EXPANDED SUPPORT FOR UNDERGRADUATE SCHOLARS: The Future is Here!

Over the last decade, a key element in the Departmental effort to raise funds in the Focus on the Future Campaign has been the goal of increasing scholarship support for undergraduate majors to help cover the rising costs of a KU education. Our ultimate intent was to provide some support to every departmental major willing to commit to the four years of intense effort and dedication required to succeed in some of the most intellectually challenging majors in the University. Thanks to the generosity of friends and alumni of the Department, we had gradually expanded the size and number of scholarships offered to incoming freshman, but still remained well short of supplying help to all those who needed it.

Amazingly, it now appears that our dream may come true, much sooner than we ever thought possible. Among the many changes underway at KU with the transition to new leadership at every level from the Chancellor to the Dean of CLAS is a new policy for the distribution of scholarship funds. Since Fall 2011, KU admissions and scholarship support has been distributing four-year renewable scholarships to incoming freshman, with the level of support tied to the student’s high school record and ACT/SAT scores. For residents of Kansas, the level of financial aid ranges from $1000/yr if the student’s ACT/SAT scores are above 24/1090 with a GPA above 3.75 to $5000/yr for a 32/1400 and a 3.85 GPA. For out-of-state residents, the range of financial aid begins at $2000/yr at rises to $9300/yr for a 28/1250 and 3.85 GPA. For National Merit Scholars, in or out-of-state, the aid can be as high as $10000/yr. For residents of Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, or Wisconsin, students majoring in Engineering Physics, Physics, or Astronomy may be eligible to receive a Midwest Student Exchange support package of $9300/yr with qualifying scores of 24/1090 and a GPA of 3.25. For students with a parent, stepparent, grandparent, step-grandparent or legal guardian who graduated from KU, equally generous support packages are available under the Jayhawk Generations program. For explicit details on amounts, deadlines for applications, and scholarship conditions, it is recommended that you check out the links at http://affordability.ku.edu/cs/index.shtml

The bottom line is that with average ACT scores in the 29-30 range for majors in the Department, the majority, if not all, of the incoming freshman seriously intending to work toward a degree in the Department could receive some level of support at the $1000/yr level or higher.

We therefore strongly encourage you to help spread the word about this new policy to any and every bright, talented high school student with a physical sciences mindset interested in securing a solid education and career preparation at a reasonable cost at one of the most beautiful campuses in the US.

While the new KU undergraduate scholarship policy significantly enhances the financial support opportunities for our departmental undergraduate majors, the exceptional financial needs of our graduate students, research support for students at all levels, and research infrastructure demands still remain. Your help in achieving our long-term goals is an undeniable necessity and we hope that in 2012 you will add your name to the extensive list of those who wish to make a difference in our future. The Honor Roll of Donors to departmental endowed funds between January 1, 2011 and December 31, 2011 is presented below.

Thank You!
Department Majors Win Two Goldwater Scholarships!

As part of a four-for-four sweep by KU within the Goldwater Scholarship competition, Jeremy Ims (Astronomy, Physics, Math) and Brittany Nicole Krutty (Physics) have been selected as Goldwater Scholars for 2012. The full list of winners nationwide can be found at this link, while the KU press release is here. Of the schools currently in the Big 12 or planning to join in the future, only KU had all four nominees receive scholarships. Each scholarship covers eligible expenses for undergraduate tuition, fees, books, and room and board, up to a maximum of $7,500 annually.
Electron-detection breakthrough could unleash next-generation technologies

Physics researchers at the University of Kansas have discovered a new method of detecting electric currents based on a process called "second-harmonic generation," similar to a radar gun for electrons that can remotely detect their speed. Dr. Hui Zhao, collaborated on the research at KU's Ultrafast Laser Lab with Dr. Judy Wu, University Distinguished Professor of Physics, and graduate students Brian Ruzicka, Lalani Werake, Guowei Xu. Their new idea could improve many present-day renewable-energy technologies — like solar cells, batteries, artificial photosynthesis and water splitting — that rely on detection of electric currents. Further ahead, sensors that better read the motion of electrons could underpin next-generation cell phones and computers. The full story can be accessed at this link.

ING Honors University of Kansas Professor for Excellence in Teaching

Financial services leader ING has honored University of Kansas Professor Greg Rudnick with the ING Professor of Excellence Award for his outstanding performance in the classroom and commitment to the profession. The award was presented at Allen Fieldhouse during the Kansas vs. Oklahoma men's basketball game. The ING Professor of Excellence Award is presented to a member of the university faculty for his or her achievements and dedication to excellence in teaching at the university. The recognition includes a $1,000 grant. The full story can be accessed here.

Research links uplifting continents to crashes in biodiversity on Earth

A mysterious cycle of booms and busts in marine biodiversity over the past 500 million years could be tied to a periodic uplifting of the world's continents, as reported in a paper coauthored by Professor of Physics and Astronomy, Adrian Melott, in the latest issue of The Journal of Geology. The full story can be accessed at this link.

Astronaut Looks Back at 50 Years of Human Spaceflight

For the KU Astrophysics program, it was an exciting week in Austin at the 219th meeting of the American Astronomical Society in January. Among two of the many highlights, program alumnus, retired astronaut, and current faculty member Professor Steve Hawley, (BA: Astronomy, Physics 1973), gave an invited talk on the 50-year history of human spaceflight, a talk which ended with a standing ovation from the audience of over 1000 astronomers.

At the same meeting, it was announced that Dr. Ron Gilliland, (BA: Astronomy, Math, Physics, 1974) has been awarded the Tinsley Prize for 2012. Ron is being honored for his innovative work on the study of ultra-high signal-to-noise observations related to time-domain photometry -- a technique of measuring an astronomical object's changes in electromagnetic radiation over time.

Patsy Tombaugh, wife of Pluto discoverer, dies in Las Cruces at 99

Patricia "Patsy" Edson Tombaugh, community leader, educator, artist, and enthusiastic supporter of her astronomy pioneer husband Clyde, discoverer of the planet Pluto and KU alumnus, died Thursday, Jan. 12 at the Arbors of Del Rey in Las Cruces. She was 99.

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