Micheels Hall, a new $8.1 million facility was formally dedicated in September. The facility is named in honor of William J. Micheels who, between 1961 and 1972, served as president of what was then Stout State College and Stout State University. Micheels and his wife, Betty, were honored at the ceremony.

Micheels headed the university during one of the most tumultuous times in higher education, characterized nationally by both unprecedented growth and campus unrest. During his presidency, enrollments soared and an ambitious building program was launched.

During his inaugural address, he pledged to make liberal arts an integral core in the education of Stout students, in keeping with the philosophy of the school’s founder, James Huff Stout, who believed in educating “the whole student.” He also envisioned an art program that would serve as a bridge on the campus between technology and liberal studies. Today, the College of Arts and Sciences is the largest academic unit on campus, and the department of art and design is the largest in the state.

Micheels is a 1932 graduate of Stout. He later received his master’s and doctorate degree from the University of Minnesota. Before returning to Stout as president, he was chair of the department of industrial education at Minnesota.

Micheels Hall links Jarvis Hall and the Applied Arts Building. It houses an art gallery, a general access computer lab and other educational facilities.

The Micheels’ were presented with a plaque commemorating the event and delivered a response.
A new technology that will change the face of education worldwide is available through UW-Stout.

UW-Stout is the first school in the nation, in fact in the world, to offer classes using Lotus Learning Space. “What we’re doing with distance education is comparable to, if not better than, any other university in the entire country,” stated Joe Holland, professor in UW-Stout’s hospitality and tourism department. “Because of our track record using Lotus Notes, we (Stout) were invited to be part of a pilot project,” Holland said. “And now we are the first school to use the Web Enabled Version of Lotus LearningSpace.”

Holland said this enables students to gain access to the class using any computer. Previously, a student had to be on a computer that had Lotus Notes software.

What this means to students or prospective students, anywhere in the world, is that it is now possible for them to sit in the comfort of their own homes and take university—“asynchronous” learning classes, offered via computer, from anywhere in the world.

Parking is not a problem. Nor are snowstorms, subzero temperatures, illness, disability, age or great distances.

Asynchronous learning is part of a new jargon created by the computer technology explosion. Simply put, it is a conversation between professors and their students that doesn’t take place in person or all at once, but rather as students logon to the computer and respond to what they see and read.

UW-Stout’s hospitality and tourism department’s asynchronous learning project is made possible by a grant from the Alford P. Sloan Foundation. It is designed to research and implement distance education using the World Wide Web, Lotus Notes and various distance learning technologies.

UW-Stout project team members—James Biergermeister, Randall Upchuch and Holland—have developed and are currently offering six classes through this program. Lectures are presented online from UW-Stout professors as well as from experts anywhere in the world. Lectures are followed by online discussions. Whereas lectures in the physical classroom typically last an hour or two, in the virtual classroom they can go on for weeks. There are no statistics on how many online classes are being offered throughout the world via the Web, but new courses are being added all the time.

According to Holland, some individuals have questioned what will happen to traditional classroom learning with this new phenomenon. Holland doesn’t believe it will replace the classroom and the stimulation of being with other students. However, it will make classes more accessible to physically challenged students, older students or those who may miss classes due to illness.

“The students may learn even better,” Holland said, “because distance learning can adjust to any learning style and time frame.” Holland noted that a student who is ill one day is still able to get that information and can also take as much time as necessary on any one particular lesson.

It is often easier for the instructor as well. Holland said that when he was in Philadelphia recently, he was still able to teach his class from there and was available to students via computer. “It also gives me the opportunity to have additional experts contribute to the class from wherever they might be,” Holland said.

Holland believes the potential for discussion is better on the computer, noting that some extroverted students may take up much of a class period, but that this way, bright students who want time to think before they participate are able to do so.

Students may give their name and information about themselves, even a photograph, or they can remain anonymous and still participate. “It breaks down barriers such as gender, appearance, physical ability or age,” Holland said.

Students can view classroom presentations on their computer screen and print them; it is not necessary for professors to reproduce numerous handouts; a retired person may audit a class from home; a wheelchair-bound person does not have to leave the house. It does change the traditional classroom—and some students may very much need that change.

Cultural immersion:

Students cast for understanding at “Lake of Fire”

Lake of Fire. Lac du Flambeau. That’s what French fur traders called the northern Wisconsin area where flaming torches burned on crystal lakes as the Ojibwe speared fish at night.

And for 10 days during summer, UW-Stout hosts students from around the state on this northwoods “campus,” this 12-square-mile Indian reservation which encompasses 150 lakes and parts of three counties. This educational experience includes touring the reservation with tribal land management and forestry staff; discussing tribal issues with tribal personnel; attending Bear River Pow-Wow and listening to the drumming, listening to the music, sharing community stories and experiences and stories; and hearing Ojibwe teachings in the teaching lodge at Wawsagonging, the traditional Ojibwe village built on the shores of Moving Cloud Lake. Students process daily events together at evening campfires.

“Cultural immersion” is how Bea Bigony (anthropologist) and Jill Stanton (multicultural education), instructors for the course, characterize the experience. The two developed the “Ojibwe Lifeways” course with the aid of a grant from the UW System’s Institute on Race and Ethnicity. “It’s the only ongoing course of its kind that we know of,” Bigony said. Students actually live on the reservation for 10 days and are in class and interacting with Lac du Flambeau community members for a minimum of 90 hours.

Bigony and Stanton note that objectives of the course are to place students in a culturally rich learning environment where they can learn about and experience Ojibwe life, getting a flavor of traditional life, but focusing on present life in a tribal community. Bigony and Stanton become facilitators for the teaching which is essentially done by tribal members. The instructors say they have been overwhelmed by the generosity of time tribal members are willing to give students. Stanton and Bigony stress that the critical element of the course is the use of community personnel resources. “It would not be possible to teach this course in a university classroom,” Bigony said. Apparently the combination of the instructors, the tribal leaders, the reservation and the students is a good one.

“Students learn about themselves as well,” said Char Hocking, the one Lac du Flambeau resident to take the class. “Students sometimes find they have prejudices they didn’t even know existed. People seem to come away from the class with a different attitude, with more empathy and understanding.”

“Students find out that they have stereotypes that don’t fit as they get to know the Indian people as fellow human beings,” Bigony said.

Public school teachers and personnel, including school staff from the nearby Woodruff/Minocqua area, and undergraduate Stout students have been among those to take the class. “As these students learn about Ojibwe life, they see how poverty, racism, prejudice and discrimination impact on reservation life,” Bigony said.

“My eyes and heart have been opened, and I have a new understanding and support of Native Americans,” said student Jim Moe, an elementary school principal.

“According to the legend, the one thing that the man animal was given was the ability to dream. Could it be that one very important step in the Ojibwe regaining their heritage is their being able to again cause their children to hope and dream?”

“Students have been powerfully impacted,” Stanton said. “They are touched deeply emotionally. There are often tears at the end, and students find it to be a life-changing experience. Their world view is altered.”

“Building relationships with Indian people helps students examine the diversity of values, lifestyles and spirituality across cultures,” Bigony said.

Jeff Peterson, a student in the class and a junior high teacher, said, “Generosity, thankfulness and respect seem to be three salient characteristics of the Ojibwe culture. The dominant culture would do well to observe and emulate the ways traditional Ojibwe people relate to their elders, their youth and their environment.”

“We’re building relationships,” Bigony said. “And building relationships builds bridges.”

The class will be offered this summer from July 6-16.

Persons wanting more information may contact Bea Bigony at 715/232-1503 or Jill Stanton at 715/232-1622. 
Patent awarded for biodegradable end caps

Tennis balls. Parmesan cheese. Pringles. They all come in containers that are not exactly environmentally friendly. The end caps are usually plastic or metal—or both.

Industrial management professor Chuck Yost and some of his students, along with the Board of Regents, were recently awarded a U.S. patent which could change that. The “rotational and vibrational process for molding cellulosic fibers” produces end caps that are made entirely out of paper and are biodegradable.

“They are just as effective in sealing a product and cost less to produce,” Yost said, “and of course they are much cheaper to produce,” Yost said, “and of course they are.

The industrial management department received $120,000, half from a Wisconsin packaging company, and that was matched by the Solid Waste Council of the State of Wisconsin, to work on the project. The packaging company anticipated needing 100 million parts. “The research was done based on that need,” Yost said.

It took two and a half years and cost $12,000 to obtain the patent, according to Yost, because of the intricacies involved. Although the packaging company has since withdrawn from the project, Yost, an environmentalist himself, believes there is a definite need and market for such a product which is both economical and environmentally correct.

The dry paper molded parts come from what other manufacturers consider refuse, such as trimmings from disposable diapers, according to Yost. “They consider it garbage, but it makes the best parts,” he said. “It’s paper that reconstitutes under pressure.”

Currently, Yost is looking for customers. “Having a patent helps because people who are seeking innovative ideas in manufacturing look through patents,” Yost said.

Yost is just as proud of the students who worked on the patent as he is of the product itself. “The important thing is that the students did it all themselves, with guidance,” he said. “The Stout way of learning is by doing—because it works. It is knowledge that stays with the students.”

Examining crime at Mall of America

If you plan to do any of your shopping at the Mall of America, you’ll be one of 40 million visitors to “The Mall” per year, according to research conducted by Leland Nicholls, director of Wisconsin Institute for Service Excellence, department of hospitality and tourism. And you’ll be safer from crime at the megamall than in other areas of comparable size.

Nicholls, along with Reyes Garcia, a Stout graduate, compiled the work, “Crime in New Tourism Destinations: The Case of the Mall of America,” which was recently published in an international journal.

The Mall of America was chosen as a focus for the study, Nicholls said, because it is the largest single shopping area in the country with 4.2 million square feet. That’s four times larger than the average super regional mall.

For that reason, the Mall of America has become a major tourist destination. In fact, the American Automobile Association ranked the Mall as the third largest tourist attraction in the United States, according to Nicholls. In one year, more than 12,000 organized groups and 400 Japanese tour groups visited the facility.

Nicholls’ research notes that when a national airlines offered a low-cost, same-day airfare to spend one day shopping at the Mall, 14,500 travelers from 42 U.S. cities used the service. Additional international travelers took advantage of two similar special packages.

Other interesting Mall facts noted in the work include:

- The Mall is big enough to hold 32 Boeing 747’s
- Seven Yankee Stadiums would fit inside the Mall
- More than 20 St. Peter’s Basilicas in Rome would fit
- Total store frontage is 4.5 miles
- There are more than 400 stores, 45 restaurants, nine night clubs and 14 theater screens in the Mall

However, as is becoming increasingly true in most large tourist areas, the safety and security of tourists is of great concern. The first White House Conference on Travel and Tourism, held in 1995, called it one of the greatest challenges to the potential growth of such areas.

The primary topic at the First Global Research and Travel Trade Conference held in Sweden in 1995 was “Security Risks in Travel and Tourism.” Crime rates typically increase with the growth of an area, and Garcia and Nichols found that the Mall of America area was no exception. However, they found that crime calls from the Mall account for less than 1 percent of monthly crime calls in Bloomington, Minn.

Nicholls said that when comparing crime indexes of other cities (the Mall is Minnesota’s third largest city on weekends), the Mall has a much lower crime rate than other places of comparable population.

A police station in the Mall basement with 18 officers could be one deterrent. Also, the Mall employs 100 security guards who eject about 150 people a month, most for “unwelcome behavior.” The most reported crimes are disorderly conduct, followed by shoplifting and theft.

But according to Garcia and Nicholls’ findings, the Mall is a comparatively safe place to shop. Nicholls said that he believes the headlines in the media have magnified the actual problem. He said the Mall garners more press because of its high profile.

According to Nicholls, while you may be rubbing elbows with thousands of shoppers from virtually all over the world, you will still be in a relatively safe environment.
Outstanding research recognized

Robert Schuler has been named UW-Stout’s Outstanding Researcher, and the Stout University Foundation Inc. received the Nelva G. Runnalls Research Support Recognition Award.

The awards were presented by UW-Stout Chancellor Charles W. Sorensen during the annual Research Day Awards luncheon held Wednesday, Oct. 16. Sorensen was the keynote speaker at the graduate faculty and principal investigators of externally funded projects during the past fiscal year. The Outstanding Researcher Award recognizes individuals for their leadership and significant contributions to research and scholarly activities.

The Stout University Foundation received the Nelva G. Runnalls Research Support Recognition Award for providing support and resources to faculty and staff to pursue their research and scholarly activities.

Sorensen, a professor in the Department of Health and Human Services new Administrative Rule 83.

The Office of Continuing Education/Extension and Summer Session at UW-Stout recently

Cynthia Jenkins has been appointed director of Admissions at UW-Stout, university officials announced. Jenkins recently completed a one-year appointment as interim director of admissions. She has previously served as director of student services and as assistant director of student services. Before joining Stout, Jenkins was director of admissions at the University of the South in Sewanee, Tenn.

Jenkins began her career in higher education in 1984, starting as an admissions counselor at Southern Illinois University Carbondale. She later served as director of admissions and director of graduate studies at the University of Tennessee at Martin. Jenkins has also served as assistant dean of undergraduate admissions at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga.

Sorensen also is the first woman to be appointed as director of admissions at Stout. The previous director, Jack Reardon, will retire at the end of the month.

First manufacturing engineering students graduate

Among the 550 students who graduated in December, were seven students whose making history. They are the very first to complete a new degree in manufacturing engineering from the university’s College of Technology, Engineering and Management.

The program was initiated in the fall of 1983 and graduated its first class of 1994. UW-Stout officials believe it may introduce a whole new chapter at the university, which is more than a century old.

“I sincerely believe this could be a turning point for us,” said Chancellor Charles W. Sorensen. “Its impact could be significant.”

There are only about a dozen institutions in the world with manufacturing engineering undergraduate programs, and Stout’s program is the only undergraduate manufacturing engineering program in the UW System.

“Getting into the manufacturing industry is the best force today,” said Bob Meyer, professor in UW-Stout’s technology department. “Manufacturers rely on trained, dedicated professionals to develop and implement the equipment and production methods they need to keep their leading edge.”

Meyer said some of these engineers in the manufacturing technology specialty is not in product design but rather in designing systems that develop products. “We are producing process engineers,” Meyer said.

SVRI reorganizes centers

UW-Stout has announced the recent merger of two of its centers in the Stout Vocational Rehabilitation Institute.

This is the result of a merger of the Vocational Development Center and the Center for Rehabilitation Technology, said John Weselek, executive director of SVRI. “There will be some new names and features, and a new operational philosophy will result from this merger,” Weselek said.

At NWMOC, the Southern Wisconsin Manufacturing Outreach Center at UW-Stout received national recognition for its work with a Rhinelander wood products manufacturer that resulted in a savings for the company of more than $120,000 per year.

The center project was selected from among more than 40 applications as being “outstanding” in the Technology Transfer category of the National Association of Management and Technical Assistance Centers (NAMTAC) Project of the Year Award.

NAMTAC is a not-for-profit association which provides technical assistance projects to manufacturers, and is governed by a Board of Directors whose mission is to improve productivity and quality in organizations.