Promises Kept: Tracy Hall Promotes Collaboration

In 2012, when the Tracy Hall Science Center was still a dream, Dave Matty, dean of the College of Science, promised stakeholders that a new building would invigorate learning and research for students and faculty.

“Science in general is tending to advance along the edges and boundaries between disciplines rather than just solely within individual disciplines,” Matty said then. “Five years from now we’ll have a new building where we’ll have faculty working with other faculty more collaboratively. We’ll have new lines of research. We’ll have students involved. All of it will point toward greater economic growth in the region, greater workforce growth. It’s really an investment in the future.”

That future is now. At the end of the first semester in Tracy Hall, four excited students triumphantly announced the success of a cutting-edge, solar-cell project.

The team used a new material called perovskites to create an environmentally friendly and low-cost solar cell. Made from lead, iodine and an organic molecule, perovskites have received international attention to replace the expensive silicon-based solar cells used currently.

Assistant chemistry professor Brandon Burnett, assistant physics professor Kristin Rabosky and physics chair Colin Inglefield provided encouragement, supplies and advice, but credit students for the outcome.

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“It’s been incredible how well the students have taken over and completed the work, communicated with each other and managed to get good results,” Rabosky said. “I can’t describe the excitement the day they came in and had their first working device. There were high fives everywhere.”

The innovative collaboration typifies the vision and promise of the new science center.

“I wasn’t anticipating having chemistry students in the physics labs and having physics students running up to the chemistry labs to watch that process,” Burnett said. “There’s been this excitement to see what the other field is actually doing. That expands the knowledge base of what they are learning in their own field.”

The solar-cell project has acted as a catalyst for additional collaboration. A new group of students plans to expand the research. They want to make incremental improvements in efficiency, production or environmentally friendly design. Chemistry and physics faculty plan to modify their materials courses so they complement and cooperate with each other.

“It’s opened our view to how we can teach slightly differently,” Rabosky explained. “We can use solar as a case study. What we envision is having the chemistry class make something and the physics class analyze it, and then go back and forth.”

Faculty presented their findings at a materials research conference in Boston in December. Burnett discussed “Building Interdisciplinary Research at Undergraduate Institutions” and Inglefield presented “A Model for Materials Science in the Physics and Chemistry Curricula at a Primarily Undergraduate Institution.”

Inglefield noted, “Real-world problems don’t always fit neatly into disciplinary boundaries. Researchers and students gain a lot from working with peers with different perspectives.”

Collaboration has always been a goal in the College of Science, and students and faculty have conducted significant research in every discipline. But the new building combines all the elements for an enticing space where innovation and creativity can flourish.

“We are doing all we can to make sure the investment made in Weber State is going to bear fruit,” Matty said. “Tracy Hall is encouraging faculty to grow. It’s encouraging collaborations to be formed, not just between faculty and students, but between the college and the community. Those efforts will just get better with time.”

demonstrate academic vulnerability early in their college careers. For example, 40 percent of freshmen earn a first-semester GPA of less than 2.2, which is a predictor of trouble ahead. The six-year graduation rate for students with a low first-semester GPA is approximately 18 percent.

“We are learning more and more about who these vulnerable students are,” Amsel said. “It is those who need developmental math and developmental English. If students are in developmental math alone, they are not as vulnerable. We need to consider ways of supporting and enhancing the academic skills of that core group.”

Academic scaffolding has many components for a large and diverse group of learners.

“It’s about a sense of belonging,” Kowalewski said. “If we give students a sense of belonging then we are going to keep them, and when we keep them, we can work our magic, and they can graduate. I believe high-impact experiences are the key to a sense of belonging: high-touch advising, high-impact undergraduate research, community engaged learning, study abroad, internships, highly engaged active learning in the classroom, where students aren’t being talked at, they are being talked with as creators of knowledge, not just consumers.”

The student success series was prompted in part by work at California State University, Long Beach. Over a 10-year period, CSULB increased its graduation rates from 27 percent to 67 percent.

That kind of improvement will take a collaborative, long-term effort. This year’s conversation at WSU includes three major presentations. The first discussion centered around revitalizing general education, the second focused on improving student outcomes. Susan Shadle, chemistry and biochemistry professor at Boise State University, will discuss “Shifting Institutional Culture for Student Success,” Feb. 7 from 12:30-2 p.m. in Shepherd Union Ballroom B.

A final session will be held April 4 to process what was learned and plan future action. To watch the presentations or learn more, visit weber.edu/tlj/StudentSuccess.html.

“I think everyone has to accept where students are and work with them, challenge them, don’t give up on them. Understand their perspective,” Amsel said. “It’s really about helping the faculty and staff do what they do more efficiently and effectively, not to lower their standards but to acknowledge students where they are.”
Great First Impression

Are you making a presentation and want to make a great first impression? WSU’s Marketing & Communications office has some tools that will help, and they are only a click away.

Check out weber.edu/brand. Look at the tool bar on the right-hand side of the page. You’ll discover resources for choosing approved fonts, creating templates for various purposes and borrowing display materials, such as banners.

Weber State’s design team has created templates that give your presentations a professional polish and adhere to university branding guidelines. Templates to create brochures, research posters, PowerPoint presentations, newsletters and invitations are ready to download in various formats.

You also are welcome to borrow display materials, including banners, backdrops, table runners or the Waldo cutout. A picture and dimensions of each item are on the site, as is the banner request form.

Whether you are creating a brochure, website, video, email newsletter, etc., a professional presentation and proper use of the brand will help identify you as part of Weber State University, reinforcing both your message and the university’s reputation.

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✓ backdrop
✓ Waldo cutout
... and more

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WELCOME to WSU

Natalie Allen, Nursing
Kristine Bouwhuis, Nursing
Richard Brizzi, Facilities Management
Brant Brown, Admissions Office
Kristy Byington, Human Resources
Heather Cimino, Student Involvement and Leadership
Victor Clampitt, Radiologic Sciences
Patricia Coan, Performing Arts
Karen Cook, University Counsel
Kody Farnsworth, Enterprise Business Computing
Kent Forsberg, Facilities Management
Lorraine Gale, Science Education Center
Rita Greenwell, Continuing Education
Douglas Grill, Facilities Management
Larry Hansen, Facilities Management
Brandi Hernandez, Nontraditional Student Center
Ernesto Hernandez, Stewart Library
Jillian Hinckley, School of Business & Economics

Mariah Johnston, Human Resources
Nicholas Lambert, Academic Technology Services
Adam Love, Alumni Relations
Constance Merrill, Nursing
Susan Naylor, Nursing
Eleanor Olson, English
Chandler Rae, Facilities Management
Supavan Renkiewicz, Accounting Services
Michael Rowe, School of Business & Economics
Erik Rushton, Stewart Library
Lawrence Scott, Facilities Management
Ginny Stimson, University Police
Kara Sweeten, Student Affairs Maintenance
WeiWei Wang, School of Accounting & Taxation
Taylor Ward, Radiologic Sciences
Fatunmi Ways, Administrative Services
Sarah Webber, Accounting Services
Kristin Wojciechowski, College of Engineering, Applied Science & Technology

On the Move/Promoted

Matthew Bass, Facilities Management
Shannon Burton, Accounting Services
Jamie Call, Registrar’s Office
Eric Christopherson, Student Affairs Maintenance
Laurie Rader, Access & Outreach
Julie Rich, Geography
Brogan Stampick, Continuing Education
Michael Tesch, Accounting Services

Retired

Georgene Ady, Performing Arts
Dixielee Blackinton, Mathematics
Lane Brown, Facilities Management
Debra Huber, Nursing
Terri Jurkiewicz, Radiologic Sciences
Betty Simons, Career Services
Faculty & Staff Accomplishments


Jamie Brass, clinical psychologist in the Counseling & Psychological Services Center, began her term as president of the Utah Psychological Association in July.

Zoology professor Jonathan Clark completed a sabbatical at the South Australian Museum in Adelaide, one of Australia’s leading research museums. This collaboration examined the invertebrate diversity within small saline lakes of the Coorong Wetlands ecosystem. He also presented a seminar, co-sponsored by the University of Adelaide, titled “Genetic Studies of Biodiversity in Great Salt Lake.”

Zoology professor Jonathan Clark and microbiology professor Mo Sondossi published “Genetic Identification of Wolbachia from Great Salt Lake Brine Flies” in the November issue of the international journal, Symbiosis. Former zoology student Amanda Truong, who is currently completing a combined M.D./Ph.D. at the University of Utah, co-authored the paper.

Christian Hearn, assistant professor of electrical engineering technology (EET), completed a Department of Energy Summer Faculty Fellowship at Idaho National Laboratory (INL). The collaboration included Andrew Kuznicki, a WSU senior in EET, and other INL research scientists. Both Hearn and Kuznicki were authors of the article “Data Acquisition in Wireless Router Link Testbed using GNU Radio Companion,” published in the Technical Proceedings for the 6th GNU Radio Conference this fall.

Communication chair Sheree Josephson published a review of the book *On Not Looking: The Paradox of Contemporary Visual Culture in Visual Communication Quarterly*, Volume 23 Issue 2. Also, Josephson and Stacey Tyler, a Master of Professional Communication graduate and adjunct professor, presented a paper at VisCom titled “Interactive Storybooks and Reading Comprehension: An Eye-Tracking Study.” Josephson was the conference’s program planner.

Alvaro La Farra-Perez, assistant professor of economics, published “Spain Is Not Different: Institutional Development and the Army in the Second Spanish Republic and Civil War” in *Revista Universitaria de Historia Militar*.


The Utah Pharmacy Association selected Marv Orrock, assistant health sciences professor, as the recipient of the 2015 Bowl of Hygeia Award for outstanding community service.

Brett Perozzi, associate vice president for Student Affairs, was recently selected as a Pillar of the Profession by NASPA (Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education). Each year, NASPA honors 12 members of the student affairs profession who are recognized as leaders, professionals and scholars.

Teacher education assistant professor Gina Shelley was honored with the Best Presentation Award for “Breaking New Ground: A Service Learning Program for Urban Education Environments” at the 2017 International Conference of Education Hawaiii.

USTAR awarded physics professor John Sohl $200,000 to develop AtmoSniffer into a marketable product. Sohl and his students created AtmoSniffer to measure air pollution up to 120,000 feet.

At the national conference of the Council for Opportunity in September, Rebecca Tierney, WSU’s TRIO Talent Search program director and president of Utah ASPIRE, a state TRIO organization, was honored for her work submitting and implementing a grant proposal highlighting the success of TRIO in the state of Utah.