Health-care benefit changes necessitate re-enrollment

The University will serve as mission control for Fossett's June attempt to circumnavigate the world by balloon, according to Chancellor Mark S. Wrighton. He plans a June launch of his balloon, Sol d'Azur, from Kalgoorlie, in southwestern Australia's historic gold fields, on a daring nonstop flight over the oceans of the Southern Hemisphere; a journey he estimates will take 15 days.

"Steve is a great adventurer, and we are pleased to be involved with his solo effort to circumnavigate the world," said Tom Lauman, director of the Office of Benefits. "Steve's efforts have enhanced interest in science, geography and technology. His spirit and determination inspire others and heighten interest in adventure and exploration. He has our support and best wishes for a successful mission."

University faculty and 25 undergraduate engineering, business and science students will assist in the project. Brookings Hall will house the mission control center as it did for his January and August 1998 attempts. Brooksies Room 300 will be partitioned into two sections, one for a 24/7 mission control and the other for a media center.

One of the journey's ascents from Kalgoorlie, his every move will be tracked by mission control and relayed to the public through a University Web site, wuspirit.wustl.edu, on the Internet. It will be updated regularly with news and data that Fossett relays.

Keith J. Bennett, affiliate professor of computer science in the School of Engineering and Applied Science, will be science coordinator for mission control. He will work with Australian teachers who will incorporate the mission into their science curriculum. Michael A. Swartwout, Ph.D., assistant professor of mechanical engineering, will also be part of the team.

Both professors will work with students to build a payload for Sol d'Azur. It will carry a prototype of a tiny spherical imaging satellite they are currently developing for flight in 2002. This prototype will weigh just 1 kilogram, and is "incredibly technically challenging," according to Bennett. The prototype will collect atmospheric data and images during flight and allow students to test various engineering innovations.

Fossett's previous attempts to make the first balloon circumnavigation of Australia's historic gold fields, on the walkway just east of Mallinckrodt Center. The sculpture, a play on Rodin's famous "Thinker," is loan from St. Louis Gateway Foundation.

Health-care benefit changes necessitate re-enrollment

Most changes in the University's health-care benefit plans will require all employees to re-enroll in health and dental insurance by May 31. Beginning Monday, faculty and staff will receive an informational packet at their homes from human resources detailing these changes that take effect July 1.

The changes include:

- The University will offer active employees two new health plans — CIGNA Health Maintenance Organization (HMO) and CIGNA Point of Service (POS). Two current plans will be eliminated — Health Partners HMO and Alliance Blue Cross Blue Shield Preferred Provider Organization (PPO).
- All dental coverage will be converted into one standard plan with BJC Dental.
- A new plan called "Willis" will be added to the human resources Web site at https://hr.wustl.edu to check the provider directories for all health carriers, view the comparison of health-care benefits and print enrollment and waiver forms.
- Employees may visit representatives from all of the health-care carriers to ask specific plan coverage questions during Carrier's Week (May 7-11) and at the Medical School Benefits Fair (May 17-18).
- Employees may contact members of their benefits department or the individual health-care carriers.
- Details of the dates and locations for these various events, as well as the e-mail addresses and phone numbers of the benefits departments and the health carriers, are included in the open enrollment brochure within the informational packet and on the human resources Web site.
- Retirees on University-sponsored health and dental insurance will receive informational pamphlets beginning April 23 outlining their plan changes, including dates and locations for their meetings.

Mervin L. Wright, Ph.D., a cancer researcher and the first person to circumnavigate the Earth solo by balloon, according to Chancellor Mark S. Wrighton. He plans a June launch of his balloon, Sol d'Azur, from Kalgoorlie, in southwestern Australia's historic gold fields, on a daring nonstop flight over the oceans of the Southern Hemisphere; a journey he estimates will take 15 days.

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Inside:


James K. O'Donnell received the Eliot Society's Search Award

Robert L. Virgil, Ph.D., former Olin School of Business dean and former executive vice chancellor for University relations, was given the Eliot Society's highest award at the 2001 banquet April 4 at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel.

In presenting "The Search," as the award is known, James V. O'Donnell, president of the Eliot Society, praised Virgil's lifetime of distinguished service and dedication to the University. Virgil was given a silver replica of the sculpture called "The Search," which was created by Professor Emeritus Helkki Seppa and resides in the University's collection.

Chancellor Mark S. Wrighton noted that "The Search" was given to exceptional University alumni.

"Bob Virgil's leadership, academic distinction, business acumen and dedication have helped advance Washington University to the internationally acclaimed teaching and research institution it is today," Wrighton said.

Virgil retired from the University in 1995 to become a general principal at Edward Jones. He has accepted an appointment to chair the University's Sesquicentennial Commission, leading the efforts to celebrate the school's 150th anniversary in 2003.

Virgil has been associated with the University for more than 40 years. He has served as professor, dean, vice chancellor and executive vice chancellor, as well as chairman of numerous campus committees. Virgil is best known as dean of the Olin School.

Virgil's ties with the Olin School began after his graduation from Beloit College and service in the Army. He enrolled in the University's MBA program. He received his master's in 1960 and a doctoral degree in 1967. He began teaching in the Olin School in 1968 as an instructor. He later became a full professor of accounting, and throughout his tenure as dean, he has held visiting professorships at other institutions, including the Amos Tuck School of Business Administration at Dartmouth, the University of Technology and the Israel Institute of Technology.

His leadership abilities were recognized early. Virgil was named acting dean in 1977 and assumed the permanent deanship two years later. During his tenure, he also served as vice chancellor for student affairs and as executive vice chancellor for university relations.

Virgil received several teaching awards given by business school students, and in 1997, he received the Dean's Medal from the Olin School. At the time of his retirement, friends and alumni established an endowed scholarship in the couple's name.

Active in many civic, educational and professional associations, Virgil has served the
A Nobel Prize winner in medicine and a "genius grant" recipient are among seven people selected to receive honorary degrees at the University's 140th Commencement May 18.

Cox will receive an honorary doctor of science degree. Furchgott will receive an honorary doctor of medical science degree.

Nobel Prize in physiology or medicine for his work concerning the control of the heart by adenosine and adenosine-like compounds.

Lucy Lopata, a tireless community volunteer and law school dean, will receive an honorary doctor of laws degree. The University also will bestow the Research Achievement Award from the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) and Lowell Thomas Award from the Explorers Club.

John F. C. Wrighton, the University's 10th chancellor, will receive an honorary doctor of laws degree from the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) and as chair of the Planning Committee for next month's AALS workshop on bankruptcy.

Furchgott, chairman and professor at State University of New York (SUNY) Department of Pharmacology, has become a SUNY distinguished professor emeritus in 1988. Furchgott will receive a honorary doctor of science degree.

A University of Washington chancellor and professor emeritus, Emry Keating, has been elected as the first Tyrrell Williams Professor of Law.

Among his many accomplishments, Williams was a charter member and adviser on criminal procedure to the American Law Institute, and in 1926, prepared the outline of a code of criminal law procedure for the National Criminal Law Association. After his death in 1947, his friends established the Williams Memorial Lecture that annually brings renowned legal scholars to the law school.

Keating has been a member of the AALS Section on Bankruptcy and Commercial Law. He also has served as chair of the AALS Section on Bankruptcy and Commercial Law. He also has served as chair of the AALS Section on Bankruptcy and Commercial Law.

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Lopata's contributions to the University are significant and far-reaching. The generosity of her contributions to the University of Washington is immeasurable, said Provost and University Relations Charles B. Wrighton, Jr., who installed Cox and Furchgott as chair of the Planning Committee for next month's AALS workshop on bankruptcy.

Keating, a nationally recognized scholar in bankruptcy, and Furchgott, a leading researcher in the field of pharmacology, were elected as the inaugural Tyrrell Williams Professor of Law.

Furchgott earned a B.S. in chemistry from the University of North Carolina in 1952 and a Ph.D. in biochemistry from Northwestern University in 1959. He was a member of Cornell University College of Medicine's faculty in biochemistry before joining the School of Medicine's Department of Pharmacology. In 1956, Furchgott became chairman and professor at State University of New York's (SUNY) Department of Pharmacology. He became a SUNY distinguished professor emeritus in 1988.

Furchgott will receive a honorary doctor of science degree.

Lopata, Professor of Law, has been a member of the University of Washington Board of Regents since 1993, as well as a member of the University's Board of Governors. She has served on the Board of Directors of the University of Washington Medical Center since 1993, and as chair of the University of Washington Medical Center Foundation since 1993. She also has served on the Board of Trustees of the University of Washington Medical School since 1993, and as chair of the University of Washington Medical School Foundation since 1993.

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Most children with sinusitis recover without antibiotics

**By Anne Enright Shepherd**

Antibiotics do not help most children with acute sinusitis, according to a study in the April issue of Pediatrics. This finding raises questions about the common practice of prescribing antibiotics to children with long-lasting sinus symptoms.

"Most children with prolonged colds and cold symptoms are not at the risk of acute sinus disease get better within a week, said Dr. Elizabeth Garbett, assistant professor of pediatrics and an infectious disease specialist at the School of Medicine. "Our study suggests that, for those patients who are unwell and presenting with antibiotic-resistant bacteria."

The researchers studied 180 pediatric patients between the ages of 1 and 18 whose sinus symptoms had persisted for 10 to 30 days. Once the patients were clinically diagnosed with acute sinusitis, they were assigned randomly to one of three groups. For 14 days, one group took the antibiotic amoxicillin, the second took the antibiotic amoxicillin-clavulanate and the third had the inactive substance. A pharmacist distributed the medications so no one knew what patients were in which group.

The researchers phoned each patient or caregiver seven times during the next two months to see if symptoms were still present. If the symptoms were worse, side effects of treatment, a relapse or recurrence of sinusitis and parent satisfaction with treatment also were noted.

Seventy-nine percent of the children on amoxicillin-improved after 14 days, as did 81 percent of those on amoxicillin-clavulanate and 79 percent of those on the placebo. Side effects such as nausea and diarrhea were more common among the children taking an antibiotic, appearing in 19 percent of those on amoxicillin, 11 percent of those on amoxicillin-clavulanate and 10 percent of the placebo group. Some patients who improved initially then relapsed after three or four weeks. Other patients' symptoms reappeared in the second month after treatment began. However, there were no differences among the three groups on antibiotic therapy said Jane M. Gellman, M.D., clinical professor of pediatrics.

"In a sense, we have met the challenge of delaying antibiotic treatment for children with uncomplicated acute sinusitis, it makes sense to delay antibiotic treatment and watch carefully," Garbett said. "Another concern is that they will be provided.

"Antibiotics are expensive and can cause side effects, most commonly diarrhea," Garbett said. "Another concern is that they are an important factor in the emergence and spread of antibiotic-resistant bacteria."

Fisher played role in surgeon general's report

**By Joe DeMuro**

Women now account for 39 percent of smoking-related deaths, double the proportion of women who died from smoking in 1965, according to a new surgeon general's report released last month.

Surgical General David Satcher also reported that since 1980, almost 3 million women in the United States have died prematurely from smoking.

Additionally, he said that the number of teen-age girls smoking cigarette is on the rise despite massive efforts to educate kids about the dangers of smoking.

The report compiles research and data from dozens of scientists around the world, including Edwin B. Fisher, Ph.D., professor of medicine, psychology and pediatrics and director of the Division of Health Behavior Research at the University of Wisconsin, Madison.

Fisher wrote a section of the report on challenges involved in getting women to quit smoking. Combining his own research in smoking cessation with that of others around the country, Fisher wrote that social context is just as important in influencing women to want to stop smoking.

"It's tough for anyone to quit, but these are particular problems with women," Fisher said. "There is an established link between quitting smoking and gaining weight. That is an important factor in a woman's decision to continue smoking, and in the same vein, research has found that adolescent women are much more likely to start smoking with the idea of making themselves attractive to men than men.

Women appear to have some advantages and disadvantages in quitting smoking. They appear to be especially able to take advantage of support groups and friends, but may be worse at understanding the challenges such as quitting smoking, so support groups and therapy can be advantageous.

other hand, traditional roles for women that may, out of concern for the needs of others, discourage them from acting on their own behalf can make it harder for some women to assert their own needs when trying to quit smoking.

We can see from the report that the scope of women's smoking makes it a very significant public health problem, and it's important that we keep young women from starting to smoke, given the high cost of the nearly $9 billion in tobacco advertising. Facing that marketing avalanche, it's also vital that we find ways to help more women quit, said Fisher, associate director for prevention and health promotion at the Institute for Stroke and Atrial Fibrillation at the Jewish Hospital.

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Not so innocent was Oscar Weller. Performance is owned by the Edison Theatre Ovation! Series. See the performance on April 20-21, with a 2:30 p.m. show.

SITI's new production, adapted for the stage by Naomi Bogart, is her co-founded in 1987, as well as other companies around the country. Founded in 1992 by Bogart and Tadashi Suzuki, the SITI Company is committed to the creation of new work, the merging of young theater artists and the pursuit of international collaboration. Originally envisioned as a summer institute in Saratoga Springs, N.Y., SITI has expanded to encompass a year-round program based in New York City with a summer season in Saratoga. Tickets are $37 and are available at the Edison Theatre Box Office, 501 S. Euclid, through MetoTix, 534-1111; for more information, call 935-5434.

Exhibitions

First Year MFA Exhibitions. Through April 30. 6 to 9 p.m. Thursday, noon to 6 p.m. Friday and Saturday. The School of Art Gallery, 3610 Forsyth Blvd. 935-5050.

Film

Tuesday, April 17

Wednesday, April 18
Noon. Ear, Nose and Throat Film Series. "Changing Eyes." Children's Hospital. 935-5156.

Thursday, April 19
4 p.m. Nippon-Gakuin flick. "Mogari." St. Louis University, Library Hall 301, 935-4460.

Friday, April 20
1:30 p.m. French Film Society. "On a Petit Bateau." St. Louis University, Library Hall 301, 935-4460.

Tuesday, April 24
6:30 p.m. Chinese Film Series. "Chang's Journey." St. Anthony's Hospital. 935-5156.

Lectures

Friday, April 13
9:15 a.m. Piedmont Grand Rounds. The role of MD-2 in the "Development of Hypothesis-Induced Hypertension and the Genetics of Essential Hypertension." Gregory A. Gavras, professor, of pediatrics, of genetics, of immunology, of medicine, of molecular biology, and of oncology, Jefferson School of Medicine and Dentistry, N.Y. Clopton Aud., 935-5610.

Saturday, April 14
11 a.m. Mathematics analysis seminar. Mike Jury, graduate student, mathematics, room 201, Y.M.C.A., 935-9930.

Karen L. O'Malley, professor, of medicine, of pathology and of immunology, Center for Research in Immunology, N.Y. Clopton Aud., 935-5610.

Music

Monday, April 16
8 p.m. Mu Sigma discount. "Jazz Songs and the War Machine." St. Louis University, Library Hall 301, 935-4460.

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### Degrees

**Seven individuals to get special honors May 18**

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**Lopata**

Freshman pitchers team for perfect game

Bears freshman pitchers Lori Feltller and Katie Armstrong combined on a first-team, first perfect game, a 2-0 win in the second game of a doubleheader against visiting Greenville College. April 5. A 4-2 win in the opener plus two wins (4-2, 0-0) for Fontbonne College Member moved WU to 16-13.

**Track & field nabs** 2nd, 7th at own meet

The women's track and field team finished second in the 400-meter hurdles (1:50.17), good for a provisional qualifying time at the NCAA Championships. Missouri-St. Louis' record.

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Fossett

Balloonist to make June try; WU mission control 
— from Page 1

gation garnered international attention: He was heading for a finish to Armstrong in August in 1998 when he was caught in a violent thunderstorm that ruptured his balloon, and fell 29,000 feet (8,500 meters) into the Coral Sea, 360 miles east of Australia. Miraculously, he survived, and in process set the world distance record for balloons at 12,235 miles (20,040 kilometers).

That flight was his second attempt. In 1997 he had told off from Bush Stadium on New Year’s Eve 1997 and had flown 5,802 miles before having to abandon that attempt in a wheat field near Kosmodorn in southern Russia. In December 1998, he and British Dr. Richard Branson made a third try for the year, taking off from Morocco and getting as far as Hawaii. Eventually, this first grand flight with a crew was accomplished by Swiss pilot Bertrand Piccard and his English co-pilot Brian Jones in March 1999. Now Fossett hopes to achieve the first solo flight and to do so in an unpressurized capsule.

At the Brookings Hall mission control, media will cover the flight and interview team members and meteorologists, while the University maintains and updates the Web site. During Fossett’s summer 1998 flight, there were 1.27 million hits per day on a similar Web site, coming from more than 200 countries.

Fossett’s likely route east from Kalgoorlie crosses Australia, the south Pacific and approaches South America in the vicinity of Santiago, Chile. Flying over the South Atlantic, he would then pass just south of Cape Town, South Africa, cross the Indian Ocean and then back to Australia.

Fossett said taking off from Australia should enable him to better manage thunderstorm risk. Diversity is greatest over the Coral Sea, he said, so launching within a day’s flight of that trouble spot makes the weather there more “Stealthy.”

Bob sailing and balloonist meteorologist Bob Rice will again provide routing and weather forecasts for Fossett. A team of mechanical engineers from the school of engineering designed a new cabin heater for Solo Spirit, which provided vastly improved performance during the summer 1998 flight. Fossett use the winds, with cooler, more stable air and no large swings between daytime and nighttime temperatures. Flying earlier in the season holds hope of catching the Southern Hemisphere’s early winter jet stream, Fossett said.

And, with only four or five countries to traverse, he encounters little risk of political or military problems. Fossett will have a personal life raft, a full-exposure wet suit, sufficient food and water and two satellite rescue beacons, EPIRBs — that can be activated to transmit his position in the event of diving.

“Steve Fossett’s efforts have enhanced interest in science, geography and technology. His spirit and determination inspire others and heighten interest in adventure and exploration. He has our support and best wishes for a successful mission.”

Mark S. Wrighton.

same design this summer. Fossett has changed his balloon to help make this a successful attempt. The balloon envelope will be even larger, 500,000 cubic feet as opposed to 450,000 cubic feet in summer 1998. He will again carry 40 cylinders of fuel, but he will now have six burners instead of four.

Additionally, the southern route offers more favorable

Lung infections reported among students

A number of University students who traveled to Acapulco, Mexico, over spring break may have contracted lung infections that medical authorities say is probably histoplasmosis — a fungal infection of the lungs usually caused by exposure to airborne dust. The disease is not passed from person to person, so the affected students cannot infect their classmates.

According, about 33 students have sought medical advice or treatment for their symptoms, and only one student has been treated with antifungal medications — the others are expected to recover without special treatment. About half of the students who may have been infected received chest X-rays and/or blood tests, for which results are expected by the middle of the week. There is clinical evidence that the infection is histoplasmosis in one student being treated with medication.

The prognosis for healthy persons who contract histoplasmosis is usually good, and treatment generally involves letting the infection run its course without using antifungal medications — and the infected students should see significant improvement in their symptoms this week. Histoplasmosis is a common disease in the Mississippi River and Ohio River valleys, and many Midwesterners have been exposed to the fungus throughout their lives. Persons not previously exposed to the fungus may be more likely to exhibit signs of the disease, such as those who traveled to Acapulco.
African-American woman and environmental engineering earned a master's in environmental contributions to the people of the aerospace fields. She has served in leadership positions in various companies. He earned a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering from the University in 1937 and since then has forged a career in engineering administration. He has used a blend of engineering skills, management know-how and initiative to plot a direct route to career success in the telecommunication, electronics and aerospace fields.

Gene K. Beere is the recipient of the Young Alumni Achievement Award. Beere, a 1993 graduate, received the award in recognition of her professional and personal achievements in environmental engineering and her extraneous contributions to the people of South Africa. Abren is the first African-American woman and the third female at the University to receive a doctorate degree. In 1998, she earned a master's in environmental engineering from Washington University in 1968.

BY TONY FITZPATRICK

The Invisible Heart: An Economic Romance

Christopher J. Byrnes, Ph.D., in conjunction with Shirley G. Skimmer Professor in Systems Science and Mathematics and dean of the School of Engineering and Applied Science, has been elected as a foreign member of the Royal Swedish Academy of Engineering Science.

Byrnes will be installed in a formal ceremony Oct. 19 at the City Hall in Stockholm, Sweden.

Byrnes received the award for his outstanding research accomplishments, his achievements in engineering education and his many international research collaborations. Byrnes has an international reputation in his field, systems science and control. Among his research interests are feedback design in automatic control, nonlinear dynamics and control, and estimation and filtering. He has applied his research over two decades in aerospace, electrical power systems, signal processing and speech synthesis, among other areas.

Byrnes has held numerous visiting appointments at institutions worldwide. In 1998, he was honored with the honorary doctor of technology degree from the Swedish Royal Institute of Technology, one of the highest engineering honors. From 1986-90, he was adjunct professor at the Royal Institute, and in 1985 and 1991, he was visiting professor at the Kungliga Tekniska Hogskolan in Stockholm, Sweden.

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By GILA RECKESS

Will R. Ross, M.D., is always eager for a challenge. He is rehabilitating a historic home, motivated by his grand-scale visions; he has climbed volcanoes for the spiritual thrill; he helps unite the St. Louis medical community, bridging racial and socioeconomic boundaries and educating about critical public-health concerns.

And at the School of Medicine, he tackles racial disparities in medical education and health care, striving to create a more comfortable environment for students, faculty and staff from all background.

It's no surprise, then, that two of Ross' childhood heroes were legendary jazz saxophonist John Coltrane and civil-rights activist Martin Luther King Jr.

"Culture always was grabbing for an answer to some of the inequities he saw around him," said Ross, associate dean and head of the Office of Diversity Programs. "He always was trying to push himself and others, always pushing ahead."

But Ross did not need to look toward celebrated figures for inspiration. One of six children growing up in a single-parent household in inner-city Memphis, Tenn., he was "bouncing off the walls," at age 15 by a couple who noticed his burgeoning academic potential. They sent him away to preparatory school, providing the springboard for countless opportunities. Ross, from there, went to Yale University as an undergraduate and later to Washington University School of Medicine.

Ross sees perhaps more poignant than the couple's financial support was that they taught Ross the importance of action.

"They taught me to pull the lever," Ross said. "If something isn't right and you see a lever, pull it. If something is going on that you can't accept, if it says 'danger,' pull it — even if it says 'danger.'"

Ross was convinced of his personal and family life. A self-proclaimed visionary, he said. "You have to have to do more than challenge the norm and offer better alternatives. You have to do more than the couple's financial support was that they taught Ross the importance of action.

One day during his fellowship, Morrison asked Ross to give a lecture about hypertension in kidney transplants. It was an opportunity that changed his life.

"I got really excited talking about this issue and realized there are a lot of people with the opportunity to enhance donation and transplantation, and found himself energized by the desire to promote medical education and resource availability in minority populations.

"I loved research but in many ways felt isolated from the experiences I had just discovered," Ross said. "I realized that I wanted to give back to the community." He left the laboratory and became director of the renal division at Regional Hospital in St. Louis.

From there, he was soon promoted to medical director of the hospital.

"Will's experience at Regional has clearly made him a broadly skilled individual — a caring physician and a strong leader ready to face the challenges of the world," said David Windus, M.D., associate professor of medicine and one of Ross' colleagues in nephrology.

But when the hospital closed in 1996, Ross again found himself at a crossroads.

He intended to make a big change — go into private practice or head a managed-care corporation. Ultimately, he decided to pursue a career in academia.

"I recognized the school's initiative, new students are more attractive not only has gained attention from students at other universities now eager to emulate its example, but also has left a dramatic impression on the current student body.

"I am Dr. Ross as a man with a powerful vision for how physicians can best serve society," said Peter Gabriel, president of the medical school of class of 2003. "He believes that the ability to relate to and interact well with one's colleagues, patients and community is essential to the practice of medicine, and that these skills can only come through an understanding and acceptance of the broad range of beliefs and cultural practices represented in our great country."

Ross' influence also stretches deep into the St. Louis community. By creating programs like the Homer G. Phillips Lecture Series to highlight local minority physicians and instigating the HealthWatch newsletter section of the St. Louis American to address major community health issues affecting the African-American community. Ross already has seen a positive change in the relationship between the medical school and the community.

Unfortunately, some obstacles have yet to budge. Ross readily admits that the number of faculty members from racial minorities has not still improved over a period of a vicious cycle wherein low numbers diminish prospective candidates, perpetuating thereby the low representation.

One cannot ignore these challenges or dance around them. Said Ross, "It's important for the minority students to feel a degree of camaraderie with each other, but they also have to feel like part of the greater student body.

In his student programs Ross tries to address both elements of that goal. Minority students accepted to the School of Medicine are required to attend the迎来了推介前他们 before they make the big decision. By so doing, Ross and his colleagues aim to foster a critical mass of students who feel comfortable with each other and are excited about the University and the city.

But Ros' is well-aware of the dangers of creating an insular camaraderie. To prevent groups from becoming "balkanized" he started a voluntary diversity retreat for all first-year students. In its fifth year, the retreat is remarkably popular, with roughly 90 percent of the incoming class participating in the overnight experience.

"We get the students off campus, talk to the people of the St. Louis community, to be like to be different, not just ethnically different," Ross said. "One cannot ignore these differences or dance around them. They need to be placed in a context where it's comfortable to talk about these differences."

These initiatives are just a small portion of Ross' extensive diversity programs that aim to engage students, faculty and staff from all walks of life. The approach not only has gained attention from other universities but soon found herself back at the School of Medicine as a fellow in the lab of Audrey R. Morrison, M.D., B.S., professor of medicine and of molecular biology and pharmacology.

Morrison admired the school's need for a change and knew that Ross was just the man for the job," Ross said. "I had the luck of his being here."

Ross' first order of business was to change the name of his department from Office of Minority Affairs to Office of Diversity Programs. Almost immediately, students of all races started knocking on the door, wanting to learn more about this new resource.

"My goal was not only to recruit minority students but to really change the overall environment," Ross said. "It's important for the minority students to feel a degree of camaraderie with each other, but they also have to feel like part of the greater student body.

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