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Global warming teach-in to take place at WUSTL

Washington University will join hundreds of campuses across the United States in presenting "Focus The Nation," an unprecedented nationwide teach-in on global warming solutions, at 5:30 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 30.

WUSTL's "Focus The Nation" teach-in, which will take place in May Auditorium in Simon Hall and under the tent of the Office of Sustainability, centers on education, civic engagement and leadership.

The WUSTL event will begin with a presentation by Dee Gish, a volunteer with The Climate Project and one of the 1,000 individuals from across the nation trained by Al Gore to share the information contained in the documentary "An Inconvenient Truth." A short question-and-answer period will follow.

At 7 p.m., the event will continue with the "2% Solution" Web cast produced by the National Wildlife Federation and aired by the 2% Solution Network. Panelists will include actor Edward Norton, Steve Schmidt, Ph.D., a climate scientist at Stanford University, Hunter Lovins, CEO of Natural Capitalism Inc., and environmental justice leader Van Jones, executive director of the Ella Baker Center in Oakland, Calif.

Following the Web cast, attendees can discuss possible initiatives that the University can undertake to address global climate change.

All students, faculty and staff are encouraged to participate, and the event is open to the public.

"We are excited to be a part of this initiative," said Matt Malten, assistant vice chancellor for sustainability.

"This offers our campus community the opportunity to learn about the collective actions that will be needed to address the climate change crisis," said Malten.

The teach-in is open to the public.

See Series, Page 6

Shriners to build new hospital at Medical Center

Washington University in St. Louis

Jan. 24, 2008
record.wustl.edu

Shriners to build new hospital at Medical Center

BY DIANE DUKI WILLIAMS

The Shriners Hospital for Children will build a new hospital at the Washington University Medical Center.

The new hospital's location, at 4440 Clayton Ave., between Taylor and Newstead avenues, will give patients better access to specialists at the medical school and to St. Louis Children's Hospital. Currently, 15 members of St. Louis Shriners Hospital medical staff, including the medical director, are WUSTL faculty physicians.

"The closer St. Louis Shriners Hospital is to the resources of not only the School of Medicine but also BJC facilities, the more effective we can be in providing care to our children and more fully collaborate in the research and education that is the hallmark of the medical center," said John O'Shaughnessy, administrator of St. Louis Shriners Hospital.

The new hospital will have one floor dedicated to research. Most of the overlapping research interests between St. Louis Shriners Hospital and the medical school are related to bone, muscle and nerve development and disease.

The School of Medicine sold 3.75 acres to Shriners for the facility. This relocation will allow St. Louis Shriners Hospital to return to the medical school campus. The Shriners' first area hospital opened in 1894 on Euclid Avenue on the medical school campus.

Shriners expects the new hospital will have fewer rooms and more operating rooms than its current 90-room hospital, said James Full, executive vice president of Tampa, Fla.-based Shriners Hospitals for Children. "Patients are spending less time in the hospital, and more procedures can be done on an outpatient basis," he said.

The current St. Louis Shriners Hospital is located at 2001 S. Lindbergh Blvd. O'Shaughnessy said that property will be sold once the new hospital is completed.

See Hospital, Page 6

International statement

Malawi president appoints WUSTL law professor Mutharika to senior cabinet

BY JESSICA MARTIN

As part of his continuing efforts to serve his native country, A. Peter Mutharika, I.S.D., professor of law, has been named Malawi's Chief Advisor to the President on Constitutional, Legal and International Affairs. Mutharika currently is on leave in Malawi for the 2007-08 academic year. Upon his return, he will serve as the Charles Nagel Professor of International and Comparative Law in the School of Law. The professorship is named for Nagel, LL.B. 1875, who was U.S. Secretary of Commerce and Labor under President William Howard Taft, a member of the Missouri House of Representatives, a member of WUSTL’s Board of Directors and a part-time law lecturer.

The estate of Nagel’s law partner, Daniel Myers Kirby, LL.B. 1874, made the professorship possible.

"Peter's international work, including in his native Malawi, is extraordinary," said Kent Syverud, J.D., law dean and the Ethan A.H. Shepley University Professor. "The chaired professorship recognizes his outstanding contributions to international law as well as to the law school and Washington University communities."

This is not the first time Mutharika has served as adviser to his brother, Bingu wa Mutharika, who was elected to a five-year term as Malawi’s president in 2004. He also was the strategic adviser to his brother’s presidential campaign. After the vote, Mutharika, who was elected to a five-year term in 2004, made the professorship possible.

See Mutharika, Page 7

Assembly Series features groundbreaking music

Saint Louis Symphony musicians visit WUSTL campus

BY BARBARA REA

The Assembly Series, which opens tomorrow at 11 a.m. in Graham Chapel with the 13th Chancellor's Fellowship Conference featuring Constitutional scholar Derrick Bell, continues with a special appearance by members of the world-renowned Saint Louis Symphony Orchestra (SLSO).

Two modern American masterpieces will be offered at 7:30 p.m. Feb. 4 in Simon Hall’s May Auditorium on the Danforth Campus. The concert is free and open to the public.

Both pieces are considered groundbreaking works in contemporary music by composers who are at the forefront of experimental American music.

"Vox balenae" (Voice of the Whale)

Composer George Crumb creates hauntingly beautiful and uniquely theatrical pieces. His "Vox balenae" also known as "Voice of the Whale," has been called a work of mystical impressiveness. Written in 1971 and scored for electric flute, electric cello and amplified piano, the piece conjures up the world of the basking whale in the deep seas. The musicians use their instruments to create the sounds of an underwater world. To enhance the tone, metal horns are sometimes used. The piece will be performed by members of the Saint Louis Symphony Orchestra at 7:30 p.m. with conducted by Music Director David Gimlett.

See Series, Page 6
Leaps and bounds Kim Norwood, J.D., professor of law, addresses Solden High School students as part of a new collaboration between law students and Boudt Civil Association lawyer to encourage juniors and seniors who hope to continue their education at law school. During the fall semester, law students in Norwood's "Race, Education & the Legal Profession" course participated in the new program, which Norwood calls Law Exposure And Professionalism Studies (LEAPS). Many of the law students will continue as volunteer mentors to the 18 high-school students and will offer workshops on getting into college, preparing for SAT and ACT exams, resume writing and interview skills.

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Tuition, fees, room and board set for 2008-09

U
ndergraduate tuition will be $36,200 for the 2008-09 academic year, an increase of 3 percent over the 2007-08 tuition of $34,900. Tuition for graduate and professional programs will be $49,500, an increase of 5.5 percent over the 2007-08 charge of $46,800. The 2008-09 tuition for first-year students in the College in Arts & Sciences, as well as tuition for evening and summer schools enrolling part-time students, will be $495 per credit hour, compared with the 2007-08 rate of $490 per credit hour.

Professor in Arts & Sciences, said the following:

"Over the next three years, the University will make even greater investments in upgrading classrooms, laboratories, and support the Skandalaris Center for Entrepreneurial Studies (LEAPS). Many of the law students will continue as volunteer mentors to the 18 high-school students and will offer workshops on getting into college, preparing for SAT and ACT exams, resume writing and interview skills.

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Profess
A 78-year-old St. Louis woman was the first patient in the region to receive a new medical device to replace her defective aortic valve without open-heart surgery. The procedure was performed by John M. Lasala, M.D., Ph.D., professor of medicine and medical director of the Cardiac Catheterization Laboratory at Barnes-Jewish Hospital; John M. Shoenberg Professor of Surgery, chief of cardiac surgery and a co-director of the Cardiovascular Division; and Alan Zajarias, M.D., assistant professor of surgery and research director of Cardiovascular Research at Barnes-Jewish Hospital; Nader Moazami, M.D., professor of medicine in the Division of Cardiology and chief of the Cardiovascular Division at Barnes-Jewish Hospital; and Ralph J. Damiano Jr., M.D., the John M. Shoenberg Professor of Surgery, a member of the School of Medicine's Department of Developmental Biology.

The woman is an initial participant in a national multicenter trial to evaluate the effectiveness of this new device. If proven effective, this new device holds enormous hope for patients who are unable to undergo the standard open-heart surgery for aortic valve replacement because they are too old or too sick to qualify for the surgery.

The School of Medicine and Barnes-Jewish Hospital are one of only a few sites selected by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to evaluate this technology. When the patient undergoes a catheterization procedure, the valve can be guided through the body's circulatory system from the leg to the heart and inserted at the site of the patient's diseased valve. The technique is called transcatheter valve replacement.

“Pending the study’s outcome, this has the potential to be one of the most significant advances in all of cardiovascular medicine,” said John M. Lasala, M.D., Ph.D., principal investigator of the trial, professor of medicine and medical director of the Cardiac Catheterization Laboratory at Barnes-Jewish Hospital.

If the device lives up to its potential, it could benefit many of the roughly 300,000 patients per year in the United States who need a new heart valve because they have severe aortic stenosis, a narrowing of the aortic valve, which normally ensures the efficient flow of blood out of the heart and into the body. Severe aortic stenosis can lead to heart failure and death.

The clinical trial, called the PARTNER trial (Placement of Aortic Transcatheter Heart Valve), will eventually enroll about 600 patients up to 15 sites nationwide. The development of Edwards Lifesciences, consists of a heart valve made of cow heart tissue attached to a collapsible mesh cylinder. “PARTNER” also signifies the partnership between a cardiac surgeon and an interventional cardiologist, both of whom participate in each patient’s procedure. Interest in transcatheter aortic valve replacement has increased significantly during recent years. Many patients who are relatively healthy but who nevertheless are candidates for conventional open-heart surgery. The other arm will consist of patients with severe aortic stenosis who are considered inoperable because they are unlikely to survive open-heart surgery.

In the surgical arm, patients will be randomly assigned to receive either the transcatheter valve or to undergo a conventional aortic valve replacement in which the chest cavity is opened and a new valve is sewn into place. In the other arm of the trial, patients will be randomly assigned to receive either the transcatheter valve or appropriate medical therapy. The goal of the surgical arm is to achieve clinical results that demonstrate the transcatheter heart valve is not statistically inferior to conventional open-heart surgery. The clinical results of the other arm are needed to demonstrate that the transcatheter heart valve is statistically superior to medical management.

Department of Developmental Biology is newly named

The School of Medicine’s Department of Molecular Biology and Pharmacology has changed its name to the Department of Developmental Biology, as unanimously approved by the executive faculty. The change reflects a shift that has already occurred in the department’s research focus and coincides with the search for a department head.

“This is an exciting time for developmental biology as a science, and the change in department name reflects a commitment by the University and executive faculty to this area,” said Larry J. Shapiro, M.D., executive vice chair and co-director of the School of Medicine. “Understanding how organisms develop through the use of new tools and concepts that have become available over the past few years is crucial to understanding how both we think about human disease and how we treat it.”

The department’s research links basic genetic information such as that provided by the human genome project to knowledge of the genes, according to department head David M. Ornitz, M.D., Ph.D., the Alumni Endowed Professor of Developmental Biology.

“You could imagine the genome as a book with a million words written in a language we, don’t understand,” he said. “We are trying to translate that language into something scientifically meaningful.”

The new departmental name reflects a change in research emphasis that happened gradually. “Over the last 15 years, the department has been recruiting researchers interested in embryonic development, aging, regenerative biology and physiology,” Ornitz said. “As the department’s focus now encompasses an organism’s development throughout the life span, including the embryonic stage, the neonatal period and adulthood all the way through the aging process and death. The original Department of Pharmacology became the Department of Molecular Biology and Pharmacology in 1991 when Jeffrey L. Gordon, M.D., Ph.D., the Robert J. Bauer Distinguished Professor of Molecular Biology, was named department head. Gordon initiated the move toward developmental biology by recruiting eight new faculty members in that field. Ornitz, Gordon’s first departmental recruit in 2000, succeeded him when Gordon was made director of the newly established Center for Genomic Regulation.

Although previous studies also had shown that the Heart Benefits from weight loss, these studies were focused on diastolic function and were used a sophisticated and expensive method called parameterized diastolic filling (PDiF) formalism. By looking at filling function in human subjects using only PDF formalism, the researchers in the current study were able to understand more detail how normal heart rates to moderate weight loss.

Kovacs said he feels the study offers an answer to what people who are overweight.

The remedy is that it’s hard to get people to change their behavior and lose weight is that we want to find what aspects of being overweight that might change in the future — if we say your BMI is too high, eventually you’ll develop heart disease, diabetes, other problems,” Kovacs said. “But now we can tell them, lose weight the right way you can have better cardiovascular health.”


doesn’t require stopping the heart temporarily for the transcatheter valve or ap- portioned randomly to receive ei- or to undergo a conventional valve replacement in which the chest cavity is opened and a new valve is sewn into place. In the other arm of the trial, patients will be randomly assigned to receive ei- the transcatheter valve or appropri- mate medical therapy. The goal of the surgical arm is to achieve clinical results that demonstrate the transcatheter heart valve is not statistically inferior to conventional open-heart surgery. The clinical results of the other arm are needed to demonstrate that the transcatheter heart valve is statistically superior to medical management.

During filling, the left ventri-cle is a suction pump,” Kovacs said. “But now we can tell them, lose weight the right way you can have better cardiovascular health.”
All-star cast brings ‘Top Secret: The Battle for the Pentagon Papers’ to Edson

By LIAM OTTEN

A acclaimed poet Erin Belieu will read from her recently published book “Anonymous Memoirs” on Thursday, Jan. 24, as part of the Writing Program in Arts & Sciences. The talk — part of The Writing Program’s Reading Series — is free and open to the public and takes place in Hurst Lounge, Room 201, Duncker Hall.

Belieu is the author of three collections, all of which have been nominated for the National Book Critics Circle Award. Her most recent collection, “Black Box: Poems,” was a finalist for the Los Angeles Times Book Prize. Belieu’s poems also have appeared in The Best American Poetry, The Atlantic Monthly, The New York Times, and other publications.

For more information, call 935-7130 or dschuman@wustl.edu.

Polarizing revelations about whether to publish the book’s astonishing centerpiece, the longer essay “On America’s Discontents,” have marked Belieu’s career. Her most recent collection, “Black Box,” won the 2006 National Book Critics Circle Award. Her previous collection, “Of What’s Left of Us All,” won the National Book Critics Circle Award in 1999.


Belieu is a native of Omaha, Neb., and is presently an associate professor in the creative writing program at Florida State University. For more information, call 935-7130 or dschuman@wustl.edu.

How to submit ‘University Events’

Send “University Events” to a post of the activity’s location and time. The post of the event, along with the location, will be published the week prior to the event. University Events is published weekly by the Washington University Office of Communications and the School of Medicine (medicine.wustl.edu/awc).

Exhibits


Film

Friday, Jan. 25


11 a.m. Assembly Series. Chassoulou’s Fellowship Committee Lecture. “Lectures for Low-Literacy Readers.” Beatrice Doll, visiting professor, Chicago, Ill. 810 Stoddard Hall.


4 p.m. Immunology Seminar: “The Role of Complement in Fulminant Hepatitis B.” René Rachel, visiting associate professor of pathology, University of Washington, Seattle. 930 E. 510.

4:30 p.m. Physiology Seminar: “Anxiety Disorders: Mice, Energy, Sleep.” Jeffrey W. Milbrandt, professor of pathology and neurobiology, University of California, San Diego. 930 E. 510.

5 p.m. Physics Seminar: “Transport and Excursion Processes in High-Temperature Superconductors” by Demetrios S. Economou, professor of physics, University of Western Ontario, London, Ont. 2241 U. Mall.

5:30 p.m. Genetics Seminar. “MicroRNAs and Epigenetics in Complex Disease.” Jeff Dreyfus, professor of biochemistry and molecular biology, Bovet Lab, 810 Stoddard Hall.

5:30 p.m. Immunology Seminar: “The Role of Complement in Fulminant Hepatitis B.” René Rachel, visiting associate professor of pathology, University of Washington, Seattle. 930 E. 510.

5:45 p.m. Cardiovascular and Artery Diseases Seminar. “Cardiac Sodium Channel Blockers as a Novel Strategy for the Management of Atherosclerosis” by Stephen Busby, professor of biochemistry and molecular biology, Bovet Lab, 810 Stoddard Hall.

6:45 p.m. Immunology Seminar: “The Role of Complement in Fulminant Hepatitis B.” René Rachel, visiting associate professor of pathology, University of Washington, Seattle. 930 E. 510.

7 p.m. Wednesday: Microbiology and Microbial Pathogenesis Seminar Series. “Path of Life of the Mentor’s Meniscus.” John Cunin, professor of physiology, University of Dundee, Scotland. 3201 Medical Sciences Bldg., St. Louis, Mo. 63110.

8 p.m. Broadway: "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow." Presented by the St. Louis University High School Drama Club. To purchase tickets, call 935-1000 or stop by the Box Office, 800 S. Kingshighway Blvd., St. Louis, Mo. 63110.

9:30 a.m. Thursday: "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow." Presented by the St. Louis University High School Drama Club. To purchase tickets, call 935-1000 or stop by the Box Office, 800 S. Kingshighway Blvd., St. Louis, Mo. 63110.

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For more information, call 935-7130 or dschuman@wustl.edu.

Lectures

Thursday, Jan. 24

Noon. Noon Series Student Irish Film Festival. "Blood Zoo" by Brian Byrnes. 362 Eads Ave., St. Louis, Mo. 63105.

4:30 p.m. Noon Series Student Irish Film Festival. "The Quiet Men." By Kevin Kean. 362 Eads Ave., St. Louis, Mo. 63105.

5 p.m. Noon Series Student Irish Film Festival. "Brave New Biology." By Kevin Kean. 362 Eads Ave., St. Louis, Mo. 63105.

6:30 p.m. Noon Series Student Irish Film Festival. "More Than Meets the Eye." By Kevin Kean. 362 Eads Ave., St. Louis, Mo. 63105.

For more information, call 935-7130 or dschuman@wustl.edu.
Men's hoops 3-0 in UAA

The No. 5 men's basketball team extended its WUSTL winning streak to 10 games and its school-record 3-0 UAA victory over Emory, also pulling down a career-high 20 points in the win on campus last week.

Sophomore Aaron Thompson scored a career-high 22 points to lead the Bears past Emory University, 85-68. Senior Troy Rutha also finished in double figures, tallying a career-high six 3-pointers in a large statute of the Madonna and child. "RENTLOY" shot for the golden "gating St. Louis," in an almost cubist city landscape of brick buildings next to the Anheuser-Busch brewery.

weitman's photographic work is on view through mid-January at the Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum, her husband, for the role of the camera in the creative process and launching what would become a full major area. He has also continued to perform the play by Julianne Moore, an adjunct faculty member in Webster University's Department of International Languages & Cultures. She also taught the tens of Chris Hartman, a graduate student in the Performing Arts Department (PAD) in Arts & Sciences, the Barbara and David Thomas Distinguished Professor in Arts & Sciences, looks on.

Weitman at the opening, which drew a crowd of more than 200 friends, colleagues and former students. "I feel that I truly don't know how to do anything else," theceased city landscape of brick buildings next to the Anheuser-Busch brewery.

The inaugural exhibition, "Diego and Washington, D.C.

"The Weitman Gallery is open and the centuries, while his previous work in the 1960s, the American Alumni photograph of the Decade" for all of U.S. higher education — an honor he again received for the 1990s from the Council for Ad-

"But he's also a lech and is inviolate private sanctum."

"You don't talk, you don't make a move unless you see a lot of noise, just find yourself a corner. That's the only way you can do it."

"Herb is an amazing person who mastered photography as a largely self-taught profession," said M. Fredric Volkmann, vice chancellor for Public Affairs and Weitman's colleague for more than 30 years. "I became a huge fan of his work in the 1960s while working for another college — never having contributed anything to that one day I would have the honor to work with him at the University."

His good nature, magnetic warmth and uncanny ability to visualize how a picture will work best are a rare combination that captivated the minds and eyes of those around him," he added.

Weitman began teaching photography classes in 1968, intro-
ducing countless art students to the role of the camera in the creative process and launching what would become a full major area. He has also contributed to the development of the play by Julianne Moore, an adjunct faculty member in Webster University's Department of International Languages & Cultures. She also taught the tens of Chris Hartman, a graduate student in the Performing Arts Department (PAD) in Arts & Sciences, the Barbara and David Thomas Distinguished Professor in Arts & Sciences, looks on.
We can be sure of only one thing: that the world is a strange and complicated place, and that we are all to some extent outsiders, and that there is a great deal of diversity and complexity in the human condition.

The world is full of mysteries, and it is up to us to uncover them, to understand them, and to use them to our advantage. In this regard, we should all be alert and curious, and always ready to learn.

The world is also full of dangers, and it is up to us to protect ourselves and others from them. We should be aware of our surroundings, and take steps to protect ourselves and others from harm.

The world is also full of opportunities, and it is up to us to seize them and make the most of them. We should be open to new experiences, and always ready to learn and grow.

The world is full of possibilities, and it is up to us to dream big and to make our dreams a reality. We should be ambitious and determined, and always ready to take on new challenges.

The world is full of potential, and it is up to us to realize our potential and to make the most of it. We should be self-motivated and self-directed, and always ready to work hard and to succeed.

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Laurel Sgan has been named director of the newly created Higher Education Recruitment Consortium (STLR-HERC), announced Leah A. Merrifield, special assistant to the president for federal relations. "The HERC director search committee was comprised of campus leaders, and Sgan's experience makes her all the more qualified for the role," Merrifield stated.

"Given that the federal government is our largest single source of research funding, including research and clinical revenue as well as financial aid assistance, it is imperative that the University is well served by the president's policies and support," Merrifield said. "Washington University is widely recognized as one of the nation's top research institutions, and we look forward to helping the University to continue to increase access to cutting-edge cancer care for underserved populations."

"Sgan also will serve as a central Web site to post employment opportunities available at the public and will offer the most comprehensive database of open positions in higher education and at research institutions in this region."

"Sgan is responsible for establishing and managing partnerships with prospective and established STLR-HERC member institutions. She also will serve as a resource for those seeking job search assistance, and with software and Internet service providers, will develop and maintain the STLR-HERC Web site."

"Many institutions have found that active recruitment minority candidates and maintaining a diversified faculty is critical when recruiting faculty and staff, especially women and minority candidates. Sgan knows from experience the challenges a dual-career couplefaces."

"Finding one right job in academia can be difficult, finding two jobs is even more challenging," Sgan said. "Eight years ago, my family and I moved to St. Louis for my husband's job at the School of Medicine. It would have been great to have a HERC Web site to find job opportunities and other resources to make the transition easier."

"Sgan's experience makes her all the more qualified for the position as director," Merrifield added. "The Director search committee was thrilled to find Laurel," Merrifield said. "Her combination of academic, professional, and background, and her experience as an accomplished spouse really made her an excellent fit. Under her leadership, we expect the STLR-HERC to flourish."

WUSTL's involvement with STLR-HERC demonstrates its commitment to improving diversity at the University and throughout higher education. The opportunity to continue the HERC site, with information designed to attract not only dual-career couples, but also individuals with diverse backgrounds, really made this program an attractive compliment to the University's current diversity initiatives," Merrifield said.

In addition to providing a central Web site to post jobs, Sgan and STLR-HERC will collaborate to identify opportunities for representatives from each member organization and offer various issues and practices in recruitment and retention strategies.

Current STLR-HERC members are the Donald Danforth Plant Science Center, Washington University, Harris-Stowe State University, Lewis and Clark Community College, Lindenwood University, Missouri Botanical Garden, Saint Louis Community College, St. Louis University Edwardsville, St. Charles Community College, St. Louis College of Pharmacy, St. Louis Community College, University of Illinois at Springfield, University of Missouri, University of Missouri-St. Louis and Washington University.

"There are six established HERCs in the United States — two in California (Northern California and Southern California) and four in the Midwest (Detroit, Chicago, Cleveland, and Upstate New York.) Two others (Chicago and Michigan) are currently under development."

Before being named director of STLR-HERC, Sgan served as coordinator beginning in 2006 for the Strengthening Center's Parity (SC3), a program designed to reduce the Elimination of Cancer Disparities, which works to increase access to cutting-edge treatments for underserved populations.

Also serving as a development consultant for New England Citybridge, a nonprofit organization in Concord, Mass., that provides educational opportunities for at-risk middle-school students, and as the director of the Hyde Community Center in Newton, Mass., from 1992-97. From 1989-1995, she was a planned gifts officer for Columbia University and as a major gifts officer for Wheaton College in Norton, Mass. From 1990-1995, she was a development officer for the Western Educational and Industrial Union in Boston.

In 1982, she earned a bachelor of arts degree from Cornell University in 1987 and a master's in business administration from Boston University in 1993. She, and her husband Adam Kidell, M.D., associate professor of surgery at the School of Medicine, reside in Clayton with their three children.

South 40 residential area near the Board of Education campus by a man brandishing a gun. The purse did not contain cash or credit cards, and the student was not physically harmed.

The job gives me a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to make a direct contribution to society and to see the results directly," he said. "Here everything is a priority, but we have priorities within priorities. The main issues facing Malawi are issues of food security, which we have now alleviated, and better health for our people; better opportunities for education; infrastructural developments and better access to clean water by more people."
The linguistic world’s loss was economics gain.

It wasn’t until Michele Boldrin was 24 and had already dabbled in law and linguistics that he realized it was economics that intrigued him most. The only downside to pursuing a doctorate in economics was that it meant leaving his native country, Italy, three years later.

“My mind was set on economics,” says Boldrin, Ph.D., the Joseph Gibson Hoyt Distinguished Professor in Arts & Sciences. “The quality of higher education had been deteriorating for a while, and the difference in quality with the best American places was so big that it was a natural choice to go to the United States.

“If you’re good at studying economics, you had to move to the States then, and you still have to move,” he says. “I am very attached to my Italian identity, but I never could have been an economist had I stayed home. Boldrin’s strong ties to his homeland can be attributed in part to his years in Liceo (high school). The practice in Italy is for students to stay with the same co-host of about four years to participate in the five-year high school.

“There was only one downside: It was an all-male class. I don’t know why it ended up like that,” Boldrin says. “As a result, it was a very much class, very athlete, and yet there was an intellectual passion in our class, which shows in the professional accomplishments of many of its members.”

During his last two years in Liceo, Boldrin’s class lobbied for the creation of a student-organized parliament in order to have a voice in the management of the school. Otherwise, the decision of the teacher and the students were not always on the same page, even if it was only several years later that Boldrin won her heart.

An intellectual journey

Because of the political situation in the world, much of Boldrin’s intellectual adventure was mixed with the politics of the times. It was the 1970s, the Vietnam War was still being fought and debated, and the long intellectual tradition of “May ’68” was in the air. Throughout his high school years, his mandatory service in the Italian army and well into his thirties, Boldrin still remembers the excitement of the student-organized parliament. He says that when he made the initial decision to move to the United States to pursue his doctorate, Emmanuela had no problems making the move as well.

“She liked the idea of trying out life in another country,” Boldrin says. “But because she had to put up with my moving around as much as she did, she ended up doing a variety of different things, switching career paths at least three times.

“She was a theater and literature major back in Italy, where she graduated at the University of Bologna,” he says. “While we were in Los Angeles, she received an MBA from the Anderson School at UCLA and worked at the LA International Film Festival. After that, she was a banker in Chicago, a research foundation’s manager in Minneapolis. Since moving to St. Louis, she teaches Italian and Spanish here at WUSTL in the Romance languages and literatures department.”

The cost of education

In a way, Boldrin’s academic interests mirror his migratory life; he did not settle into just one area of study. He has delved into a variety of subspecialties, including growth theory, business cycle theory and macroeconomics. His most recent work examines the cost of education and pensions and suggests a way to pay for both by linking them.

“Michele definitely has his own way of thinking about things,” says David Levine, Ph.D., the John H. Biggs Distinguished Professor of Economics. “He questions everything around him, and that’s an important ingredient to him and to our relationship.”

Levine and Boldrin met 20 years ago when they were both professors at UCLA. They’ve remained friends and co-researchers despite Boldrin’s peregrinations around the globe. In fact, the two decided jointly to accept positions at WUSTL in 2006 because of the economics department’s goal of increasing the size and quality of its faculty.

“There is potentially something very exciting going on in the economics department here, and we knew we could be a big part of that,” Levine says. For Boldrin, playing a role in the department’s growth has been a challenge.

“For both David and me, we were working in great collaborations with wonderful colleagues, and we had turned down top positions in the past,” he says. “But it wasn’t about the money; the excitement of the new department is what really drew us to WUSTL.”

Boldrin says it is a challenging quest because economists tend to be a conservative bunch, and economics is a field not very receptive to self-criticism. The department’s vision is to promote a perception of economics as an interdisciplinary science, where the basic tools of economic analysis interact with those of other sciences and are applied to everything human beings do when acting "socially" — that is to say in interaction with other human beings.

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“The cost of education should be treated as an accumulation of debt toward the older generations,” Boldrin says. “From the time students start kindergarten (in principle, but more practically since the last few years of high school, or even college) until the time they finish their education, students are, in a certain sense, taking on debt toward the older generation, a debt that should be repaid when they enter the workforce.

“The debt could be paid off like a mortgage in fixed amounts every month or all at once, whichever is more convenient,” he says. “Either way, that money would be an individual's social security contribution. The proceedings for that would go toward paying part of the public pensions.”

He questions everything

This kind of research exemplifies Boldrin’s unique way of thinking, says David Levine, Ph.D., the John H. Biggs Distinguished Professor of Economics. “It’s what makes him stand out as an economist.

“Michele definitely has his own way of thinking about things,” Levine says. “That’s one of the valuable things for collaborators. He also has problems with authority, to see the line of work is that, in that probably a good thing. In research it is good to challenge conventional wisdom. He questions everything around him and to our relationship.”

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