



May 19

**Cy looks good on the hood of a race car**

The No. 85 Chevrolet in a NASCAR Pro Series race at the Iowa Speedway May 21 will feature Iowa State colors and logos. The university is sponsoring the car to highlight its role in the development of ethanol and continued leadership in biofuels research.

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**Many ISU Dining locales open this summer**

Many ISU Dining locales adopted new summer hours last week. A few are closed until mid-August, but you still have options for coffee or lunch.

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**ISU learning communities: Strong and still growing**

Iowa State heads into its 17th year of learning communities when the 2011-12 academic year begins in August. What's made the program a keeper -- and where could additional growth occur?



Summer dining options

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**Blackboard: The time to Learn is now**

CELT is offering a series of Blackboard Learn summer workshops for instructors who need to make the switch from WebCT. The WebCT course management system is being discontinued next spring.

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**Army ROTC confronts invasion of a different kind**

A group of Army ROTC cadets volunteered to clear Pammel Woods of invasive garlic mustard plants, which are threatening the natural habitat.



ROTC volunteers

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**Special Olympics will temporarily close roads, lots**

Several campus parking lots, including the Iowa State Center commuter lots, will close to accommodate the

**Announcements**

- Cyclone women's basketball is No. 4 in attendance
- Join Coach Rhoads on benefit motorcycle ride for Alzheimer's
- Greenlee students capture 2nd in national marketing competition
- Former faculty member Sande McNabb dies
- MU's Workplace announces summer courses
- Childcare center at Vet Med has openings in two age groups

**Receptions & open houses**

Retirement

- Patricia Murphy, May 26

**Arts & events**

Christian Petersen fountains get summer conservation work

Francis Miller will talk about his conservation work on several Petersen sculptures at a May 26 lecture.

**Honors & awards**

- Jenny Aune, Carolyn Cutrona, Andrea Dinkelman, Larry Ebbers, Suzanne Hendrich, Dayle Nickerson, Jennifer Nissen, Gail Nonnecke, Helen Olson

**Around campus**

- Landscape architecture students contribute to prison renovation
- Student is panel member at international conference

**Inside tools**

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Special Olympics summer games May 26-28 in Ames. Beach Road and South Fourth Street also will be impacted.

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## Fast Cy

As a way to highlight Iowa State's role in the development of ethanol and continued leadership in biofuels research, the university will sponsor a **NASCAR race car** at the Iowa Speedway in Newton Saturday. The No. 85 Chevrolet in NASCAR's K&N Pro Series East/West Challenge May 21 (7 p.m.) will race with Iowa State colors and logos. The car was on campus Wednesday morning at the start of a caravan to Newton, via the State Capitol, to promote biorenewable fuels in vehicles. NASCAR started fueling some of its stock cars this year with a blend of 15 percent ethanol. *Photo by Bob Elbert.*



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### **Need a new summer routine?**

Student Liz Madrigal (right) orders a morning coffee at the Courtyard Café in Lagomarcino Hall Tuesday morning. Most ISU Dining locales switched to summer hours last week. The Conversations dining center in Oak/Elm halls and three cafés -- in Design, Gerdin and Frederiksen Court -- are closed for the summer. Schedules at the West Side Market (Union Drive Community Center), and Seasons dining center and East Side Market (Maple Willow Larch commons) will vary, depending on campus conferences and special events. ISU Dining posts all [dining/café hours](#) online. *Photo by Bob Elbert.*

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## ISU learning communities: A 71 percent capture rate and growing

by Anne Krapfl

Students don't pay any additional fees to belong to one, but history shows a learning community goes a long way in their academic success at Iowa State. In a recent 15-year recap, the average one-year retention rate for Iowa State freshmen in learning communities is 8 percentage points higher (89 percent vs. 81 percent) than those not in a learning community. The average six-year graduation rate is 12 percentage points higher (74 percent vs. 62 percent).

That kind of news is spreading. Last fall, nearly three out of every four freshmen (71 percent) participated in one of Iowa State's 84 learning communities. The rates vary among Iowa State's undergraduate colleges, from 98 percent in Design, to about 44 percent in Liberal Arts and Sciences. (Recall that undeclared students enroll in that college; those without a major are less likely to identify a learning community.) In between were Business (54 percent), Human Sciences (74 percent), and Engineering and Agriculture and Life Sciences (about 86 percent each).

Students don't use words like "retention" or "engagement" when they talk about the perks of belonging to a learning community. For them, it's much more day-to-day, and in an end-of-year survey, they offered "sense of comfort," "making connections," "opportunity to meet many people," "learn and have fun with people in my major," and "share information and experiences" as key benefits.

Most students come to college with two big questions: Can I handle the academics? Will I make friends? Thirteen-year co-director of learning communities Doug Gruenewald said, "Learning communities create this intentional environment for students to be successful at both of those."

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-- Doug Gruenewald,  
Learning Communities  
co-director

### Communities that persevere

Some of Iowa State's current learning communities -- such as BEST (Biology Education Success Teams), BLT (Business Learning Teams), WiSE (Women in Science and Engineering) or First-Year Honors -- date all the way back to fall 1995, the beginning of the tradition at this university. Others from that era dissolved, typically just not reassigned when the coordinator left Iowa State. Some don't hold student interest over time.

"We like to encourage [staff and faculty] to experiment and be creative," Gruenewald said. "That means some will disappear and new ones will emerge."

He said he expects Iowa State to field 85 or 86 learning communities this fall, the 17th fall of the program. Students in the 20 or so in which members live on the same residence hall floor sign up for a learning community at the time they commit to on-campus housing. Most sign up during June orientation when they meet with their academic advisers, although some learning communities add members through the first week of fall classes.

Staff have been preparing for them much longer. Annually, during a February-March time window, learning community coordinators apply for funding from a central pool. Awards typically range from \$2,000 to \$20,000. Gruenewald estimates that 60-65 percent of funds pay the salaries of peer mentors -- sophomores or juniors who are the workhorses of learning communities. They coordinate the frequent study groups and out-of-class field trips, whether co-curricular or social, and some help teach class sections.

"Every learning community has mentors," Gruenewald said. "They're an incredible resource for our students. But learning communities also provide valuable leadership training for the mentors."

### **Self assessment: strengths**

*U.S. News and World Report's* 2011 "College Compass" includes Iowa State in the **top 24** learning community programs among all U.S. colleges and universities. Gruenewald's co-director Steve Mickelson told those attending last week's annual Learning Communities Institute "we think we're in the top five."

Gruenewald quickly ticked off what he sees as strengths of Iowa State's program:

- Lots of assessment, from the beginning. "We try to share and publish a lot of that."
- Strong peer mentor component. There will be more than 300 peer mentors involved this fall; in most cases they're alumni of the learning community they serve.
- A "true" academic affairs-student affairs partnership -- in funding, administration and policymaking. "Everyone is working together on a seamless experience for students."
- Dedication of learning community coordinators.
- Involvement and cooperation from the beginning in the registrar's office (necessary to place learning community members in the same class sections). "The attitude here has been, 'We can make this work' -- and that's not so at other schools."
- The focus remains on learning (not social experiences or creating a club-like environment)
- Longevity of leadership. Gruenewald and professor of human development and family studies Corly Brooke and Gruenewald co-directed the program for 10 years. Longtime learning communities champion Mickelson succeeded Brooke. Vice president for student affairs Tom Hill and presidents Martin Jischke and Gregory Geoffroy have promoted learning communities as well.

### **Looking ahead**

For all its steady and sustained growth, learning communities at Iowa State still have room for expansion, Gruenewald said. He identified three goals: Capture more transfer students, identify more interdisciplinary themes and involve more faculty members.

Transfer students are as at risk as first-year students when they arrive on campus, he said, but only 23 percent participate in a learning community. Last fall, seven learning communities were designated just for transfer students and another 20 included transfer students among their members.

"We'll continue to look at that group and find ways to better meet their needs," Gruenewald said.

Sustainability is one interdisciplinary or themed idea for a learning community being investigated, he said. The seven-year-old entrepreneurship learning community is an earlier example.

"Themes give us the potential to do almost anything. We need to ask ourselves what students are interested in and find appropriate leaders for that," Gruenewald said.

A challenge to the learning communities program that isn't likely to go away is making involvement rewarding for faculty members.

"In the faculty rewards structure, there's a perception that this isn't something they should focus on," he said. Two strategies could help.

"We have had some faculty tell us, 'No one ever asked me.' So we know that once they've been exposed to the idea and have some understanding, they are more likely to get involved."

Gruenewald said he also has learned what to ask faculty for. A special discussion over the lunch hour with students about his or her area of expertise will be received better than, say, an invitation to play volleyball in the evening.

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## Blackboard: The time to Learn is now

by Erin Rosacker

Instructors are running out of time to make the switch from WebCT to Blackboard Learn. Iowa State will completely transition to Blackboard's new course management system at the end of next spring semester.

The WebCT system (Blackboard Vista) is being discontinued by the Blackboard company. ISU has been piloting the Blackboard Learn system on campus since last fall. CELT (Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching) is offering several **Blackboard Learn summer workshops**, including an introductory overview and several hands-on sessions for beginners.

"Many instructors and course designers may be able to take advantage of extra time or lighter course loads in the summer months to transition their WebCT content to the Blackboard Learn system," said CELT director Steve Mickelson. "We've designed a series of short workshops to help make that transition as smooth as possible, especially for first-time users."

The workshops are being offered multiple times over the next four months. They are designed for beginners and can be taken independent of others in the series. The topics include:

- Introduction to Blackboard Learn (one hour)
- Organizing Course Content (one hour)
- Developing Learning Activities (1.5 hours)
- Grading Student Work (1.5 hours)
- Communicating with Students (1.5 hours)

Attendees can bring their own course content to use during the workshops, or use the generic content provided. The workshops are free of charge, just register in advance.

In addition to the workshops, CELT offers **online Blackboard Learn tutorials** and one-on-one appointments. A **Blackboard users group** meets monthly to discuss teaching and learning topics, and is open to all instructors and course designers.

### Learn more

More **Blackboard Learn (BbL) information**, including tips, announcements and resources, is available on CELT's eLearning website. Or contact CELT's support team by phone (4-5357) or **email**.



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## Army ROTC confronts invasion of a different kind

by Erin Rosacker

A group of ISU Army ROTC cadets spent their lunch hour weeding a portion of Pammel Woods, west of the ISU cemetery. About 25 cadets volunteered to help clear the area of invasive garlic mustard plants on Wednesday.

Garlic mustard is classified as a noxious weed in some states, and thrives in woodland areas. It can grow up to four feet tall, crowding out native plants and quickly proliferating. One of the removal methods is to hand-pull and bag the plants. Composting or discarding the plants allows the seeds to reproduce.

Rhonda Martin, landscape architect in facilities planning and management, said the woods are used as a teaching lab for many classes and the spread of garlic mustard would destroy the habitat. The Army ROTC program uses the woods for training maneuvers and tactics, and volunteered to help FP&M with manual labor projects to keep the area usable.

"We get a lot of use out of Pammel Woods and we want to give something back," said Adam Hon, a senior in interdisciplinary studies and the cadet operations officer. He said the group also has cleared trash from the woods and plans to partner with FP&M on future rehabilitation projects. *Photo by Bob Elbert.*

### About garlic mustard

An [educational video](#) produced by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources shows the history and harmful effects of garlic mustard.

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## Road closures and parking changes for Special Olympics

The Iowa Special Olympics Summer Games are May 26-28, with most of the competition sites on the Iowa State campus. Nearly 3,000 athletes will compete in the games, accompanied by more than 1,200 coaches and chaperones. About 2,000 volunteers work the three-day event.

Several parking lots -- including the commuter lots at the Iowa State Center -- will close Thursday and Friday to accommodate the games. Road closures, including current construction projects, also will factor into the commute. Road crews have closed the **University Boulevard exit** off U.S. Highway 30 (west bound) and **a portion of Union Drive** on the south side of Beyer Hall, where the swimming events will be held.

For more information, contact parking and transportation supervisor Aaron Steffen in the department of public safety, 4-3169.

### Temporary road closures

- Beach Road: Closed to through traffic from Lincoln Way to Wallace Road on Thursday, May 26, and Friday, May 27 (7 a.m.-10 p.m. each day)
- South Fourth Street: Closed from Beach Avenue to just west of the entrance to the stadium parking lots on Thursday, May 26 (8 a.m.-5 p.m.), for bike race events

### Parking lot changes

- Iowa State Center lots: Commuter parking and CyRide routes will be moved to the stadium lots (S3-S8) on Thursday and Friday. All Iowa State Center lots will be closed Thursday, May 26, and the commuter lots (A3, A4, B4, B5, B6) will be closed Friday (midnight-5 p.m. each day)
- Lot 3 (north side of Beyer Hall): Saved for Lot 3 24-hour Reserve permits, Special Olympics permits and handicap permits Friday, May 27 (all day)
- Lot 50A (west side of Forker Building): Saved for Special Olympics permits or handicap permits Thursday, May 26, and Friday, May 27 (all day)
- Lots 57 and 100 (west and south sides of Lied Center): Saved for vehicles with Special Olympics permits Thursday, May 26, and Friday, May 27 (all day)
- All parking in the Richardson Court residence area: Saved for Special Olympics permits and handicap permits Thursday, May 26, and Friday, May 27 (all day)

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## Why the fountain is dry

by Erin Rosacker

The *Fountain of the Four Seasons*, one of the most beloved landmarks on the ISU campus, has been noticeably dry this spring. It is one of several Christian Petersen art works getting some love from fine art conservator Francis Miller this month.

Miller, the director of ConservArt in Hamden, Conn., was contracted by University Museums to do the work. He will conserve three of Petersen's fountain sculptures -- *Four Seasons*, *Reclining Nudes* and *The History of Dairying* -- and a selection of studio sculptures. The fountains, which also are getting some plumbing and lighting maintenance, should be operational by August.

The *Reclining Nudes* sculpture, which was removed from Roberts Residence Hall in the 1990s, will be reinstalled in the Anderson Sculpture Garden with Harriet Bart's Alcove. Bart's piece was removed from the exterior of Catt Hall for repair in 2009.

As part of his stay in Ames, Miller will present "Conserving a Legacy" on Thursday, May 26 (7 p.m., 2019 Morrill), to share the techniques he uses to conserve the Petersen art works. The lecture is free and open to the public.



Christian Petersen at work on *The Gentle Doctor*. He was ISU's artist-in-residence from 1935 to 1961. Submitted photo.