Kennedy speechwriter, Carnegie president to speak at Commencement

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At the same time, all FirstChoice classes will move to an enrollment cap of 19 first-year students. This initiative will increase the number of FirstChoice classes to nearly 80, with a total of about 1,500 seats for incoming freshmen, said Interim Provost David King. FirstChoice began in fall 2001 by serving 875 of 1,375 first-year students in classes of 25 or fewer students.

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Associate Provost Rhonda Mandel and Dean of Arts and Sciences Sara Varbus have been working with others in academic and student affairs in recent months to make the jump to providing all new freshmen with the intensive, small-class learning environment that Engage 2000 envisioned for them.

“[T]he goal is to create engaging interactive learning,” said Interim Provost David King.

Preceptor — Richard Metzgar (center) of the art department will teach one of the new FirstChoice courses next fall as the program expands to serve all first-year students. Last week he worked with freshmen graphic design majors Krystyna Dorna (left) and Mike Francisco in a design class.

Retention-boosting small classes to embrace all new freshmen next fall

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SUNY Oswego has ‘first-year advocate’ in Evans

Kathleen Evans, associate dean of students, was one of 10 people recognized as the nation’s Outstanding First-Year Student Advocates last month at the annual Conference on the First-Year Experience in Texas.

Bestowed by the University of South Carolina’s National Center for the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition and Houghton Mifflin Publishing Co., the award honors outstanding work on behalf of first-year college students. Evans was one of two awards allotted for colleges and universities in Oswego’s enrollment category.

“Her intelligence, energy, and initiative have fueled the many positive changes for first-year students that have occurred at Oswego and have kept us ahead of the curve in developing experiences that benefit first-year students and the college,” wrote President Ubo-ran F. Stanley in nominating Evans for the award.

“She is regarded by her colleagues as the campus expert on the first-year experience.”

Evans joined Oswego’s staff in the Student Advisement Center in 1989 and coordinated New Student Orientation for a number of years.

She has played a major role in developing a number of innovative programs for first-year students at Oswego. Chief among them is the Johnson First-Year Residential Experience, which became a reality in fall 1996 at her initiative.

“She was the heart and soul of the project,” according to Associate Provost Rhonda Mandel, who assisted Evans in developing the academic aspects of this program.

Annual assessments of this program continue to show improvement.

‘College hour’ under review

A student’s idea for increasing student involvement and building a stronger sense of community on campus is currently the subject of discussion in academic departments campuswide.

Greg Lawson, vice president of the Student Association, and Registrar Andy Westfall presented a proposal for a weekly “college hour” at last week’s Faculty Assembly meeting. They asked representatives to take it to their departments for discussion and come back for a vote at the March 22 meeting.

When he asks students why they are not more involved in campus activities, Lawson said, the typical answer is, “I don’t have time.”

“So I thought, ‘Why not make time?’” he told Faculty Assembly. “A very simple solution to a rather complicated problem.”

Westfall and the Registrar’s Advisory Group have been working for many months with Law.

See ‘College hour proposed,’ page 3
College applications up

“Seventy-six percent of colleges surveyed by the National Association for College Admission Counseling received more applications in 2003 than they did in 2002, according to the association’s College Admission Report. The selectivity rate of colleges and universities in the United States was 69.9 percent in 2003, while the ‘yield’ rate—the percentage of admitted students who enroll at an institution—was 43.2 percent. Approximately 13 million students were enrolled in college in 2003, the report says, but white students were more likely to graduate from high school and enroll in college than were black and Hispanic students. At four-year colleges, blacks and Hispanics accounted for only 17 percent of the enrollment in 2003, but 31 percent of the country’s college-age population.”

— Briefcase, Council for Advancement and Support of Education, March 2004

SUNY fights for alumni control

“The State University of New York is looking to gain more control over its alumni associations, but some campuses are against the idea. SUNY officials are asking each of its campus alumni groups to sign contracts that would: give campus officials voting representation on the association’s board of directors; regular audits of the association’s board of directors; and a provision stating that should a campus alumni association dissolve, its assets would go to the campus. Some campuses, including the University of Buffalo and the University of Albany, are already asking the university’s alumni offi  ce.”

— SUNY News Release, Feb. 25, 2004

Rioting: The new campus craze

“Have a few beers. Watch the big game. Get loaded. Go out and burst stuff. That, in a nutshell, is the latest craze sweeping American colleges, and one that has campus administrators and police scrambling for solutions. From Maryland to Minnesota to Ohio to Massachusetts, students have caused hundreds of thousands of dollars of damage in boozed-fueled riots following major sporting events. . . . Some experts think rioting is just the latest wacky behavior to spread through the higher education circuit...”

— Reuters, Feb. 24, 2004
Power, network interruptions to advance center during spring break

Spring break on campus will be even quieter than usual this year, because of a series of four half-day power outages affecting 17 buildings.

The contractor working on the utilities relocation phase of campus center construction requires the power interruptions in order to complete connections to the campus power grid, said John Moore of the Facilities Design and Construction Office.

“All occupants of the affected buildings are requested to power down and unplug sensitive electronic equipment” before each outage, Moore said. Here’s what people on campus can expect from Monday, March 15, to Thursday, March 18, according to Moore and Mike Pisa of Campus Technology Services:

- Brief power outages in Snygg and Wilber halls will take down the campus network, affecting e-mail and Web services, for about five minutes before 8 a.m. Monday and again after 8 p.m. Thursday.
- Four power outages will occur in buildings west of Poucher Hall from noon to 10 p.m. Monday through Thursday. The buildings affected are Swetman-Poucher, Penfield, Lamigan, Mahar, Tyler, Hewitt, Culkin*, Funnelle, Hart*, Cooper, Seneca, Cayuga, Pathfinder, Onondaga, Oneida and Littlepapge. Emergency generators will keep lights on.
- A generator will provide full power to Culkin and Hart halls, with brief interruptions only around noon on Monday and around 9 p.m. on Thursday to switch to and from the generator.
- Telephones are expected to keep working on battery power, for the most part.
- A generator will keep the computer network working, for the most part.

Underground lifelines — Buckskin Pipeline Construction Ltd. has begun to install this 12-inch water pipe near Swetman Hall as part of the utilities foundation for the future campus center. The electrical portion of the utilities project will require a series of power outages during spring break.

- Because the project involves splicing of cables that carry voice, data and video, intermittent interruptions of telephone, computer network and cable television may occur at various points on campus, including east of Swetman-Poucher, Pisa said.

The Help Desk (312-3456) will be open until 4:30 p.m. each day, and a network status line (512-5678) will report known network issues, he added.

All members of the campus community should already have received an e-mail message about these scheduled power outages. Questions and concerns can be directed to Moore at jmoores@oswego.edu.

Campus Update Spotlight shines on Susan Skripac.

Campus enjoys flexibility, autonomy at Oswego

The Campus Update Spotlight shines on Susan Skripac, this week. She is associate professor and chair of vocational teacher preparation, as well as chair of Faculty Assembly at SUNY Oswego.

Q. How long have you been at Oswego?

Since August 1987.

Q. Why did you start teaching?

I got into this by accident. I was at a horse show when a friend of mine came up to me, put his arm around me and said “we need a teacher next week.” It was for an agricultural education program.

Q. Where did you earn degrees?

I have a bachelor’s in animal science from Ohio State, a master’s in vocational education from Kent State, and a Ph.D. in vocational education from Louisiana State University.

Q. What classes do you teach here?

I teach curriculum development and assessment. This summer, I’m teaching a travelling seminar on agriculture in Oswego County. I teach live classes, but most of the time I teach online.

Q. What are your research interests?

Online learning and teaching and whether it is effective — and it’s better for some students. I’m also interested in improving online learning and teaching. Because we do so much of it, it’s important to make sure it’s working.

Q. What is your favorite part of teaching at Oswego?

The job is wonderful because you have flexibility and autonomy of sorts. It’s also stressful because you have flexibility and autonomy of sorts. The best part about teaching is watching how much students grow up and improve on their way to becoming teachers.

Q. What is your impression of Oswego’s students?

The ones that come to us have a goal of becoming great teachers. The ones that come to us have a goal of becoming great teachers. It’s also stressful because you have flexibility and autonomy of sorts. It’s also stressful because you have flexibility and autonomy of sorts.

Q. What achievement are you most proud of?

The most important thing we’ve done is put our whole undergraduate program online so anyone anywhere in the world can become a vocational teacher. In five years, we went from one online course to the whole program being online except for one week of residency in the summer. We will be doing the same thing with our graduate program.

Q. Do you have any hobbies?

My social life revolves around horses and horse activities... taking my horse to horse shows, clinics and other events. Sometimes you show at a show; sometimes you go to watch the great horses show. I also do some perennial gardening.

Q. What can you tell us about your family?

I live with my husband, Dale, in Mexico. Our daughter Ashley is a freshman at SUNY ESF and will attend Upstate Medical Center in radiation therapy in fall 2005. My horse, Juice, is in New Haven.

College hour proposed

Continued from page 1

son on a proposal that would bring his idea to life. Their proposal creates a class-hour from 1 to 2 p.m. on Wednesdays that would be the official “college hour,” during which speakers, performances and activities would be programmed.

Such events now often occur during evening hours, when commuting students, faculty and staff are unable or reluctant to return to campus, Lawson noted.

It provides us with the opportunity to decide whether to have make-up days, additional days off, special days or increased teaching opportunities. — Registrar Andrew Westfall

The proposal also involves changes in class scheduling and the academic calendar that are proving controversial.

- Monday-Wednesday-Friday classes would lengthen to 60 minutes, Tuesday-Thursday classes to 90 minutes. Longer classes would not result in a shorter semester, however, because semesters must be 15 weeks long, Westfall said. That means there would be extra days, and the proposal does not specify how those days would be used. “It provides us with the opportunity to decide whether to have make-up days, additional days off, special days or increased teaching opportunities,” Westfall said.

- Besides the official college hour on Wednesday, the same gap would occur in class scheduling on Monday and Friday, and more classes would have to be scheduled at noon under-used times to allow for those unscheduled hours. “If each department had one more 8 a.m. or late afternoon class, the problem would be easily solved,” Westfall said.

He emphasized that exceptions to the class schedule would be made for lab and studio classes in the arts and sciences.

Some speakers at Faculty Assembly suggested that instead of one vote on March 22, the issue be divided and considered in two votes: one on the concept of the college hour and another on the proposed new class schedule.

If the proposal gets a green light in its entirety, the college hour could be instituted by fall 2005, Interim Provost David King said. He suggested a two-year pilot.

— Julie Harrison Blissert
Jazz weekend to feature high school, ArtsWego performances

An internationally renowned troupe of jazz performers and educators will present clinics and concerts for scholastic musicians during the first-ever Oswego County High School Jazz Weekend March 19 and 20 at SUNY Oswego.

The weekend will serve as a kind of tune-up for a weeklong Jazz Institute at the college in July. These intensive hands-on educational opportunities are “something I’ve wanted to do for a long time,” said Rick Holland, an assistant professor of music at the college and coordinator of the two programs. “I’ve always wanted to do an event like this that has enough diversity to please the people it could attract.”

Presenters at both the March weekend and July institute include Holland on trumpet, big band, combos, rhythm section, and improvisation; John Rutter, who will perform the cello called “Nada Te Turbe.”

Choral Schoenfeld.

The college’s experience with FirstChoice so far is “very positive,” King said. “The college’s experience with FirstChoice, a comprehensive first-year experience that provides a choice of academic options to incoming students, has proven to be successful. Further, it has allowed us to have a more diverse student body.”

Continued from page 1

“Choosing the right college is critical for a student’s success,” King noted. “All the FirstChoice courses make a point of helping students manage the transition to college, connect with faculty and tutors, and get to know opportunities available on campus. Nearly all are taught by experienced faculty or staff, and some have a peer educator working with the instructor.”

It’s the very essence of learner-centeredness,” King said.

Jazzman coming — The Kerry Strayer Septet will perform at 8 p.m. Saturday, March 20, at Tyler Hall’s Waterman Theatre.

The music department will present “Baroque Pearls and 20th Century Gems” at 8 p.m. today in the Sheldon Hall fitness center.

This admission-free concert will feature the College Choir and Chamber Singers, conducted by Julie Pretzat, and the College-Community Orchestra, directed by Juan La Mana.

The first portion will highlight student talent in Baroque solo concert movements with the orchestra. Brian Duran, a senior music major and winner of many awards and scholarships at the college, will perform the Concerto for Guitar and Orchestra by Antonio Vivaldi. Andrea Veresack and Jodi Castello will perform the Concerto for Two Cellos and Orchestra, also by Vivaldi. Vivaldi’s Concerto for Two Cellos will be performed by Valerie Perkins and Rachel Schoenfeld.

The second half of the program will feature vocal works, with and without accompaniment. The 12-member select Chamber Singers will present a cappella singing of a setting of a text of Saint Theresa of Avila for chorus and solo cello called “Nada Te Turbe.”

Soprano Amanda Carnie, adjunct instructor of voice, will perform Bachiana Brasileiras No. 5 by Heitor Villa Lobos accompanied by the cello section of the orchestra. The concert will culminate with a setting of the traditional “Te Deum” text for chorus and orchestra by contemporary English composer John Rutter.

Because seating is limited, attendees are advised to arrive early.

FirstChoice expands

Continued from page 1

experiences for new freshmen and give them an opportunity to work more closely with the faculty and staff teaching these small classes,” King said. “The goal is to engage and connect.”

The college’s experience with FirstChoice so far is that these courses increase student success and retention, he said. Nationally, studies show that students who make meaningful connections with experienced faculty are more likely to succeed in college, he added.

The “choice” in Oswego’s FirstChoice program of freshman seminar means that students have a variety of options, from discipline-based courses called preceptors to courses aimed at specific groups such as student athletes and students entering the college Honors Program.

The additions for next fall “are overwhelmingly in the preceptor courses in Arts and Sciences,” Mandel said. The expansion means that some faculty will be teaching these courses for the first time. Training for them will take place this spring and summer, she noted.

The expansion will add major-specific preceptor courses in art, biology, public relations, broadcasting, journalism, computer science, meteorology, physics, public justice and elementary education as well as courses aimed at students preparing for law and health professions. It also will reduce the class size and increase sections of the existing gateway courses.

“We have in place a Web-based registration process that will ensure that each student chooses one of these options, and that each student can access only one option,” Varhus said.

All the courses also fulfill other college requirements, either in general education or in the major, King noted.

All the FirstChoice courses make a point of helping students manage the transition to college, connect with faculty and tutors, and get to know the opportunities available on campus. Nearly all are taught by experienced faculty or staff, and some have a peer educator working with the instructor.

“It’s the very essence of learner-centeredness,” King said.

First-year advocate

Continued from page 1

show that freshmen who participate in the First-Year Residential Experience tend to have higher grades, higher retention rates and higher rates of involvement in student activities than typical students, according to Dean of Students James Scharfenberger.

Evans was instrumental in developing and implementing FirstChoice, a comprehensive first-year experience that provides a choice of academic options designed to enhance student success. Instituted in fall 2001, the program will expand next fall to serve all incoming freshmen (see story, page 1).

She was also a key player in implementing the First-Year Advisement Program in fall 2000, which is helping to increase the week-end and during the week-end and institute, and Professor Julie Pretzat and the music department have been instrumental in making the events come together in a short time.

Jazzman coming — The Kerry Strayer Septet will perform at 8 p.m. Saturday, March 20, at Tyler Hall’s Waterman Theatre.

Mission Review grant from SUNY System Administration to fund the start-up of both FirstChoice and the First-Year Advisement Program.

Evans’ efforts to enhance the college experience of Oswego’s students has been recognized in part honors. The Johnson First-Year Residential Experience that it pioneered at Oswego won an award from the USA Group/Neil-Levit for excellence in retention in 1998. Oswego was one of only eight colleges nationally to receive the award. Two years ago, Evans received the SUNY Chancellor’s Award for Excellence in Professional Service.

Evans is the second member of the college community to be recognized as an Outstanding First-Year Student Advocate. Mandel was honored in 2002.

— Julie Harrison Blissett

Police report

Since Feb. 20, University Police investigated several cases of theft, harassment and vandalism. They made four arrests.

Police charged a 24-year-old Oswego man with petit larceny. He is accused of entering Laker Hall and stealing clothes and car keys from several people playing racquetball.

Officers charged a Scales Hall resident with criminal mischief. He is accused of smashing the glass of the front door of the building while trying to get in at 1 a.m.

Two charges of unlawful possession of marijuana were lodged at the violation level against residents of Cayuga and Lonis halls.

Calendar highlights

• College Choir, Chamber Singers and College-Community Orchestra concert, March 10
• Oswego Calling, March 10 and 11
• Women’s Center birthday party, March 11
• Rice Creek Ramble, March 13
• Oswego County High School Jazz Weekend, March 19 and 20
• Kerry Strayer Septet concert, March 20
• Faculty recitals, March 24

For a more complete calendar, see the Events Calendar link at http://www.oswego.edu/news.html — the News button on the college’s home page.