

The COPUS Clarion

A Monthly Newsletter of the COPUS Network Volume 2 Issue 1 January 2008

The Coalition on the Public Understanding of Science (COPUS) is a grassroots effort linking universities, scientific societies, science centers and museums, advocacy groups, media, educators, government agencies, businesses, and industry in a peer network having as its goal a greater public understanding of the nature of science and its value to society.

University Wide Celebration of the Year of Science 2009

Contributed by: Kent Holsinger, University of Connecticut (kent@darwin.eeb.uconn.edu)

With 350 days and counting to Year of Science 2009, the University of Connecticut has begun its planning for celebratory activities. Excited about the opportunity to participate in a community wide effort, the University is seeking ways to engage diverse departments in the celebration. Universities are uniquely positioned to emphasize the theme of YoS'09 "How We Know What We Know" in an exploration of the role science plays in human health and well-being across all disciplines of study.

For more than a millennium, universities have been centers of teaching, learning and scholarship. Modern universities and colleges are home to scientists whose discoveries help us to understand the world, and they are home to artists, historians, and philosophers whose work helps us to understand the meaning of those discoveries. Yet science is increasingly under attack, whether from those who promote the teaching of intelligent design creationism or from those who deny that human activities are warming the global climate.

This is ... a time when a US senator proclaims that "the greatest climate threat we face may be coming from alarmist computer models," when a state superintendent of public instruction concludes that "there is no evidence yet to claim how the earth was created and no evidence to connect the family of apes with the family of man," and when a congressman feels compelled to write to the head of a federal agency complaining that "good science cannot long persist in an atmosphere of intimidation." (Holsinger, BioScience 56:955; 2006)

As centers of teaching, learning and scholarship, universities and colleges have an opportunity to support the outstanding science that is done within their own walls and to show cohesive support of scientific discovery. Year of Science 2009 provides a great unifying force for doing so.

Plans for the celebration at the University of Connecticut are only beginning to form, but our activities are likely to include a special lecture series for the lay public and the campus community about the nature of science and its meaning for our lives; student arts competitions for writing, drama, visual, or performance that illustrate or exemplify scientific principles; science "jams" in which scientists, poets, musicians, actors, visual artists, or performance artists demonstrate the impact of a scientific research project in a 3-minute performance; and a day-long symposium focused on exploring what science does or does not reveal about human nature and human potential.

In 2009 we celebrate many diverse seminal events in science, the 200th anniversary of Darwin's birth, the 150th anniversary of his publication of *On the Origin of Species*, the 400th anniversary of Galileo's first look to the skies, the publication of Kepler's first two laws of planetary motion – and a Year of Science. Universities have an opportunity to play a significant leadership role in celebrations of the Year of Science 2009, and by doing so, will lay the groundwork to ensure that 2009 marks the start of a new era in public understanding of science.

COPUS Web site Updates

The COPUS Web site underwent significant changes in December. By logging into "My COPUS home page" at <http://copusproject.org/participate/index.php>, COPUS participants are now able to invite colleagues from their organization to set up a user account on the COPUS Web site. By doing so, key people in your organization will be able to add programs and resources to the directory, download COPUS and Year of Science logos, and will receive the COPUS newsletter. If your organization inducted new officers with the new year, this is a great opportunity to add them to the list of contacts so that they can keep up to date with COPUS progress and initiatives.

Other new/ updated pages:

» Year of Science 2009 page:
www.yearofscience2009.org

» Support COPUS page:
www.copusproject.org/support.php

» COPUS participant map:
www.copusproject.org/participants/participants_map.php

» COPUS regional hub map:
http://copusproject.org/regional_hubs.php

Featured Program: Life@UCF

Contributed by: Edward A. Haddad, Executive Director, Florida Academy of Sciences;
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SCIENCE NEVER GROWS OLD!

One of the major functions of COPUS is raising the level of scientific literacy among the general public. The nation, and Florida, in particular, is experiencing a growing population of retired and elder citizens. Today's elder generation is vastly different from previous older populations in that they are well-educated, affluent, and vitally interested in learning about and contributing to the world around them. As such, this population is an ideal outlet for science programs, activities, and outreach.

In Orlando, Florida, the University of Central Florida is home to the Learning Institute for Elders (LIFE@UCF). This is a group of more than 450 students aged 50 and older who are pursuing knowledge for the sake and joy of learning. These students meet weekly on the UCF campus, taking 12 courses throughout the academic year, two each month. For the most part these courses are taught by UCF faculty members, and the courses cover a range of subjects from physics to English. A recent sampling of courses offered include robotics, simulation, microbiology, and forensics.

LIFE@UCF faculty have been amazed to walk into the classroom and find hundreds of wide-awake, eager students taking notes and asking challenging questions. They quickly warm to their attentive elder students — so much so that LIFE now enjoys a lengthy waiting list of professors who would like to teach the group. A good number of LIFE courses are offered in the sciences. In fact, the College of Sciences at UCF is the principal host and University liaison to the LIFE program. LIFE@UCF gives back to the University through its scholarships and grants program which each year awards substantial funds to UCF departments, individual professors, and student-centered organizations and study programs. The LIFE students serve as ready research subjects to the University for studies where segments of the elder population are needed.

In planning events and outreach to the public under the auspices of the COPUS network, I urge my fellow COPUS participants to consider focusing on the population of elders in their area. These citizens are interested and eager to learn about science! To learn more, visit the LIFE@UCF Web site at: <http://life.org.cos.ucf.edu/>



Welcome New COPUS Participants!

- Alaska EPSCoR
- American Association for the Advancement of Science
- American Microscopical Society, Inc.
- American Society of Naturalists
- Ask A Biologist
- Banana Slug String Band
- California Academy of Sciences
- Center for Excellence in Education
- Denison University Biology Society
- DoctorSlime's Science Shows
- Earth, Life & Time Program, College Park Scholars
- The Encyclopedia of Life
- Entomological Society of America
- Environmental Information Coalition
- Freethought Society at Tufts
- Galileo Players
- Gordon A. Cain Center for Scientific, Technological, Engineering and Mathematical Literacy
- Immersion Presents
- Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory
- Lawrence Hall of Science
- Maine Mathematics and Science Alliance
- Museum of Nature and Science
- National Institute for Student Access to Space
- New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs
- NOAA Education
- PaleoStrat
- Pennsylvania Citizens for Science
- Pennsylvania Science Teachers Association
- Projects for a New Millennium DBA Projects2k
- Santa Fe Alliance for Science
- Sigma Xi - Chapter 301 - University of California, Santa Cruz
- South Carolina Science Council
- UC Davis Arboretum (Univ. of California, Davis)
- Vanderbilt Center for Science Outreach

Questions? Comments? Ideas? Contact Sheri Potter at spotter@copusproject.org.

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