I spent the weekend attending the Sigma Xi Board meeting at Research Triangle Park in North Carolina. I saw the inside of a meeting room for three very long days and a hotel room for two short nights. No matter how bad things seem at JSU, I can assure you that it is probably worse at Sigma Xi. However, we had a good meeting last weekend. I pushed hard to balance the budget, and it is a balanced budget (although cash reserves are still a problem). We all worked on our vision for Sigma Xi and concrete steps to move in that direction. These same principles that we are attempting to put into place in Physical and Earth Sciences will stop the downhill slide that Sigma Xi has experienced for the last two decades. Since Physical and Earth Sciences is not in a deep hole, like Sigma Xi is, these principles will allow us to improve and move forward. It is always good to come home!

Lou

Faculty Annual Reports (FAR) due on Friday, 8 May
The report forms can be downloaded from the College of Arts and Sciences web page: http://www.jsu.edu/depart/cas/collegepolicy.html
These should be completed and turned in to the Head of Department by 8 May. Meetings with the Head will be scheduled for 18 – 29 May.

FAR Comments from the Head – some of the reports are in
Um Gottes willen! Sorry, I slip back into my most primitive German (tr. For Heaven’s sakes). I did not expect such tomes of detail. Rest assured that the importance of these reports is a reflection on what you planned to accomplish, what you actually accomplished and what is planned for next year. The 200 and more pages of detail should not be used to obfuscate the past or to confuse the future. I have not been part of your previous years FAR meetings with the Head of Department. However, I strongly suspect the meetings this year will be very different.
2009 State of Alabama Science Olympiad
On April 25, JSU hosted near 180 high school students from 12 teams representing nine high schools for the state finals of the Science Olympiad. The event was well run and very successful. Our Department certainly provided its share of support—both strategic and grass roots. Nagarajan Vasumathi (Vasi) co-directed the even with Robert Carter from Biology. Contributing from the Department was (in no particular order): Kelly Gregg, Jonathan Herbert, Nixon Mwebi, Jan Gryko, Lou Reinisch, Laura Weinkauf, Nouredine Zettili, Tom Baucom, Brent Helms, Allison Newton, Doug Nelson and Bernice Moser. Several students also helped, like Kristen Shirey, Sunde Jones, Ashley Casey, Stephen Fordham, Jennifer Brown and Chad Goodwin. Thank you to everyone who contributed and congratulations to both Vasi and Robert.

Letter excerpt from Mr. Richard J. Beschi
Thank you for your call and kind letter. Enclosed is a check of $1,500.00 in support of your chemistry program. The establishing of the R.J. Beschi Leadership Award [in Chemistry] was very flattering, considering its modest value. I am very honored and grateful for it. I am confident that your selections of Caleb Hill and Ashley Casey as 2009 recipients of the award is well deserved. Wishing you continued success in your endeavor. Sincerely, Richard J. Beschi

University News

2009 Faculty Awards Reception
Tuesday, 12 May at 5:00 in 1103 Houston Cole Library with hors d’oeuvres following the presentations on the 12th floor.

College of Arts and Sciences Reception
The annual College reception will be held May 14th in the Gamecock Center from 3:00 to 4:00 PM. Invitations are in your mailbox. All faculty and staff are invited to attend.

Banner Training for New & Experienced Users
The Office of Controller and Office of Purchasing will hold Banner Financing Training classes for experienced Banner users as well as those who are new to the Banner system.
  • New Users- May 12 (9 a.m.) and May 14 (1:30 p.m.) This session will be covering the basic financial processes (i.e. budget query, encumbrances, purchase requisition entry) and will be formatted for those who have not had any previous Banner training.
• **Experienced Users** - May 12 (1:30 p.m.) and May 14 (9 a.m.) This will be a review of the financial processes that experienced Banner users work with every day. There will also be a Q & A sessions.

The training will be held in the Ayers Hall lecture hall. To reserve your spot in the training, please call ext. 5002 or e-mail Jennifer Evans.

**Last Call for Blackboard Training**
During May and June the Office of Distance Education will be conducting Blackboard training on our current version of Blackboard (7.3) for the LAST TIME! Go to [http://www.jsu.edu/distance/fac_res/training](http://www.jsu.edu/distance/fac_res/training) to view the training calendar and sign up for these sessions.

**Publications and Presentations**

**Student News**

**ACS Student Affiliates Chapter**
The 2007-2008 Student Affiliates Chapter Report to the ACS earn our chapter the Honorable Mention plaque. Congratulations to all the students. I am confident that the 2008-2009 report will be even better.

**Degenerate States**

**How to Write Gooder**
Here are several very important but often forgotten rules of English:
- Avoid alliteration. Always.
- Prepositions are not words to end sentences with.
- Avoid clichés like the plague (they’re old hat).
- Employ the vernacular.
- Eschew ampersands & abbreviations, etc.
- Parenthetical remarks (however relevant) are unnecessary.
- It is wrong to ever split an infinitive.
- Contractions aren’t necessary.
- Foreign words and phrases are not *apropos*.
- One should never generalize.
- Eliminate quotations. As Ralph Waldo Emerson once said: “I hate quotations. Tell
me what you know."

Comparisons are as bad as clichés.
Don’t be redundant; don’t use more words than necessary; it’s highly superfluous.
Be more or less specific.
Understatement is always best.
Exaggeration is a billion times worse than understatement.
One-word sentences? Eliminate.
Analogies in writing are like feathers on a snake.
The passive voice is to be avoided.
Go around the barn at high noon to avoid colloquialisms.
Even if a mixed metaphor sings, it should be derailed.
Who needs rhetorical questions?

Contact Details

If you have items of news or interest that you would like included in the Department of Physical and Earth Sciences newsletter, then contact Tracy Casey before noon on Thursday at; tscasey@jsu.edu or phone (256) 782-5232.