” he explained.

Shiell suggested another way Stout alumni who are interested in ethics can get involved in the center. “‘We are still looking for people to help out in some areas. We don’t need expensive equipment or a big new building. We just need people’s time and energy,’ he said.

During the past year, the center sponsored two panel discussions. Approximately 100 people attended the first discussion, which centered on environmental issues related to property rights and land regulation. The second panel discussed legalizing physician-assisted suicide and attracted some 300 audience participants. This fall’s panel discussion will be about gun control, which is a hot issue in the upcoming elections. According to Shiell, the Center for Ethics plans to have a state senator, a National Rifle Association representative and a Million Mom March participant on the panel. At the discussions, the panelists share their views after a brief topic introduction. Then, the panel is given some time to discuss the issue or rebut each other’s statements. Next, the audience is invited to participate in the discussion.

“It is fascinating to see the panel discussions play out. People, at least so far, have been really mindful of sticking to the issues and not launching into personal attacks,” said Shell.

Currently the center is developing a speaker’s bureau that will enable them to identify individuals or groups who can speak about a particular concern that a business or a community has. In addition, the Center for Ethics will sponsor a Friday Ethics Series this fall. Various people will come in and talk about an issue of their choice. According to Shiell, topics already booked for the series include business ethics, computer-related issues and leadership ethics.

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Pete Heimdal, associate dean in UW-Stout’s College of Technology, Engineering and Management, pointed out that this project illustrates the connections between art and technology at the university, quoting the plaque on the hall dedicated to the late William J. Michels, “a man who had the foresight to create an environment where art and technology could flourish.”

Pushing to make a difference

Have you faced a difficult ethical decision in the workplace or in your personal life? If so, the UW-Stout Center for Ethics wants to hear from you.

The UW-Stout Center for Ethics collects your stories

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To offer your own personal ethics stories, you may e-mail Shell at: shell@uwsstout.edu, or write to: UW-Stout Center for Ethics Harvey Hall 418 A-C University of Wisconsin-Stout P.O. Box 1790 Menomonie, WI 54751-0790 or call: 715/232-1490

For more information about the Center for Ethics, visit their website at: http://www.uwsstout.edu/artscl/cfe
Researching regional issues

Applied psychology students determine influences on area workforce

Due to low unemployment rates in the area, more and more Chippewa Valley businesses are experiencing difficulties recruiting new employees. "Business growth in West Central Wisconsin has been excellent in recent years," said Tom Franklin, chair of UW-Stout's psychology department. "However, the availability of a sufficiently large, quality workforce could impede continuing growth. Recruiting new employees to the region, keeping area youth interested in living in the region and retaining existing employees are essential to area economic growth."

Under Franklin's guidance, graduate students in UW-Stout's master of applied psychology program recently conducted research to determine what incentives have attracted new employees to West Central Wisconsin. The graduate students polled employees hired within the past 12 months by the 10 largest area businesses. According to the summary of their results, 274 of 542 distributed surveys were returned for a 50.5 percent response rate. Nearly 20 percent of the respondents were female, half were in the 25 to 39 age range, and half had earned at least a four-year degree.

The majority of the respondents had a work history of 11 years or more, and 52 percent worked in health care, while 38 percent worked in education. As most reported having moved to be closer to family, 23 percent of the new employees came from outside the state, according to the report.

The employees who responded expressed high levels of satisfaction with living conditions including friendly communities, high-quality schools, low population density, minimal pollution and low crime rates. They also indicated that they were drawn to the outdoor recreation opportunities of the area.

Cost of housing and goods were rated as the most favorable economic issues. The average purchase cost of a three-bedroom home in Eau Claire is $86,000 compared to the $110,450 national average.

Survey results also indicated that state income taxes were the least favorable economic issue among respondents.

"In the perceptions of employer stability, easy commutes and a variety of employer benefits influenced the respondents' decisions to take a job in the Chippewa Valley. However, they viewed their salary as the most disappointing condition of their employment. Worker's wages are 25 percent lower than those in the nearby St. Croix Valley, according to the students' report. Overall, the findings of this research support West Central Wisconsin workers' view of existing levels of literacy in the local workforce, and to gauge the market's familiarity with local adult literacy programs, including LVA-CV.

"LVA plans to use the study to make critical decisions, said Gabler. "The structure and secure information for successful marketing, said Thor Meinen, director of Career Services. "From a student's perspective, this is clearly still their market. For professions experiencing applicant shortages, like packaging and applied math, employers are offering competitive wages and sign-on bonuses, even for entry-level positions."

Each year more than 500 employers come to UW-Stout to interview students on campus. Many of these employers visit the campus weeks beforehand to drum up interest in their company by talking to classes and student organizations. In addition, last year more than 340 employers recruited students during Placement and Co-op Services' three-day Career Conference.

"Last year one employer sponsored an evening dinner for approximately 80 juniors and seniors from the retail merchandising and management and general business majors just for the opportunity to share their company's job opportunities," said Meinen.

Meinen also pointed out that competition has made the traditional two-week job acceptance period nearly extinct. "It is becoming commonplace for competitive recruiters to ask students to accept a position within two to three days or, in some cases, on the spot," he explained.

During the 1998–99 school year, 420 UW-Stout students participated in co-op programs. "This practical work experience makes them very marketable," said Meinen.

Moreover, the 1998–99 co-op class earned an average $10.32 per hour while on co-op assignments. According to Meinen, the increased demand for qualified job candidates has caused a steady rise in co-op salaries.

Last year, UW System approved a 5 percent tuition differential increase proposed by UW-Stout students. Some of the money generated by the increase was used to eliminate co-op course fees. Meinen indicated the elimination of fees has increased co-op participation by 15 to 20 percent, which will have a positive effect on future employment rates.

"If the economy continues to be strong, our students next year can look forward to very favorable hiring opportunities," he stated.
Advocating Hmong rights

Leave of absence fruitful for multicultural student adviser

“You don’t have to teach people to be human. You have to teach them to stop being inhuman.” — Eldridge Cleaver

As an advocate and humanitarian, Stephen Vang was exceptionally busy last year. After taking a leave of absence from his multicultural student adviser position at UW-Stout in June 1999, Vang traveled to Washington, D.C., volunteering to educate legislators about several issues that affect Hmong and Laos people in the United States and overseas.

Because the refugee program in Thailand was scheduled to end last year, Vang visited the Ban Napho refugee camp to facilitate a compromise between the Royal Thai Government, the United Nation’s High Commissioner for Refugees and the refugees themselves. “We worked to ease the situation by saving some people, but those who did not qualify under the program had to return to the communist Laos, which is where they don’t want to go,” Vang explained.

According to Vang, the refugees sent back to Laos are not safe because the country’s human rights practices have completely deteriorated since the capture of the Royal Lao Government by the communist regime. The regime is now conducting a genocide campaign against officials and military officers of the former government and opposition groups who sided with the United States during the Vietnam War. Vang said the campaign against civilians and minorities, particularly the Hmong living in remote areas, recently intensified, causing the deaths of thousands, including women and children.

“I went to the U.S. Congress and the international community to help them understand the situation, so they could help or at least put some pressure on the Laos government to stop killing these people,” said Vang.

Vang mentioned that he could not have tackled so many projects without the support of his colleagues, UW-Stout administrators and the members of Ron Kind’s staff.

It was exciting and challenging to be in Washington. It was a good opportunity for me to experience how our Congress works and how interest groups educate them about different issues,” he said.

While he was still working on his Ph.D. at the University of Wisconsin, Laramie, Bomar collected most of the currently available specimens of Boreus bomari while cross-country skiing in the Medicine Bow National Forest with his wife, Julie Keown-Bomar, of UW-Stout’s social studies department.

“I knew immediately when I saw the bug that it was nothing I had seen before. I was very familiar with this family of insects, so I collected and identified a number of them,” explained Bomar.

New specimens are not commonly named after the people who discover them. Generally, taxonomists name them for a specific characteristic or for the area in which they were found.

“I had proposed several other names for the specimen, including lincolni—because I found it at the base of the Lincoln Monument,” said Bomar.

According to Bomar, B. bomarius is unusual because it is a winter insect that scampers across the snow. The female insect measures approximately one-quarter inch. The male is half that length. “Very little is known about the biology of this whole family because it is economically unimportant,” he noted.

This particular insect is unique in Wisconsin, but two other closely related winter species dwell in the state, Boreus brunalis and Boreus niveivitans. Bomar said we can also look for the wingless winter cranefly that walks across the snow on warm, sunny winter days in Wisconsin’s forests.

Other characteristics of the newly classified insect, Boreus bomari, were recently detailed in the Journal of the Kansas Entomological Society in an article written by George W. Byers and Scott R. Shaw, who are co-authors of this species. Bomar spent a great deal of time with Shaw at the University of Wyoming, where he teaches in the department of plant, soil and insect science. Byers is a taxonomist at the University of Kansas and the world authority on the Boreus family of insects, said Bomar. “A New Species of Boreus (Mecoptera: Boriidae) from Wyoming,” the article that features B. bomari, appeared in the April 13, 2000 issue of the journal.

Meeting High Standards

Though many academics argue that accreditation adds little value to a program, the benefits that several UW-Stout programs gained from the accreditation process are evident. The rigorous review process keeps programs current and in line with industry and professional standards. Accreditation also enhances a program’s ability to recruit qualified faculty and students. During the past year several programs at UW-Stout achieved national accreditation.

The Stout Vocational Rehabilitation Institute (SVRI) achieved a three-year accreditation from The Rehabilitation Accreditation Commission (CARF) for its assistive technology, comprehensive vocational rehabilitation employment programs.

CARF accreditation is awarded to organizations that fulfill the highest level of standards and are determined to have established a pattern of maintaining and improving those standards. UW-Stout’s assistive technology program is one of the first certified nationally under CARF’s newly implemented assistive technology standards.

SVRI, the only institute of its kind in Wisconsin, is a campus-based, nonprofit rehabilitation operation at UW-Stout. The institute provides a wide array of services that improve the quality of life for people with disabilities and offers training programs in vocational rehabilitation to majors at UW-Stout to become highly qualified professionals who serve people with disabilities.

UW-Stout’s bachelor of fine arts, interior design concentration, was awarded accreditation from the Foundation for Interior Design Education Research (FIDER). Recognition by this organization enhances a program’s visibility, strengthens its ties to the industry and plays a major role in the program’s ongoing improvement, continued viability and vision for the future.

FIDER ensures that interior design programs meet professional benchmarks while also providing the program flexibility to meet the needs of the regional marketplace. As more states begin to require FIDER accreditation for licensing or certification, UW-Stout’s interior design program will continue to graduate well-prepared and qualified design professionals.

The Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) acknowledges FIDER as the accrediting authority for interior design education in North America. The Commission on Accreditation for Dietetics Education (CADE) grants an under-3-year accreditation to UW-Stout’s bachelor of science program in dietetics. CADE recognizes the program’s compliance with their standards of education and praised the program’s efforts to improve quality education.

CADE accreditation offers dietetic students the opportunity to apply for internships or preprofessional practice programs that established eligibility to seek active membership in the American Dietetic Association, to write the dietitians’ registration examination. CADE is the American Dietetic Association’s accrediting agency for education programs that prepare students for careers as registered dietitians.

University programs and services earn national accreditation

“This is my Andy Warhol fifteen minutes of fame,” said a modest Charles Bomar, of UW-Stout’s biology department. His claim to fame is the “brand spanking new bug species,” as he described it, that was recently named after him.

While he was still working on his Ph.D. at the University of Wisconsin, Laramie, Bomar collected a new species of insect, Boreus bomari, while cross-country skiing in the Medicine Bow National Forest with his wife, Julie Keown-Bomar, of UW-Stout’s social studies department.

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Boreus bomari

Bug claims biology professor’s name

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