

NEWS BRIEFS

EVENTS

NOTABLES

SEARCH

PRINT THIS ISSUE

PRINT PAST ISSUES

FEEDBACK

UVM HOMEPAGE

## Sweeping Ethics Course Will Launch New Honors College



Engaging ethicists: The honor of kicking off the foundational academic experience for the new Honors College went to Alan Wertheimer (left) and Don Loeb for their multidisciplinary ethics course. (Photo: Bill DiLillo)

The new Honors College will offer a multidisciplinary ethics course as its first-year honors seminar when the college is launched next fall, Robert Taylor, dean of the college, announced on Nov. 25. "The course has the potential to build bridges across the university in serious and important ways," says Robert Taylor, the college's dean.

[FULL STORY ►](#)

## PREVIOUS ISSUE

[Historian Looks at Women and the Pre-Civil War Vermont Economy](#)
[Chiara String Quartet to Play Lane Series](#)
[The Women Who Built UVM](#)
[Lane Series Holiday Concert Offers Hesperus in "Wintergrace"](#)
[A Peek Inside the Commons](#)
[Asian Studies Outreach Wins National Award](#)
[Trustees Report](#)

## Frank Bryan Q+A

Depending on the point he's making, Frank Bryan, the author of the new book *Real Democracy*, may praise New England town meeting as the closest thing we have to pure Athenian democracy or he might just call it "a long day sitting on a hard chair listening to people argue."

## Questioning

**Authority** President Daniel Mark Fogel, who never met the president of Cornell University while an undergraduate there in the 1960's, wants students to join him over coffee and cookies at a series of informal gatherings.

## Quantifying the

**Digital Divide** The so-called digital divide between poor, middle class and wealthier Americans created in part by the emergence of the United States as a technological power, has caused Rashmi Narsana to alter her definition of the three basic needs of humans.

## THE WEEK IN VIEW

**Dec. 4, 11 a.m.**  
Winterfest: An event celebrating winter observances and holidays.  
Information: [UVM Winterfest](#)

**Dec. 4, 7 p.m.**  
Speaker: "Towards Election 2004," with William Kristol, editor and publisher of *The Weekly Standard*. Ira Allen Chapel.

**Dec. 5, 7:30 p.m.**  
Concert: UVM Lane Series presents Hesperus with special guest Pete Sutherland.  
Information: [Lane Series](#)

**Dec. 6-7, multiple times**  
UVM Theatre presents "The Toys Take Over Christmas." Royall Tyler. Information: 656-2094 or [UVM Theatre](#)

**Dec. 7, 3 p.m.**  
Concert: Handel's "Messiah" performed by 65 members of the UVM Concert Choir and Chamber Orchestra.  
Southwick Music Complex Recital Hall.  
Information: 656-3034.

**Dec. 8, 4 p.m.**  
Lecture: "Inequity and Crime: How Strong is the Evidence Around the World?" with John Gibson, University of Waikato, New Zealand. 221 Old Mill. Information: 656-3064.

## NEWS BRIEFS

## EVENTS

## NOTABLES

## SEARCH

## PRINT THIS ISSUE

## PRINT PAST ISSUES

## FEEDBACK

## UVM HOMEPAGE

## NEWS BRIEFS



Planners are considering a cogeneration options to squeeze efficient, clean power out of the central steam plant. (Photo: Physical Plant Department)

### UVM Investigating Electricity Cogeneration

Behind all the new ideas planned for the university — a student center, the 800-bed University Heights dormitories, a 300,000-square-foot life sciences building, renovation of the George D. Aiken Center for Natural Resources, and more — is a five-letter word: power.

Not power as in "powerful ideas," but the power that runs generators, boilers, air conditioners, furnaces and generally keeps things humming. Where will the university get the money and the energy to power all these new projects? And an even more complicated question: Is it possible to grow the university without increasing the amount of power it takes to run it? These are the questions that a group of interested UVM faculty, students, engineers and physical plant experts volleyed on Nov. 21 in an informal meeting at the Aiken Center.

"We're trying to reduce our electrical use on campus so that as we expand facilities we don't use more electricity. We want expansion to be energy-cost-neutral," began Salvatore Chiarelli, director of UVM's physical plant.

Chiarelli provided the background for remarks from Steve Schray of Turbosteam Corporation, who was invited to explain how UVM could convert backpressure steam, which is a byproduct of the university's existing boiler system, into electricity. The practice of generating heat and power simultaneously is called cogeneration.

Turbosteam, a Turners Falls, Mass.-based company designs, manufactures and installs

### Medical Librarians Move Out From Stacks, Into Community

Access to health information is more democratic than ever before — a ten-second Google search can yield documents once only found in medical libraries — and care, as well, is more collaborative, with doctors taking the notion of informed consent farther than they did in the past.

"My parents, who are quite elderly now, are being asked to make decisions that they never would have been asked 30 years ago — such as choosing between this operation or that operation," says Marianne Burke, director of the Dana Medical Library. "Before, many things just sort of happened to you. Now there's a huge expansion of choice."

This generally positive trend, says Burke, put patients in some difficult positions. How do they winnow down thousands of hits to the one document that helps them make sense out of a condition or a medication? And how do they insure that information is reliable? To help consumers, and public librarians, find what they need, Burke applied for and received a grant from the National Network of Libraries of Medicine-New England Region to create the Vermont Cooperative Consumer Health Information Project.

The \$25,000 in funding has paid for a consumer-oriented [Website](#) with pointers to the most requested forms of health information, and two events for community librarians and people working in public health information. The UVM medical librarians connect with their colleagues on everything from deciphering medical jargon to using specialized medical databases to the privacy and personal concerns of guiding an individual to personal-health resources.

The cooperative is going public on Dec. 10 at 1:30 p.m. in Burlington's Fletcher Free Library, with a talk and presentation titled "Finding the Best Consumer Health Information on the Internet." At least two more public events, in South Burlington and Burlington, are planned for February and March.

Burke and her colleagues relish the opportunity to get out and connect with other librarians and the general public. She's also aware of a large and growing need: One study said that 31 percent of all Web queries were related to health in some way.

"There is so much information out there. There is a lot of quack stuff, there are lot of chat groups

turbine-generator sets that are compatible with steam heating and cooling systems. These turbines convert the expansion of steam from high pressure to low pressure, and then mechanical turbines convert that pressure into electricity.

"It allows electricity generation at about triple the efficiency of the national average," said Schray. "This is really the reason to do it — higher efficiency translates into cost savings."

"The other reason is that it reduces pollution by displacing dirtier electricity," said Gary Hawley, organizer of the meeting and a senior researcher at the Rubenstein School of Environment and Natural Resources.

Some of the hurdles to turbine installation might include unusual conditions and system configurations, long-term savings versus initial costs, objections of utility providers and state and local regulations, Schray said.

At least 10 colleges and universities have installed these backsteam cogeneration systems, including the University of Wisconsin, University of Maryland and Carnegie Mellon University. Colby College in Waterville, Me. installed one as a backup during winter storm power outages and now saves \$186,000 in energy costs, according to Turbosteam promotional material. UVM's Vermont neighbor, Middlebury College, installed a system in 2000 that produces "100 percent of the college's heating, over 80 percent of its cooling and 13 percent of its electricity load," said Schray.

Schray and Chiarelli made some rough estimates based on the size of UVM's boiler system that a cogeneration system here would cost around \$500,000 to generate 1,000 kilowatts of electricity. Chiarelli pointed out that university wide, an installation such as this would not have been cost effective until last summer when UVM added chillers to cool buildings and now runs the steam system year round.

"I think it's exciting that we're pushing forward to see if it's going to work," said Hawley.

"We're seriously thinking about it," said Chiarelli. "Very seriously."

### **Study Identifies Stroke Marker in Elderly Men**

Despite rising lifespans, the number of stroke deaths rose almost 10 percent from 1990 to 2000 according to the American Stroke Association. Now, a cholesterol-related particle found in blood called Lp(a) lipoprotein may help physicians better identify elderly men at a higher risk for stroke.

A study published in the Nov. 27 *New England Journal of Medicine* has identified a new independent predictor of stroke and other vascular events in men over 65. The report is the latest publication from the Cardiovascular Health

and things, where people, perhaps with good intentions, are promoting questionable cures," she says. "And people can spend a lot of time searching and not find anything useful."

The new Website should help that by providing access to the National Library of Medicine, the nation's most reliable and credible source of current and accurate databases on diseases and medical conditions, as well as links to information about Vermont hospitals and health care provider databases.

"The ease of use of this new system is remarkable," says Dr. Mildred Reardon, associate dean of primary care and lead administrator of the grant for UVM's Area Health Education Centers program. "I think that primary care physicians will be very supportive of recommending it to their patients."

In addition to the Dana Medical Library, partners on the project include the Champlain Valley AHEC library, Fletcher Allen Consumer Health Resource Center, Fletcher Free Library, and South Burlington Community Library. The URL for the information site is <http://library.uvm.edu/dana/vthealth>.

### **UVM Center Helped Food Entrepreneurs Succeed**

The Northeast Center for Food Entrepreneurship, based jointly here and at Cornell University, had a powerful impact on existing and start up food ventures in the region, according to a survey of companies in the NECFE database conducted by the Center for Rural Studies between November 2002 and June 2003. In all 2,285 people were called, and 229 surveys were completed.

NECFE was created in January 2000 with a grant from the Fund for Rural America/CREES/USDA to provide a range of services — from product development and manufacture to food safety, packaging and marketing — for companies in the Northeast.

"We have felt throughout our work with our clients that we were having an impact on their success, helping them in a variety of ways to succeed and make a contribution to their local and regional economies," said Catherine Donnelly, co-director of the center and a professor of food science and nutrition at UVM. "It's gratifying to see that intuition corroborated by a quantitative survey of our client base."

Highlights from the survey include the following:

- NECFE helped clients in the survey create 393 new products for 61 new businesses.
- The five top products that NECFE clients were approved to manufacture and sell included: dressings and flavoring (20%); meats (16%); dairy products (12%); baked goods (11%); and produce (11%).
- 48% of clients experienced growth in their business after starting to work with NECFE.
- Those who worked with NECFE longer

Study, a population-based longitudinal study of coronary heart disease and stroke in older adults funded by the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute.

"There is evidence that Lp(a) may relate to blood-clotting and atherosclerosis, which both play a role in stroke and cardiovascular events," said study co-author Russell Tracy, senior associate dean for research and academic affairs and director of the Laboratory for Clinical Biochemistry Research at the College of Medicine, where the blood analysis for the 5888 people in the CHS was conducted.

Despite statistics that show 72 percent of annual stroke victims are over the age of 65, medical scientists had previously emphasized studies of vascular events in middle-aged individuals. In studying a population over 65, the researchers found that elderly men with Lp(a) levels in the highest 20 percent had about three times the risk of suffering a stroke over a seven-year period and were twice as likely to die from all causes in that time period than men with levels in the lowest 20 percent. No such relationship between Lp(a) and risk was identified in the elderly women who participated in the study.

"Based on these results, some physicians may look at Lp(a) to help better identify risk in older male patients where there is some uncertainty," said Tracy. "However, further study into the subject is necessary before instituting a recommendation that all elderly men get their Lp(a) levels measured."

For this arm of the Cardiovascular Health Study, researchers followed 2375 women and 1597 men (over the age of 65 and free of vascular disease) for nearly seven-and-a-half years. In addition to Tracy, co-authors on the study included Dr. Abraham Ariyo, from Johns Hopkins Hospital in Maryland and Chau Thach, from the University of Washington.

and used more services experienced more growth than those companies who worked with the center for shorter periods and used fewer services.

- 159 new jobs were created by companies in the survey while they were working with NECFE.
- 69% of businesses reported that their income had increased or remained the same after working with NECFE.

For a copy of the full report and information on upcoming workshops, contact Susan Callahan at NECFE at (802) 656-2952.

## **Anti-Idling Initiative Aims for Fewer Fumes**

An idling vehicle wastes gas, causes respiratory ailments and emits 20 times more pollution than a vehicle traveling at 32 mph. And when a vehicle idles next to an air intake, the building's occupants suffer.

A "No Idling" initiative to be launched this January by the Environmental Council intends to reduce the number of idling vehicles on campus. Educational flyers will be distributed to the drivers of idling vehicles and signs encouraging drivers to turn off their engines will be posted at campus loading docks and at the circle outside of Patrick Gym.

"This is a one-year initiative for the Council, but the idea is to provide signs and information that will be useful for years to come," says Gioia Thompson of the Environmental Council.

Some facts to consider:

- idling a compact car for 10 minutes each day wastes more than 30 gallons of gasoline per year and damages a vehicle's spark plugs, cylinders and exhaust system
- idling more than 10 seconds uses more gas than restarting your engine
- idling vehicles are the main source of indoor air quality problems at UVM

UVM's "No Idling" initiative is a collaborative project with administrative and facilities departments on campus, and is part of the 10% Challenge campaign of the Alliance for Climate Action, an organization dedicated to reducing Burlington's greenhouse gas emissions by 10 percent. For more information, contact Thompson at 656-3803.



NEWS BRIEFS

EVENTS

NOTABLES

SEARCH

PRINT THIS ISSUE

PRINT PAST ISSUES

FEEDBACK

UVM HOMEPAGE

## EVENTS

**Kristol to Describe Democrats' Foreign-Policy Bind**

Bill Kristol, editor and publisher of *The Weekly Standard* and an outspoken and long-time advocate of regime change in Iraq, will discuss the implications of foreign policy for the 2004 election on Dec. 4 at 7 p.m. in Ira Allen Chapel.

Kristol has had a long career in politics, policy and commentary. He regularly appears on all of the major television public affairs shows, and served as chief of staff to Vice President Dan Quayle during the Bush administration and to Secretary of Education William Bennett under President Ronald Reagan. He is the former leader of the Project for the Republican Future, a group important in the party's 1994 Congressional victories, and the founder and chairman of the Project for the New American Century, a foreign-policy think tank.

Before coming to Washington in 1985, Kristol taught politics at the University of Pennsylvania and Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government.

**Theatre's 'Toys' Great for Girls and Boys**

The UVM Theatre's holiday tradition, now in its 13th year, is to stage Patricia Clapp's "The Toys Take Over Christmas," a kid-friendly celebration of Santa. This year's public performances are Dec. 6-7.

Following the performances, children will have the opportunity to meet all the characters from the play as well as a hirsute visitor from northern climes.

Another performance of the play, on Dec. 5, is offered free to the families of children with terminal illness or disabilities.

Information, tickets: 656-2094. Tickets to the Dec. 6-7 matinees and early evening performances are limited; call or visit the theatre's box office for information about available show times.

**Student Jazz Ensemble and Guests to Perform Ellington's 'Portrait of Ella'**

The University of Vermont Jazz Ensemble will perform Duke Ellington's "Portrait of Ella Fitzgerald" on Dec. 4 at 7:30 p.m. in the Southwick Recital Hall, Redstone Campus. Joining the ensemble's 19 student musicians for the free, public performance will be Larry McCrorey, jazz aficionado and professor emeritus of molecular physiology and biophysics.

Ellington and collaborator Billy Strayhorn wrote the five-movement suite to honor Ella Fitzgerald, America's "first lady of song" and most popular female jazz singer for more than half a century. She often performed with Ellington, one of the world's greatest composers and musicians. McCrorey will take on Ellington's role as narrator of the piece, reading texts of tribute to introduce each movement.

"Portrait of Ella Fitzgerald" includes "a couple of big, challenging pieces," says Alexander Stewart, assistant professor of music and Jazz Ensemble director.

Sophomore Gregory Benson, for example, will perform Ellington's 1947 Carnegie Hall modernistic piano concerto, "Clothed Woman." Other students whose musical chops will be showcased include trumpeter and sophomore Alex Toth.

The UVM Jazz Ensemble is one of several performing ensembles in the Department of Music that are open to all students by audition. For information, visit [UVM Jazz Ensembles](#).

**Annual 'Winterfest' Gathers Diverse Observances of the Season**

Winterfest, UVM's annual "appreciation and celebration of winter observances and holidays from the different people and communities in our global village," will take place on Dec. 4 from 11:00 a.m. to 5 p.m. in Billings Student Center.

The event will include performances by jazz singer Jenni Johnson, the Bosnia Children's Dance Group and the UVM Percussion Ensemble. There will also be a Shabbat observance and a demonstration of Indian dance and sari, and free refreshments.

Information: 656-0059

NEWS BRIEFS

EVENTS

NOTABLES

SEARCH

PRINT THIS ISSUE

PRINT PAST ISSUES

FEEDBACK

UVM HOMEPAGE

## NOTABLES

December 4, 2003

## Awards and Honors

**Mark Bouton**, professor of psychology, has been named 75th president of the Eastern Psychological Association for 2004/05. He served as President Elect last year. The EPA is the oldest and largest regional divisions of the American Psychological Association, with more than 3000 members. Bouton conducts research on the mechanisms of learning, memory and emotion represented in classical conditioning/associative learning.

**Branimir von Turkovich**, professor emeritus in the University of Vermont mechanical engineering department, was awarded the M. Eugene Merchant Manufacturing Medal at the annual American Society of Mechanical Engineers at its International Congress Nov. 15 in Washington D.C. Presenters cited von Turkovich "for his significant influence on the advancement of the art and practice of machining in industry."

## Publications and Presentations

**Jeanine Carr**, associate professor of nursing, recently published two papers: "Poetic Expressions of Vigilance," in *Qualitative Health Research*, and "The Experience of Parents Staying at the Bedside of Hospitalized Children," in the *Journal of Pediatric Nursing*.

**Kevin Foley**, assistant professor of biomedical technologies, published a paper, "Novel Aminopropiophenones as Potential Antidepressants," in the December issue of the journal *Drug Development*.

Nov. 19, 2003

## Awards and Honors

Dr. **Robert Karp**, assistant professor of medicine, was appointed to a national consensus panel to develop a Clinical Practice Guideline for the American Medical Directors Association titled "Stroke — treatment and prevention in nursing and rehabilitation facilities."

The U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration recently awarded the **Division of General Internal Medicine** a three-year \$565,977 grant to develop a clinical research training curriculum that will be delivered long-distance and provide training and mentoring to learners from around the country. Key members of the project include Dr. **Benjamin Littenberg**, Carleen and Henry Tufo Professor of Medicine; Dr. **Alan Rubin**, research associate professor of medicine; Dr. **Richard Pinckney**, assistant professor of medicine; **Dana Walrath**, assistant professor of medicine; **Paul Turner**, assistant professor of medicine; and Dr. **Charles MacLean**, associate professor of medicine.

Dr. **Alan Rubin** was recently promoted to research associate professor of medicine. In September, he presented a talk titled "A Curriculum on Medical Errors" at a conference sponsored by the American Academy of Family Practice and the U.S. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. Rubin recently received a grant from the Vermont Department of Health to fund a study he is leading, "Training Health Professionals in Tobacco Cessation."

NEWS BRIEFS

EVENTS

NOTABLES

SEARCH

PRINT THIS ISSUE

PRINT PAST ISSUES

FEEDBACK

UVM HOMEPAGE

## Sweeping Ethics Course Will Launch New Honors College

By Jeff Wakefield



Engaging ethicists: The, er, honor of kicking off the foundational academic experience for the new Honors College went to Alan Wertheimer (left) and Don Loeb for their multidisciplinary ethics course. (Photo: Bill DiLillo)

The new Honors College will offer a multidisciplinary ethics course as its first-year honors seminar when the college is launched next fall, Robert Taylor, dean of the college, announced on Nov. 25. The six credit, two semester course, which all first-year students enrolled in the Honors College will be required to take, is meant to provide a common, foundational academic experience for first-year honors students.

The course was chosen unanimously by the

Honors College Curriculum Committee and the Honors Council. All UVM faculty were invited to submit proposals for the course in October.

Jointly developed by Don Loeb, professor of philosophy and Alan Wertheimer, professor of political science, the course is titled, "Making Ethical Decisions: Personal, Public and Professional."

The course will have multiple sections led by faculty experts in ethical theory. Additional faculty from across the university will also participate in the course, presenting for study the unique ethical challenges faced by their disciplines.

"I'm delighted with this choice," Taylor says. "It's terribly difficult to develop a course with both broad appeal and intellectual integrity. We received a number of strong proposals but this one excelled on both counts."

The course, which will be offered for at least two years, will incorporate the widest possible array of perspectives, Taylor says. "It will speak to virtually every discipline, and the faculty at large will be involved."

"It was a tough call; we had some really good proposals to choose from," says Brenda Tessmann, lecturer in microbiology and molecular genetics and a member of the Honors College Curriculum Committee. "Faculty from all of UVM's colleges and schools think about ethical issues, so this seemed like an opportunity to bring disciplines together. The course is a perfect choice for students. My advisees are often interested in taking ethics courses, because the subject matter is engaging and they get to really debate the issues, which they like."

### Building bridges

Taylor said he is particularly enthusiastic about an extra dimension contained in the concept for the course: an accompanying faculty seminar that will shadow the course curriculum. Core and visiting faculty involved in the course will study the ethics literature together and will meet for regular discussions.

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### Frank Bryan Q+A

Depending on the point he's making, Frank Bryan, the author of the new book *Real Democracy*, may praise New England town meeting as the closest thing we have to pure Athenian democracy or he might just call it "a long day sitting on a hard chair listening to people argue."

### Questioning Authority

President Daniel Mark Fogel, who never met the president of Cornell University while an undergraduate there in the 1960's, wants students to join him over coffee and cookies at a series of informal gatherings.

### Quantifying the Digital Divide

The so-called digital divide between poor, middle class and wealthier Americans created in part by the emergence of the United States as a technological power, has caused Rashmi Narsana to alter her definition of the three basic needs of humans.

"The course has the potential to build bridges across the university in serious and important ways," Taylor says.

"The seminar promises to be intriguing and stimulating for students in all disciplines and parts of the university," says Provost John Bramley. "I think it is a good start towards the goal of bringing faculty together and creating a truly cross disciplinary culture at UVM."

"Ethics is one of those subjects that appeals to all students," says Stephanie Knisley, a senior psychology major and one of two students on the Honors Council. "The course will provide just the kind of intellectually stimulating experience students are looking for when they come to a college campus. It's also very practical: ethics are important no matter what you study or what you do."

"One of the requirements in the request for proposal was that the course be multidisciplinary," says Loeb. "Ethics seemed like a natural from that point of view. Philosophers and political theorists might have the market cornered on ethical theory, but we're not so expert on the more practical applications in the specific disciplines taught at the university. That being the case, the course offered a way to bring a broad cross section of university faculty into the classroom on topics highly relevant to students."

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NEWS BRIEFS

EVENTS

NOTABLES

SEARCH

PRINT THIS ISSUE

PRINT PAST ISSUES

FEEDBACK

UVM HOMEPAGE

**INTERview: Frank Bryan**

By Tom Weaver



The work of citizenship: Frank Bryan has spent his career explaining how "real democracy" works. (File photo: Sally McCay)

*Depending on the point he's making, Frank Bryan may praise New England town meeting as the closest thing we have to pure Athenian democracy or he might just call it "a long day sitting on a hard chair listening to people argue." Both descriptions fit, and Bryan, longtime UVM professor of political science, knows this better than most after 27 years of spending every first Tuesday in March in town halls across Vermont. That*

*work came together in November with the publication of Real Democracy: The New England Town Meeting and How it Works (University of Chicago Press). On a warm June morning in Starksboro, Bryan hopped down from his tractor and took a seat in the shade of his front deck for a conversation with Vermont Quarterly editor Tom Weaver. In the straight-talk style that makes him a favorite of students and journalists alike, Bryan held forth about life on a back road, Vermont politics, the temptations of secession, and the tradition of town meeting.*

**TOM WEAVER: Does living out here on Big Hollow Road, in this rural Vermont setting, shape your approach as a university professor?**

FRANK BRYAN: I think it helps me a hell of a lot for teaching. It gives me a sense of the real world constantly, and certainly, I think, makes one more of a democrat with a small "d." Most of my time is spent with working class people in Vermont. The old Vermonters are who I socialize with, and professionally, I see the other side. I think having both of those perspectives helps make my lectures a little more lively.

**I read recently where you said the idea of "rural virtue" is a myth.**

Jefferson once said that those who labor in the earth are the chosen people of God, and there certainly is a mythology about rural life in America. You see it in advertising. A bunch of teenagers in a hay wagon under a harvest moon — that's good, healthy Americana. A bunch of teenagers on a street corner in a city are up to no good. But those kids in the haywagon may be up to just as much as those kids on the cement, see?

It's both a blessing and a burden. We're expected to be better for some silly reason, and we're not. God didn't bless us; we're just as evil and sinful as anyone else, maybe more so. The benefit I see to rural life has to do with spatial arrangements of people. I believe that the best way to breed tolerance is to force us to deal with one another. And we're forced to in a small town. If I drive down the road and there's someone in the ditch, I don't dare go past them, because I might see them down at the village store and I'd have to explain why I didn't stop. You'd never say, "I don't like that jerk, I'm not going to stop." Plus, I expect some reciprocity, knowing that they'll help me out on the day when I'm the guy in the ditch.

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**Honors Ethics**

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**I understand that many of your students took a role in the considerable data gathering and observation that went into [your new book].**

Whenever I meet a student I haven't seen in 20 years, I'll ask them where they went to town meeting, and they'll always remember, and then they'll tell me a story about it. I'm proud as hell of that fact. So, they really learned something about democracy and the academic world both. There's nothing like putting a kid right in the middle of it.

**You've been closely watching Vermont town meetings for almost 30 years now, what are some of the ways they've changed?** Attendance has gone down in towns that have gotten bigger. But if you look at towns of 500 registered voters in 1970 and compare them to towns of 500 registered voters in 2003, the drop off in participation isn't any greater than the drop-off in voting in national elections.

About 20 percent of the registered voters, on average, will attend the town meeting in towns of under 5,000. That percentage might seem kind of low. But compare that to national elections which you only have to attend once every four years, it only takes a half-hour, and it's not work. You don't sit in hard chairs and listen to people argue.

**Is there a population level where town meeting just doesn't work anymore?**

Right around 5,000 registered voters.... John McLaughry and I wrote a book together called *The Vermont Papers* which deals with how we can recreate democracy on a human scale. I'm a decentralist communitarian, which means that political parties don't mean much. I don't care if it is General Motors or the U.S. Department of Education, they are both big bureaucracies that are both fundamentally undemocratic because ordinary people really don't have a say in them.

My ideology is with the small is beautiful crowd. Applying that philosophy to schools, for instance, I think of my high school experience in Newbury, Vt. I was in the senior play. I was on the debate team, basketball, baseball. Not only was there a place for any kid to participate, people would come and get you to participate. Hard core working class and poor kids, everybody knew there was a chance for them, they didn't get lost. Studies that measure self-esteem, academic prowess, involvement in extracurricular stuff, indicate that the best size for a graduating class in a high school is between 30 and 70. Think about that...

I went back to my high school reunion last Saturday night. The Class of 1953 was there. They graduated 11. Ten of them were there, and the only one who wasn't had died. There's got to be a reason for that — and that's conservatism in the best sense of the word, preserving values, sense of enduring community and place, the things that hold a nation together.

That's my politics, keep it small. The basketball isn't good, but everybody gets to play.

**If small-scale town meetings make for better communities, do you think they also create better individuals?**

Both of those things are up in the air. My view is that they do. There are some scholars who say that they just ask too much of human beings. I think that when you go to a town meeting you see a lot of intolerance, you see a lot of ignorance, but that's because it is open, honest government. You can't hide the fact that you're an ass or a damn fool. We'll come home after town meeting and my wife will say, "God, why did you say that, what a stupid..." Someone once said that Adolf Hitler as the chancellor of Germany was a horror, but Adolf Hitler at town meeting would be immediately recognized as a jackass.

**Your book also explores gender issues at town meeting. Could you talk a little bit about that?**

There is no legislative institution in America in which women have more power than in town meeting in Vermont. Town meetings are legislatures, they make laws, and about an average of 48 percent of those attending are women. That beats any state legislature, the American Congress can't come close, city councils on average are much lower. In many towns in Vermont, the majority of those attending town meeting are going to be women, the majority of the speakers are going to be women. It is really egalitarian in that way.

We're also noticing that the issues women are speaking to are no longer as stereotyped as they once were. It used to be that women participated more on education issues. Now that is leveling out, not because women are participating less but because men are participating more. And at the same time, women are weighing in on things like trucks and roads on an equal basis.

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A longer version of this interview is available on the *Vermont Quarterly* Website at [Being Frank](#).

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NOTABLES

SEARCH

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FEEDBACK

UVM HOMEPAGE

## Questioning Authority

By Jon Reidel

President Daniel Mark Fogel never got the chance to meet the president of Cornell University while an undergraduate there in the 1960's. He does remember sitting in his office a few times, though.

"I think [the protest] was over the war or something," Fogel said. "I remember 'sitting in' his office on more than one occasion. But I never got the chance to meet my president. I think it's something I would have remembered."

Fogel's light-hearted remarks came after a roundtable discussion with students over coffee and cookies in Waterman's Memorial Lounge. Students were invited via e-mail for an afternoon of "informal conversation and refreshments" to voice any issues or concerns they have with their university's highest-ranking official.

The setting had Fogel in a laid-back mood, far from the daily formalities of a college president, despite the probing questions coming from the 25 students on hand for the get-together.

### On the spot

One of the first queries came from a student opposed to the University Commons planned for Main Street between Morrill and Terrill halls, saying he came to UVM for the "rural, backcountry feel," and didn't think a modern building set against the backdrop of UVM's older structures would work.

Fogel said he agreed that the historical integrity of the campus must be maintained and that the ultra-modern design proposals were rejected so not to create an unharmonious hodge-podge of buildings, as is currently the case with some of the buildings constructed in the 1960's and 70's. Unsatisfied with his answer, the student, Nick, and the president engaged in constructive, if intense, debate.

Another student wanted to know what the president intended to do about improving the university's ethnic diversity. Fogel said this is an area "I've worked hardest on" and that although "we have a long way to go, some things have already improved." The 500 people of color currently on campus represents an all-time high and constitutes six percent of the total student population, up from three percent in 1999, he said.

Not good enough. "How is the university preparing to embrace these new minority students?" volleyed another student. "Is there a campus-wide plan to integrate these new minorities so they feel a sense of community?"

The questioning turned to sexual orientation. "You spoke earlier about the values of the university," a student said. "The promotion of homosexuality by the university bothers me."

"I think we're going to disagree on this," Fogel responded. "I don't think we're promoting homosexuality. I want this to be a place where everyone feels welcome and safe."

"I'm not for exclusion, but I think [UVM] goes above and beyond the call of duty [to attract gay and lesbian students]," the student shot back.

And the questions, which made a Board of Trustees meeting seem tame, continued:

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### Honors Ethics

The new Honors College will offer a multidisciplinary ethics course as its first-year honors seminar when the college is launched next fall, Robert Taylor, dean of the college, announced on Nov. 25. "The course has the potential to build bridges across the university in serious and important ways," says Robert Taylor, the college's dean.

### Frank Bryan Q+A

Depending on the point he's making, Frank Bryan, the author of the new book *Real Democracy*, may praise New England town meeting as the closest thing we have to pure Athenian democracy or he might just call it "a long day sitting on a hard chair listening to people argue."

### Quantifying the Digital Divide

The so-called digital divide between poor, middle class and wealthier Americans created in part by the emergence of the United States as a technological power, has caused Rashmi Narsana to alter her definition of the three basic needs of humans.



"I don't feel like a lot of the teachers make an effort to connect with students."

"Do you think seniors could have the option to have *Universitas Viridis Montis* put on our diplomas like it used to be?"

"I don't feel like I know where my money is going."

"I don't think it's fair that we have to pay \$40 to get another (dorm) key if we lose the first one."

And so on...

### **Enjoyable interactions**

Fogel answered the questions seriously, interjecting humor in the appropriate spots. Most students appeared genuinely satisfied with the experience. Fogel said he enjoyed the interaction and thinks it was beneficial for both parties. Toward the latter part of the 72-minute discussion, Nick, who opposes University Commons among other Fogel proposals, quietly gets up to leave.

"So long Nick," Fogel says with a warm grin, perhaps seeing some of his defiance from his sit in days at Cornell in the young student. "Thanks for coming."

Looking a little uncertain as to why the president was saying goodbye to him by name, the student looked at Fogel, and with a mutually understood grin said, "Thanks for having me," and walked off.

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UVM HOMEPAGE

## Quantifying the Digital Divide

### Center for Rural Studies grant evaluations help local non-profits and open avenues for new UVM research

By Jon Reidel



Rashmi Narsana, a research analyst in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, is helping a local nonprofit measure the impact of its work to narrow the "digital divide." (Photo: Bill DiLillo)

The so-called digital divide between poor, middle class and wealthier Americans, which was created in part by the emergence of the United States as a technological power, has caused Rashmi Narsana to alter her definition of the three basic human needs.

In addition to food, clothing and shelter, says Narsana, a research analyst in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, a lack of computer skills can be a major obstacle in

people attaining gainful employment, and thus, the other three fundamental needs.

Narsana sees the positive effects that come when disadvantaged Burlington residents receive computer training in her work as an external evaluator for UVM's Center for Rural Studies on three grants totaling almost \$1 million. The grants, awarded to CyberSkills/Vermont, an independent non-profit, are designed to help provide computer training for people wanting to join the work force in areas that require some computer knowledge.

"A lot of research questions come out of our work on these grants," Narsana says. "We've found that, yes, there is a digital divide and a need for training and access in the community. But we've also discovered a number of other obstacles in getting people the training they need."

#### Blocks to progress

Two of the most difficult obstacles to overcome for disadvantaged people are transportation to computer sites and daycare for children. During one grant period of 13 months, for example, 64 workstations were available, creating almost 100,000 hours of access availability. But some of the participants couldn't get to Fletcher Free Library and the Department of Employment and Training District Office where the bulk of the hours were provided.

The obvious answer would be to provide training and then give everyone a computer. Since that's not financially practical, other ways to provide training and accessibility are being developed. UVM is working on research that addresses this issue and others discovered through its work with CyberSkills.

Research growing out of the Vermonter Poll, administered by the Center for Rural Studies, found that the percentage of households in the lower income group (below \$20,000 annually) that own computers increased from 28.2 percent in 2000 to 39 percent in 2003. However, because the disparity between the lower income group and other groups, center analysts concluded that even though lower income households are getting more computers, they

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#### Honors Ethics

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#### Questioning Authority

President Daniel Mark Fogel, who never met the president of Cornell University while an undergraduate there in the 1960's, wants students to join him over coffee and cookies at a series of informal gatherings.

still aren't catching up to the household average.

In her grant evaluation report, Narsana wrote, "The barriers to technology for the low-income population go beyond the need for computers. Not only are the low income populations who have had no technological training lacking in self confidence and financial resources to take advantage of workshops and training, but they face barriers that are beyond their reach."

#### **Technological confidence building**

Community Development and Applied Economics Chair Jane Kolodinsky says her department is involved in a number of projects involving computer training, including a massive USDA grant that provides e-government training for local municipalities, e-commerce advice for small businesses, and affordable telecommunications access for rural Vermont communities.

Harold Smith, director of CyberSkills, says UVM is helpful in designing the evaluation process he must submit when applying for grants exceeding \$200,000, which requires an external evaluator. With many external-evaluating organizations charging high fees for extra services not needed by Cyberskills, UVM's willingness to charge an inexpensive rate for only the services required by each grant, has made for a positive collaboration.

Smith says CyberSkills, which tries to match its training with the type of computer skills in demand in the private and public sector workforces, has a 75 percent success rate of placing people in jobs with little or no prior computer experience.

Most of the data compiled by UVM is based on quantifiable research-based information. But Narsana says that not all results are scientific. Some of the incarcerated women involved with one grant program Narsana helped evaluation said they benefited from the training and gained self-confidence. Many other participants, including an 85-year-old grandmother who learned how to email her grandchildren and now teaches other seniors how to surf the web and send email to relatives, expressed increased self confidence and an overall improvement in self-esteem.

"A lot of the people were optimistic about the future," Narsana says.

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