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Department of English

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Jonathan Bush Discusses His Time in Afghanistan

Jonathan Bush is an associate professor and our newly-elected department chair. He is also a Lt. Cmdr. in the Navy Reserve. He was deployed as part of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) Headquarters from February-October 2010.

When I returned home, a colleague asked if I was going to write about my experiences. My response was simple: an emphatic “no.” At that point, I didn’t want to think about Afghanistan; I just wanted to get back to my normal life – reconnect with my family, get used to being back home, and learn how to become a teacher again. Now that a few months have passed, I’ve changed my mind: I hope my impressions can convey some of the complexity and nuance as I saw it in my small slice of Afghanistan.

I had the privilege of working near the city-center of Kabul. During low-threat periods, I was able to walk short distances outside our compound to Afghan government buildings and other NATO compounds where I worked. Through these travels, I came to know the street kids who would loiter nearby our compound gate. On some level, I guess we became friends. Whenever they saw me coming, they would rush to greet me with a jubilant “Jon!”(I was, it can be argued, a bit of a pushover with my loose change and snacks). I also became a bit of a familiar presence to the local fruit vendors; we would mutually greet each other—right hand over our heart in a traditional Afghan sign of respect, and a greeting of “sa·laam alai·kum.” We would occasionally share small favors – a gift of toothpaste and soap for a shopkeeper; my worn out running shoes for a boy with none of his own—small things. In return, I’d often receive bracelets to give my children, or an extra peach or a small melon to take back to my office. We would exchange thank yous -- “tashakor” in Dari. It was small, but it was a connection.

My work also gave me the opportunity to wander more widely through Kabul. Make no mistake: the city is often anarchic: lawless, dirty, corrupt, and dangerous. Piles of garbage are endemic. Destroyed buildings are so common as to be unremarkable. Traffic rules are, at best, advisory. Street children and beggars abound. Corruption is a way of life. Violence is common and expected. It is not uncommon to see men and women with missing and mangled limbs.

Continued on Pg. 5

Also in this issue...

Pg. 2 - Chair’s Corner
Pg. 3 - Student News
Pg. 4 - Sigma Tau Delta Inductees
Pg. 5 - 2011 English Studies Conference
Pg. 6 - English 3110: Our Place in Nature
Pg. 7 - Faculty News
Pg. 8 - Alumni News
Pg. 9 - Ed Gailligan Obituary
Pg. 10-11 - English Department Awards
Just about four years ago I came to WMU for my campus interview and shortly thereafter I accepted the offer to join the English department as its chair. The last four years have been a good experience for me. As an external chair, I enjoyed a steep learning curve and gained invaluable insights into the workings of the department, college, university, and the academy in general. I shared, albeit vicariously, in the numerous achievements of our students, faculty, and staff, and I learned to listen, to be patient, and to follow my professional ethical compass in the face of collegial disagreement, honest dissent, and some of the less delectable forms of behavior that inhabit a unit’s social and intellectual space.

All in all, as I look back over the last four years, I feel a sense of pride in having helped shape the course of our department. Most of the credit for the excellent work done belongs to those I was privileged to work with, a number of wonderfully talented and dedicated colleagues who collaborated with me on the Executive Committee, Policy Committee, and many more. I was blessed with a formidable support staff and work-study students and assistance from dozens of individuals all across our university.

As I leave this position, I can state with full confidence that this department is, as evidenced by national rankings, one of the most widely recognized unit at our entire institution. Despite considerable budget reductions, we have managed to maintain the qualitative hallmarks of our programs: relatively small classes with individual attention to student learners, efficient advising and mentoring by experienced faculty, and high research and creative activity among a majority our faculty and graduate students.

I feel good about relinquishing the reins because I know that the incoming new chair of the department, Dr. Jonathan Bush, will ensure that our unit will continue to thrive. Jonathan received his Ph.D. in Rhetoric and Composition, with an emphasis in English Education, from Purdue University in 2001. He joined WMU in the same year and has since served as Interim Director of First-Year Writing, Coordinator of Developmental Writing, and Co-Director of the Third Coast Writing Project. Among his many other leadership qualifications is his work as Lieutenant Commander and Public Affairs and Media Specialist for the United States Navy Reserve, a position in which he recently served in Afghanistan. He is an accomplished academic teacher and a well-published scholar, exactly the kind of primus inter pares this student-centered AND research-active unit needs.

As I will join the faculty ranks later this summer, I would request that you please extend to Jonathan the same steadfast assistance and patronage you have shown me over the last four years. I look forward to giving Jonathan my full support in my role as the future former chair, an elder statesman of sorts, who is excited about returning to full-time teaching and scholarship.

I am sincerely grateful to you, the Friends of the Department of English, for your liberal intellectual and financial support and I hope to see you at our annual Awards and Recognition ceremonies and the myriad other scholarly events we sponsor throughout the year. I am not leaving, just switching offices.
Kelly Phillips (Footnotes intern and English Department student employee, pictured right) was nominated for a STAR Award for her volunteer work at the Kalamazoo Gospel Mission. The Mission’s volunteer coordinator Hannah Dockweiler (pictured left) wrote the following:

“Kelly volunteers as a food service volunteer. She comes in every Monday at 6 A.M. to help serve breakfast, and every other Saturday to help prepare the lunch meal. Even at the early hour of 6 A.M., Kelly kindly greets clients by name, because she has taken the time to get to know the people she serves. She arrives even when she could have called and said the weather was too bad to drive.

She also is involved in assisting in our after school program, helping school aged children with their homework, playing, and being a friend to the children in the shelter. Kelly has a heart to serve others and is wonderful serving our diverse population. We always see Kelly volunteering with a positive attitude and sweetness that radiates behind her smiling face.”

Laura Donnelly (Ph.D. student) has been awarded a Dissertation Completion Fellowship for Fall 2011 to finish her dissertation - a book of poetry.

Sheridan Steelman (Ph.D. student) presented at the Michigan Reading Association Conference in March. His topic was “Student-Choice Reading at the High School Level.”

Katie Burpo (M.F.A. Fiction), is pleased to announce the forthcoming publication of two short stories: “A Small Town Vigil” in Barely South “For Fun, For Keeps” in Specs.

All three of this year’s department Teaching Effectiveness or Creative Scholar award winners—Renee Gardner, Chad Sweeney, and Bonnie McLean (pictured left)—have also been selected by the Graduate College as All-University award winners. This means all our department’s nominees have been recognized for their excellence from students across the university. It also gives English the most All-University awards of any department in the Graduate College this year.

The following English students have been invited to join Phi Beta Kappa:

Natasha D. Allen
Andrew J. Argo
Madeline J. Baker
Thomas L. Brown
Jonathan D. Current
Katie E. Drenth
Michael T. Dwyer
Meghan M. Dykema
Madison E. Edwards
Paula R. Fader
Jacqueline C. Goodman
Christine E. Hamman

Angela R. Kramer
Eli F. Kroes
Ian M. Magee
William D. Martin
Sara L. Olivares
Candace N. Pine
Sarah E. Rozek
On March 20, the Alpha Nu Pi chapter of the Sigma Tau Delta International English Honor Society celebrated its Spring induction and reception and the fifth anniversary STD at WMU. Since March 2006, the Alpha Nu Pi chapter has grown to nearly 300 active and alumni members and has been nationally recognized as one of the most active, vital chapters in the country.

A record number of new members were inducted, all received lifetime memberships to Sigma Tau Delta free of charge, thanks to generous donations from faculty, staff, alumni, and friends as well as support from the WMU Department of English and the College of Arts and Sciences.

**Spring 2011 Sigma Tau Delta Inductees:**

- Aly, Hanan
- Bajdo, Diana
- Barnes, Sara
- Brandt, Courtney
- Brimhall, Traci
- Burpo, Katie
- Brockway, Grace
- Cahn, Elissa
- Charnley, Kassie
- Christian, Laura
- Church, Kayla
- Cornelius, Jessica
- Deal, Holly
- Dennis, Jeffrey
- Dodson, Micaela
- England, Andrea
- Evans, Kelly
- Fiddler, Benjamin
- Freitas, McKaley
- Gietzen, Christian
- Hammon, Christine
- Hollenbaugh, Ian Benjamin
- Holwerda, Anna
- Howard, Krystal Jo
- Hovey, Amanda
- Hulsey, Amanda
- Jennings, Brandon
- Khalil, Dina Anwar
- Krasnicki, Shannon
- Landers, Tammy
- Leffler, Nicole
- Livingston, Kenneth
- Lukshaitis, Margaret
- Martin, Elizabeth
- McLean, Bonnie
- Michaels, Chelsea
- Pelto, Travis
- Pehrson, Joseph
- Pender, Jena
- Peters, Ashly
- Rice, Jonathan
- Root, Erica
- Rozek, Sarah
- Samuelson, Phillip
- Scott, Emily
- Schaefer, Alyssa
- Shelley, Kathryn
- Sieber, Jennifer
- Sing, Yee Wen
- Smith, August John
- Snyder, Rebekah
- Springsteen, Alana
- Stahl, Tyler
- Svikiz, Andis
- Szejbach, Michelle
- Walsh, Kerry
- Wethy, Jade
- Wiley, Alyson Paige
- Witte, Alexa
Continued from Pg. 1

It is not uncommon to see men and women with missing and mangled limbs. Herds of disheveled sheep graze on trash along roadsides and in vacant lots. Smog covers the mountain peaks. Sewage fills the streets; refuse flows down the Kabul River. It can be a grim place.

But that’s not the entire picture. Kabul is also festive and vibrant. Ad hoc storefronts are packed into every corner of the city. Commerce is everywhere: people are selling common things like fruit and bread, of course, but also unexpected items -- empty oil cans, sticks, and recycled cinder blocks. The bazaars are full of tents and vendors. The Kabul Zoo is open and crowded each weekend. Families crowd the parks each Friday. Schools are open and in session: children in well-worn uniforms can be seen walking with books in hand. Newly built wedding halls rise next to burnt-out storefronts. Brightly colored jingle trucks jostle past donkey carts and innumerable white Toyota Corollas. Mothers in burkas clutch the hands their stunningly beautiful toddlers while their husbands animatedly gesture and talk and smoke and argue. There is an energy and hopefulness to the city that is hard to ignore.

I recently had another friend ask me if Afghanistan was a good experience. I had to stifle a laugh when he asked it. I didn’t mean to be rude: there was nothing good about it. I’m not a better husband, father, teacher, or academic; my transition home was neither smooth nor easy. I will, however, carry memories of Kabul and its people with me for a long time to come.
Given our own interest in the environment and our desire to create an interactive course that would encourage our students to view the world in diverse ways, we designed the honors section of English 3110/Our Place in Nature around a series of inter-related texts, activities, and assignments. These would enable our students to interact with the environment itself as well as engage with experts whose experiences and attitudes would serve as a source of information and inspiration as the students made decisions about their own careers. In order to narrow our scope and to take advantage of the wealth of resources available in West Michigan, we decided to make one of our main themes the importance of the local.

To that end, among the texts that we chose were two that were written by West Michigan authors, Looking for Hickories: The Forgotten Wildness of the Rural Midwest by Three Rivers resident Tom Springer (The University of Michigan Press, 2008) and Fresh Water: Women Writing on the Great Lakes edited by Saugatuck resident and WMU Environmental Studies instructor Alison Swan (Michigan State University Press, 2006). Both authors visited our classroom to talk about their own environmental activism in Michigan, as well as the writing and publication processes.

To further develop our focus on the local, we also took our students on two field trips, the first to the Kalamazoo Nature Center and the second to the Kalamazoo Farmer’s Market. As part of our study of Barbara Kingsolver’s bestselling book Animal, Vegetable, Miracle, we asked students to purchase locally grown foods during their farmer’s market visit. They then prepared and served at our screening of the West Michigan-focused documentary Eating in Place, which we held in the Lee Honors College later that week. This event allowed our students to engage in conversation with two of the documentarians involved in the making of the film. They also visited with professors and each other about the ideas and local resources explored in the film and Kingsolver’s text as well as their own experiences with local eating. This was a much more intentional, environmentally conscious form of consumption that will likely prove critical to the long term well being of our planet as the human population continues to increase.

In addition to the field trips and guest speaker visits, we also encouraged our students to develop their powers of observation and tech skills via a semester-long blogging assignment. This enabled them to record and share their thoughts with their classmates online. These blog posts focused on topics as varied as their observations about the flora and fauna around them as they walked across campus to their reflections on some of the nature poems that we were discussing in class. They proved very engaging and eventually served as the springboards for their creative writing during our writer’s workshop held later in the semester. In some cases, the blogs inspired their final projects, digital stories.

We learned a tremendous amount about environmental issues and about teaching throughout this breathless semester of ours—information that we hope to share in a textbook focused on many of the pedagogical strategies that we employed with the help and hard work of our honors students. And we would be remiss if we did not acknowledge the huge debt of gratitude that we owe to our department Chair, Dr. Richard Utz, and the Dean of WMU’s Lee Honors College, Dr. Nick Andreadis, whose enthusiasm, encouragement, and financial support of our class made so many of the units, field trips, and classroom visits possible. We had a wonderful time teaching this class and hope that other graduate students in our program will be similarly empowered to experiment with what is possible within the classroom—and beyond it—in the future.
Staci Perryman-Clark, WMU’s Director of First-Year Writing, appears in a recently published essay on the status of feminism in Rhetoric and Writing Studies. Access the article at *Present Tense: A Journal of Rhetoric in Society.*

Dr. Perryman-Clark also presented a paper on the panel, “Toward a Pedagogy of Inclusion: Contesting the Boundaries of Alternative Pedagogies, Rhetorics, and Languages in a Writing Program,” at the annual 2011 Conference on College Composition and Communication on April 8, 2011. This panel was a featured session at the conference.

**Jaimy Gordon**, winner of this year’s National Book Award, just received the Dr. Tony Ryan Book Award. The award, which carries $10,000, was presented by Castleton Lyons and Thoroughbred Times during a reception Wednesday evening at Castleton Lyons in Lexington, KY.

Dr. Gordon was also a finalist for the 2011 PEN/Faulkner Award, America’s largest peer-juried prize for fiction. All five finalists will be honored during the 31st Annual PEN/Faulkner Award ceremony at the Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington, D.C., on Saturday, May 7.


**Toby Kahn-Loftus** had a busy March: she planned four professional events on behalf of Michigan Council of Teachers of English and her rural satellite writing project; and she also presented at the Michigan Council of Teachers of English Spring Round Table. Five WMU students attended the MCTE round table.

**Richard Utz** has accepted an invitation to write an essay for a volume on *Medieval Afterlives in Popular Culture: Fascinations and Fantasies*, edited by Gail Ashton and Daniel T. Kline and contracted to be published in Palgrave Macmillan’s New Middle Ages series. Utz’s essay will focus on the afterlife of the Robin Hood figure in French television series in the 1960s.

**Daneen Wardrop** has received the College of Arts and Science Gender Scholar Award for 2011. In recognition of this honor, she presented “Civil War Nursing Narratives” at the Oaklands on March 17.

The Alpha Nu Pi chapter of the Sigma Tau Delta International English Honor Society announced that **Gwen Athene Tarbox** was voted the chapter’s 2011 Faculty Honorary Inductee. Honorary membership recognizes outstanding faculty and staff for their commitment to excellence in teaching, research, and service. Dr. Tarbox joined 57 undergraduate and graduate students who were inducted March 20, in the largest induction class in chapter history.

**John H. Stroupe**, Professor Emeritus of English and Editor Emeritus of *Comparative Drama*, has been appointed to the Editorial Advisory Board of *Explorations*, a literary and research journal which has been published since 1969 by the Department of English, GC University, Lahore, Pakistan.
Faculty News Cont.

Arnie Johnston is negotiating with the Jacques Brel family so that Wings Press—which published Johnston’s *The Witching Voice: A Novel from the Life of Robert Burns* in 2009—can bring out a collection of his translated lyrics. Love Creek Productions in NYC is planning several cabaret-style presentations of his Brel songs through the current season. And Debby and Arnie just finished the book for a musical, *Summers on the Seine*, with his translated lyrics to jazz arrangements of songs by Gabriel Fauré. The San Francisco Playhouse has requested copies of both *Summers* and his Jacques Brel’s *Lonesome Losers of the Night* for possible production. A CD of the Fauré songs (which should stimulate interest in the show) is being recorded by a cadre of Chicago cabaret luminaries.

The College of Arts & Sciences Teaching and Research Awards have been awarded to Casey McKittrick, John Saillant, and Karen Vocke.

Gwen Tarbox has received funding from multiple sources to conduct research this summer on graphic narratives at Le Centre Belge de la Bande Dessinée in Brussels. The Children’s Literature Association will present her with a faculty research award at its annual meeting in June 2011, and she will combine that award with a travel grant from the Haenicke Institute’s International Education Faculty Development Fund and an ASTRA grant from WMU’s College of Arts and Sciences. Tarbox will give a paper, “Skimming the Surface: Gender and Identification in Contemporary Girls’ Graphic Narratives,” at the Children’s Literature Association Conference in June and will prepare a second essay for publication after her trip in August.

Lisa Minnick has been awarded travel support from the International Education Faculty Development fund.

Grace Tiffany has been awarded research support from the Faculty Research and Creative Activities Award (FRACAA).

Alumni News

Dave Dempsey (B.A. ’77), our Distinguished Alumnus for 2010-11, has recently taken a position as policy advisor for the International Joint Commission/Commission mixte international, an independent binational organization to help prevent and resolve disputes about the use and quality of boundary waters in Canada and the United States.

Bonnie Jo Campbell (M.F.A. ’98) is the recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship. One of 180 awards given this year, they are “appointed on the basis of prior achievement and exceptional promise. The successful candidates were chosen from a group of almost 3,000 applicants,” according to the Guggenheim Foundation website. The award will support Campbell’s project “writing a series of interlocking stories set in a contemporary American circus, revealing surprising rigid social hierarchy in this multicultural institution.” Campbell spent five months with the Ringling Bros. & Bailey circus. Campbell’s next novel, *Once Upon a River*, is due out in July.

Rajah Smart (B.A. 2000) sends word that his latest novel, *You Were There*, was recently published. *You Were There* is based on his sister’s life story of teenage alcoholism and drug addiction, loss, fallen hope, the steps she was forced to take to clean up, and picking up the pieces to move forward with her life.

Smart currently works for the Michigan Department of Education, and is in pursuit of his doctorate.
Remembering Ed Galligan
by Norman Carlson, emeritus

Ed Galligan, a member of the English Department from 1958 through 1988, died at Rose Arbor Hospice on March 28, following a sudden, mercifully brief decline resulting from a recurrence of esophageal cancer.

“All use of language is grounded in talk.” So wrote Ed early in *The Truth of Uncertainty: Beyond Ideology in Science and Literature*, a work he produced in the first decade of his “retirement.” And Ed loved to talk. Thus one of Ed’s early contributions at WMU was the development of the course “Major American Writers” as a replacement for the traditional American literature surveys: he wanted to “talk” to students about writers whose literary voices spoke to him—such as Thoreau and Twain, not to “lecture” them about the theological intricacies of Cotton Mather.

A different sort of contribution came in the mid-1960s when Ed helped develop—and served on—the Department’s first “Policy and Planning Committee,” which oversaw the first election of a department chairperson, and established the policies that guided that chair and the associate chairs. Again, “talk” was central—the Committee offered an opportunity for colleagues to discuss issues and then formulate policies for departmental approval.

During Ed’s years as Director of Graduate Programs (1978-82), he supervised the development of our Master’s in Professional Writing degree, a rather unusual program at the time. Central to the curriculum was, for Ed, ENG 632: Essay Writing, the course in which development of a “personal voice” was crucial.

Ed finished his service to the Department as Chair. At the time, university enrollment was starting to rise after a very sluggish decade, but funds were in short supply. Ed perceived a rare opportunity to make a lasting contribution when a journalism position opened up. He found a successful magazine journalist whose writing he admired—with college teaching experience—who could, he thought, strengthen both our undergraduate journalism program and the graduate professional writing program. Alas, the then-provost nixed the deal—the candidate lacked proper academic journalism credentials. Ed accordingly thumbed his nose in the direction of the Administration Building and settled down for 20+ years of serious reading and writing/talking.

Ed was very active in Kalamazoo’s ACLU chapter in its early years, a passion reflected in his involvement as a defense witness in a Grand Rapids pornography trial concerning a work he cheerfully acknowledged as being a piece of unreadable trash, *Sex Life of a Cop*.

When not reading/writing/talking, Ed watched baseball—the only sport worth attention, listened to Duke Ellington or classic American blues, savored the films of Harold Lloyd and Buster Keaton, and cooked (he counted Julia Child and Marcella Hazan as among his most important mentors).

Ed is survived by his wife of 62 years, Isabel “Brownie” Galligan, sons Joe and Jim, and granddaughters Sarah and Kate.
2011 Department of English Awards

Distinguished Alumnus Achievement Award:
David Dempsey

Chair's Distinguished Service Award:
Jana Schulman

David C. Czuk Part-Time Faculty Awards for Teaching Excellence:
Michael Monje
Marcus Johnson

Presidential Scholar:
Staci Layne Stutsman

The Poetry Awards
Herbert Scott Award for Excellence in Poetry:
Shana Wolstein

The Gwen Frostic Undergraduate Winner:
Michelle S. Reed

Honorable Mention:
Chris Cialdella

The Gwen Frostic Graduate Winner:
Traci D. Brimhall

Honorable Mention:
Laura Donnelly

The Gordon Awards for Fiction
The Bruno Schulz Award for Undergraduate Fiction:
Bridget G. Dooley

The Gordon Prize for Graduate Fiction:
Daniel Mancilla

The Playwriting Awards
The Arnie Johnston Award for Undergraduate Playwriting:
Conor McShane

The Gwen Frostic Undergraduate Winner:
Conor McShane

Honorable Mention:
Kelsey Pretzer

The Gwen Frostic Graduate Winner:
Mikala Hansen

Honorable Mention:
Jason E. Lenz

The Gwen Frostic Creative Nonfiction Awards
Undergraduate Winner:
Monica Vanstone

Honorable Mention:
Jessie Miller

Graduate Winner:
Marin Heinritz

Honorable Mention:
Katie Burpo

Frederick J. and Katherine Rogers Memorial Shakespeare Awards:
Undergraduate:
Ian B. Hollenbaugh

Graduate:
Jennifer Dustin

The William R. Brown Award for Early English Studies:
Aanee K. Ruple
2011 Department of English Awards

The Comparative Drama Award:
Helena Witzke

George Sprau Awards:
Aanee K. Ruple
William D. Martin

Ralph N. Miller Memorial Award:
Ian B. Hollenbaugh

Patrick D. Hagerty Promising Scholar:
Jordan S. Rossio

Jean and Vincent Malstrom Scholarship:
John D. Kreider

Nash Scholarship in English Education:
Lindsey A. Hesslau

Diversity Studies Award:
Aaron Greer, Katie O’Brien

English Department Graduate Teaching Effectiveness Awards
Master’s Level:
Bonnie McLean

Doctorate Level:
Renee Lee Gardner

Graduate Research and Creative Scholar Award:
Chad Sweeney

Excellence in Rhetoric and Writing Award:
Katherine M. Peterson

Bernadine P. Carlson Prize for Professional Writing:
Hannah Lucero
Maria E. Benson

English Language and Linguistics Award:
Christopher U. Wahamaki

The Linda Christensen Award for Outstanding New Teacher Dedicated to Social Justice:
Stephanie S. Herda

The Adolescent Literature Awards:
Christy A. Connellee
Natasha D. Allen

Sigma Tau Delta Outstanding Service Award:
Allison C. Billedeaux
Kara A. Pauley

Honorary Inductee into Sigma Tau Delta:
Gwen Athene Tarbox

Recognized Awards and Prizes:
2010 Maurice Prize & Flannery O’Connor Short Fiction Award:
Melinda Moustakis

WMU’s Distinguished Teaching Award:
Grace C. Tiffany

Kennedy Center Annual Playwriting Award:
Mikala Hansen

2011 Mississippi Review Prize:
Rachel Swearingen

2011 College of Arts & Sciences Gender Scholar Award:
Daneen Wardrop

2010 Winner of the National Book Award for Fiction & Nominee for the 2011 PEN/Faulkner Award in Fiction:
Jaimy Gordon

2010 Outstanding Academic Title Award from the American Library Association’s Choice Magazine:
Katherine Joslin
What’s New With You?

Please tell us where you are and what you’re doing. We would love to include you in our next alumni update section.

Email us at engl_news@wmich.edu and include the year and degree with which you graduated, any fond memories of the English department, as well as something you’ve done since your times as a Bronco.

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For a contribution of $100, you can be among the special groups of supporters of the programs that make our department special. Your name will be inscribed on a plaque displayed in the department’s central office on the 6th floor of Sprau Tower.

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