PERFECT PITCH
Cal U composes a new program in Commercial Music Technology
In the spring 2010 edition of Focus On, highlighting the College of Liberal Arts.

Dr. Michael L. Hummel
Dean, College of Liberal Arts

Welcome to the spring 2010 edition of Focus On, highlighting the College of Liberal Arts.

As I contemplate the past year as dean of the College of Liberal Arts, the first thought that comes to mind is a quote by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.: “Life’s most persistent and urgent question is, What are you doing for others?” This thought strongly correlates with our faculty and staff’s professional work ethic. I have always referred to Dr. King’s concept of working for the benefit of others as “selfless service.” To me, it means service to society, either on a professional, public or personal basis. It has been a pleasure to witness the powerful value of selfless service operationalized on a daily basis over this past year.

Let me share some highlights:

- For the first time, California University hosted the 2010 Scholastic Art and Writing Awards of Southwestern Pennsylvania. The program was organized by the Scholastic Board, the Department of English and the Department of Art and Design, which received full accreditation late last year.
- The Communication Studies Department hosted the state championship of the Pennsylvania Forensics Association, which returned to Cal U after 15 years.
- Several English majors presented papers at the statewide conference of EAPSU-Jr., the English Association of Pennsylvania State Universities.
- Theatre and Dance students participated in the annual North Central Regional Conference Auditions and Technical Interviews, and the very popular “Summer Experience.”
- The Applied Sociology program at the Department of Justice, Law and Society received full accreditation.
- The third annual Conference for Corporate and Homeland Security was another huge success.
- Faculty from the Department of Modern Languages have escorted students on international academic field trips and hosted Modern Language Day.
- The Philosophy Department continues to engage in scholarly activities and student academic clubs, with activity in Italy, Scotland and Sweden.
- History and Political Science faculty have engaged in numerous activities, including the G-20 Summit, American Democracy Project events, Constitution Day and Black History Month, which also involved the Frederick Douglass Institute.
- The Psychology Department is supporting our communities through the Child and Family Studies Institute, and a faculty member is consulting on the children’s television program Meet Me at the Great Tree.
- The Music Department continues its education and service by developing a new Bachelor of Science degree in Commercial Music Technology. Max Gonano, chairman of the Music Department, calls Commercial Music Technology a ‘career-building major’ that blends music and technology.

Instead, I will close with a quote from the great Indian philosopher and independence fighter, Mahatma Gandhi: “The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.”

Respectfully,

Dr. Michael L. Hummel
Dean, College of Liberal Arts

Because of its diverse nature, the program targets students Gonano describes as “artist-techie-entrepreneurs.” “For this major, students need to be musicians first and foremost,” says Dr. Yugo Ikach, associate professor of music. “But they also need to be smart business people and competent technicians. We want to arm our graduates with as many skills as possible to give them an edge in the job market.”

Applicants for the Commercial Music Technology program must be proficient on at least one instrument and audition for a spot in the program. The first class of students arrives in fall 2010.

Many of the classrooms and rehearsal facilities in Gallagher Hall have been equipped with state-of-the-art sound and recording equipment. Even the music practice rooms have been upgraded. “The equipment is second to none,” says Gonano. “Say you’re a guitarist and you want to simulate a performance in a smoky nightclub or a prayerful cathedral. You can simulate that exact experience — minus the smoke and prayers.”

“It’s been a fascinating journey,” he adds. “And we’re so proud of the results.” Several adjunct faculty members, working commercial music professionals who are at the top of their game, contributed to the development of the program and add a real-world dimension to this exciting new major.

Gipp Rippin, for example, has been a freelance audio engineer for more than 10 years and a teacher in the field for seven. He concurs with the full-time professors. “We’ve put together a great program and a great facility here at Cal U,” he says. “I’m excited for the classes to start.”

— By Linda Keaveny, a Peters Township-based writer

Dr. Yugo Ikach, associate professor of music, says students in the new Bachelor of Science degree in Commercial Music Technology must be proficient on at least one instrument and audition for a spot in the program. The first class of students arrives in fall 2010.
Singing their hearts out

LOVE OF MUSIC MOTIVATES CAL U’S VOCAL PERFORMERS

The hours are long. The rehearsals are demanding — and then there’s summer camp. Yet every semester, more than 100 students at Cal U juggle coursework, homework, part-time jobs and volunteer positions so they can participate in one or more of the vocal music groups on campus.

From the University Choir to the Jazz Singers and California Singers to innovative spin-off groups like A Capella Stella and Vulcanize, Cal U’s vocal ensembles perform tirelessly, both on campus and at a variety of venues throughout western Pennsylvania.

“We just love to perform,” says Carl Halye, founder and current director of Vulcanize, an all-male a cappella group.

The sheer love of sharing their talent can be a powerful motivation. Dr. Yugo Ikach, associate professor and director of the University Choir, says these students come from all majors and diverse backgrounds, but they build tremendous bonds with one another because of their common interest.

Halye, for example, is a meteorology major who was inspired by the a capella and “rock-aperilla” groups at his former high school.

“Six of us tried to get a harmonizing group going here in the spring of 2008, but it wasn’t until fall semester that Vulcanize really took off,” he says. “We practice every Tuesday and Thursday. Sometimes we sing with the choir or other ensembles. Other times it’s just us at events.”

The enthusiasm that Halye and the other Vulcanize members bring to each performance is typical of all the musical groups on campus.

“No one is making them show up for practice or the shows,” adds Ikach. “They’re really, really a great bunch of kids,” adds Ikach. “People really want to be here. They work so hard and so long. And they do it just because they love it — and they want others to see how much they love it!”

Last fall semester, students participated in more than 30 events, ranging from New Student Convocation and winter Commencement to holiday caroling sessions on campus and run-out concerts at local churches and senior centers.

This spring, the concert schedule included an all-star college performance at Heinz Hall in Pittsburgh, as well as a choir tour to Washington, D.C.

Although these groups are all about singing, there is a strong community service aspect to membership.

“Music is good for people and helps to lift their spirits,” says Jenna Dunmire, a senior in the Department of Communication Disorders and president of the University Choir.

She adds that teamwork plays a big role in ensuring a solid performance.

“When you’re part of a group, you no longer just want to make sure that you sound your best, but that your group performs the best that it can. You also do not want to disappoint your audience, because they’re the ones who took time out of their schedule to come and see you.”

“I always have to remind myself that these are avocational musicians,” says Dr. Max Gorano, chairman of the Music Department. “They’re doing it for fun. Every year we are so excited to how see the groups take shape.”

“They’re really, really a great bunch of kids,” adds Ikach.

“Working with them convinces me that I have the best job in the world.”

By Lindy Kravec, a Peters Township-based writer

Members of the California Singers Cody Foster and Dick Peeger (above) and Dan Plamley (below) rehearse in Morgan Hall.

School psychologist plays host on children’s TV show

‘Miss Palomine’ brings educational principles to her Cal U classroom, too

With a warm smile, Miss Palomine invites children to join her in the television world of Midlanda. They gather at the Great Tree to meet Socrates the Squirrel before setting out to learn about letters, words and other educational concepts with the help of other cuddly Midlandans.

Another day has begun on Meet Me at the Great Tree, an educational program for children ages 3-6. The show finished its run in Milwaukee, Wis., and on Pittsburgh’s WPCH Fox 53 in April, but it is scheduled to begin airing soon in Philadelphia.

Miss Palomine is the perfect alter ego for Dr. Angela Bloomquist, a Cal U assistant professor of psychology and a school psychologist who has an extensive background in musical theater.

“I started when I was 9, with a small role in Annie Get Your Gun with the Pittsburgh Civic Light Opera,” Bloomquist says.

“When I was 16, I did a show at the Pittsburgh Playhouse and met some people associated with Point Park (University) who now have connections with the Lincoln Park Performing Arts Center.”

Meet Me at the Great Tree is filmed at the arts center in Midland, Pa., a venue affiliated with the National Network of Digital Schools.

The show reinforces concepts from the Little Lincoln Interactive curriculum, which uses online and offline resources to teach math, reading, writing, social studies, science and visual arts.

“They were looking for a warm, kindergarten-type personality to fill the role of Miss Palomine, and my name came up,” Bloomquist says. “So I brought my curriculum vitae with me, as well as my performance resume, and did a little screen test.

“The producers offered me a position on the team as an educational consultant, too. It was wonderful to be a part of the creative process while developing this project.”

Bloomquist says she was able to discuss the show with the child-development class she taught at Cal U last fall.

“If I would ask my students, ‘What do we know about 3-to-6-year-olds, and how would we translate that into providing educational entertainment for them?’

“For example, we know children don’t have long attention spans, so we don’t spend too much time on a segment. If we introduce a song for the letter of the day, we also present a cartoon character associated with it, and then someone talks about it and draws it, so we have multiple ways of presenting the same concept.”

Bloomquist filmed 35 episodes of the show in just five weeks last summer. She currently is acting as Miss Palomine in video clips for the Little Lincoln curriculum.

She says Cal U has supported her efforts.

“Part of my job is service and part of my job is scholarship,” she says. “To be encouraged to do this project is fantastic — I couldn’t ask for anything more.”

By Wendy Markal, assistant communications director at Cal U
**CONFERENCE SPEAKERS ADDRESS SCHOOL VIOLENCE**

2010 Homeland Security Conference will focus on crime in cyberspace

Two human skeletons hang in the laboratory-classroom where Dr. Cassandra Kuba teaches forensic anthropology. A glass case holds a skeletal cat, and assorted skulls and other bones are displayed on shelves or packed away in neatly labeled boxes.

“If students think it’s going to be like the TV show Bones, they’re only partly right,” says Kuba, who originated the undergraduate program at Cal U just three years ago.

Examining bones can, indeed, provide critical evidence that helps to solve crimes and bring the perpetrators to justice, but few cases are neatly wrapped up within an hour.

“This can be painstaking work,” Kuba says. “And sometimes we just don’t know all the answers.”

Lonich discussed suicide risk factors — including depression, negative self-evaluation, poor coping skills, and social and interpersonal isolation and alienation — as well as local school districts’ work to provide suicide prevention training for teachers and social and coping skills training for students.

Participants also discussed school and youth violence policies and procedures used by the state Education Department and the Washington County District Attorney’s Office. Other sessions focused on emergency planning and case studies of school shootings.

“School security is a hot-button topic,” says Dr. Michael Hummel, dean of the College of Liberal Arts, past chair of the Justice, Law and Society Department and lead organizer of the event.

“This conference provided the opportunity to educate society on helping to prevent these crimes.”

About 200 people attended, says Hummel, including 50 students who had the opportunity to meet corporate CEOs, chiefs of police, security professionals, government officials and school administrators.

“Each year the conference provides a real skill-building and networking opportunity for students,” he says.

By Colleen C. Derda, a Pittsburgh-based writer

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**2010 CONFERENCE LOOKS AT INTERNET**

The 2010 Corporate and Homeland Security Conference will look at security issues in cyberspace. The Department of Justice, Law and Society will present “Internet Security and Cyber Crimes” on Oct. 21 in the Performance Center of the Natali Student Center.

The conference will feature sessions with FBI professionals working with the High-Tech Crimes Task Force and Dr. Raymond Hsieh, a Cal U assistant professor who trains law enforcement professionals in computer forensics.

Lonich will present a session on cyber-bullying and the increased prevalence of depression and suicidal ideation among both youth who have been bullied and those who bully.

Internet terrorism will be the focus of a discussion led by Hummel, whose work with Pennsylvania State Police and a cadaver dog team to scan a tract of state game lands where police suspect a “cold case” homicide victim may be buried.

Students also learn to use laser surveying equipment to map a target area. In the field, they take soil samples and probe the earth for signs that something — a drug cache? a body? — may be hidden underground.

“My students get hands-on experience, which isn’t always the case in undergraduate programs,” says Kuba, who teaches introductory and upper-level courses. “They learn about search and recovery and how to conduct lab analysis. And they develop a basic understanding of how forensic anthropologists fit into the criminal justice system.”

In the classroom, though, it’s all about the bones. Students learn to distinguish human remains from animal bones. They measure a skull at key points and use a computer program to determine the individual’s sex and ancestry. They examine specimens for signs of trauma, and they study the effects of fire and decomposition on skeletal remains.

Human bones can tell us the story of how someone lived and possibly how they died. A forensic anthropologist may be the only person who can identify an individual,” says DaNetta Snook, a senior anthropology major with a concentration in forensic anthropology.

“This work is important to families who have lost a loved one, to victims of crimes and to law enforcement.”

Through Cal U’s Institute for Forensic Science and Criminology, Kuba conducts workshops for local police and colleagues work with ground-penetrating radar.

Some people have difficulty working with human remains, especially those of crime victims, but Kuba says she never regrets the career choice she made back in high school.

“I’m being granted a privilege, to get to know people in a way they don’t even know themselves,” she says. “I know that my work with their loved ones’ remains may help bring closure for surviving family members. That in itself is reason enough to do this.”

By Christine Kindl, communications director for Cal U
Efforts to build the Cal U speech and debate team into a more prestigious organization got a boost recently when the University hosted the state championship of the Pennsylvania Forensics Association.

"The state competition hasn't even been hosted in western Pennsylvania for about 15 years," says Dr. Gregory Spicer, chair of the Department of Communication Studies and the team's adviser. "To have it here was a pretty big deal."

Two students from Cal U competed in the Lincoln-Douglas category, a one-on-one policy debate. They earned third place in the President's Division, which is for smaller teams.

For perspective, St. Joseph's University, a nationally known program, sent about five times as many students and competed in a variety of categories, such as rhetorical criticism and persuasive, extemporaneous and impromptu speaking.

"Eastern Pennsylvania has a long history of excellent speech and debate programs," says Spicer. "His goal — and one that is fully supported by the University and the College of Liberal Arts under Dean Michael Hummel — is to create a similar tradition at Cal U."

There are challenges. For one, "there aren't that many high school forensics programs in the area," Spicer says. "Because our students don't have this experience, it takes time to build a forensics program."

For another, weekend competitions often require travel to other schools. "For many students, this is a non-starter, because they have to work on weekends."

The College of Liberal Arts has setup a $500 scholarship for excellence in debate that can be awarded to a deserving student.

Despite the obstacles, Spicer says a forensics program is worth nurturing, because it will benefit students well beyond graduation.

"I was able to apply the skills I learned from participating in forensics on a daily basis in the workplace," says Megan Behary '03, a former Cal U debate team president who is now a graduate assistant in the Department of Communication Studies.

"Forensics had an impact on my career more than any one singular class."

For this reason, says Spicer, "we want Cal U to be known as the only school in western Pennsylvania with a comprehensive forensics program."