To coin a phrase, “We’ve come a long way.” That was unmistakable at the recent Faculty Showcase on classroom technology presented by Tina Dierkes, Office Administration and Technology program coordinator. Both faculty and staff were invited to a Smart classroom to get a close-up look at the mating of a PC with the PDA and voice recognition software, and how these technological tools are used in the OAT 276 course, Current Technology for Office Support.

The Business Division’s use and purchase of PDAs, or personal digital assistants, in the classroom was based on the advice of the Office Administration and Technology advisory committee. “They suggested that we start teaching how to use PDAs in the classroom because of their wide use, and many businesses now require them,” said Dierkes. “We are trying to give our students that added technological edge.”

Students use their PDAs to create PowerPoint presentations, Word documents and Excel spreadsheets, which they then ‘sync,’ or ‘beam’ to a laptop, PC or another PDA. This transmittal function also enhances the collaboration and sharing of information and software. This task of beaming is in itself a classroom exercise.

The PDA also teaches organizational skills through the use of the contacts, calendar, lists and notepad functions. These are skills that are necessary for their career fields and everyday life, according to Dierkes.

Speech recognition software, Dragon NaturallySpeaking, turns spoken words into text. Users can dictate into Windows-based applications at speeds of up to 160 words per minute by speaking into a microphone mounted on a headset attached to the computer. The text is then fed onto the page. Mandatory training, for which the software ‘learns’ the user’s speech pattern, takes about five minutes. Dragon speeds up tasks such as creating documents, entering data, launching applications, completing forms and browsing the Web. Occasionally, typos or misunderstandings occur, but the overall rate of accuracy is high.

Using Dragon is similar to the PDAs -- giving that added edge to students, said Dierkes. “Although not as many businesses use this software yet, it is the wave of the future.” This product also has applications for people with restricted movement or mobility, or with learning disabilities.

The Faculty Showcases provide opportunities for faculty members to share their expertise with interested SWIC employees. This Faculty Development series is part of a plan to fulfill the goals of the AQIP Action Project for Employee Orientation and Continuous Development.
From the Board of Trustees...

At its September meeting, the Board of Trustees accepted the FY2005 tactical plan, which was forwarded to the Board by the Strategic Planning Council. The Board also awarded the bid for printing the Spring 2005 class schedule to Breese Publishing and awarded the bid for the printing of the Spring 2005 "Classes in Your Community" to P&P Press of Peoria, Illinois.

In personnel matters, the Board took the following actions:
- Approved the recommendation to issue a lay off notice to Patricia Etling, secretary, Senior Nutrition Program, effective October 22.
- Accepted the retirement of Gary Rickert, full-time custodian at the Granite City Campus, effective December 31, 2004.
- Appointed Shaletta Lewis to the position of Payroll Specialist.
- Awarded tenure to Monica Hatch, assistant professor of English, and Steven Nigg, assistant professor and coordinator of the Hospitality/Food Service Management Program, effective January 8, 2005.

The next meeting of the Board of Trustees will be held at 7 p.m., Wednesday, October 20 in the Marsh Conference Room, Belleville Campus.

It All Comes Down To This. PLEDGE.

Did you know through the annual United Way campaign, more than 200 agencies are supported that help people in 16 Missouri and Illinois counties? The money raised here, stays here.

Local organizations supported by our contributions include PSOP's Senior Companion Program, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Salvation Army, Call for Help, IMPACT and many more.

One way to make a difference in our community is by giving to the United Way's "It All Comes Down to This. Pledge." campaign this year. Between Sept. 20 and Oct. 11, Southwestern's goal for Belleville and Red Bud campuses and PSOP is to raise $14,800. That would break the previous record set last year, by 6 percent.

Employees may contribute through one of the following ways: payroll deduction, a one-time cash gift, a direct bill from the United Way for gifts more than $25, a gift of securities, or a gift by credit card. Pledges of at least $100 will be entered in a drawing to win exciting prizes, with winners to be announced in November. Employees who watch the United Way video and complete an entry form will be eligible for additional prizes, including a new car.

If you would like to donate, send your pledge card to Campaign Coordinator Sherry Favre Johnson in the Office of Human Resources. For more information, call extension 5534.

Campus Briefs
from the Belleville Campus...

The “spooktacular” annual Halloween Costume Contest will be held at noon, Friday, Oct. 29 in the Cafeteria. A cash prize could be yours, so don your most imaginative costume and enter. For more information, call College Activities, extension 5561.

If Trivial Pursuit is your game of choice, check out the History Club’s Trivia Night at 7 p.m., Saturday, Oct. 2 at the O’Fallon VFW Hall, 221 W. First St. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. Admission is $10 per person; call Patrick McGarrity at extension 5406 to reserve your spot. Walk-ins are welcome.

The William & Florence Schmidt Art Center’s Kids Rule! program is so popular, a second session, scheduled for 1:30-2:30 p.m., has been added to the Saturday, Oct. 16 program. This month’s hands-on activity is contemporary pumpkin painting, and Executive Director/Curator Libby Reuter will give a kid-friendly tour of the current exhibit, “Kenneth and Nancy Kranzberg: Contemporary Art.” The program is designed for children ages 5-10. The fee is $2 per child. To reserve a seat for your child, call extension 5278.

from the Granite City Campus...

Storyteller Bobby Norfolk is sure to fascinate kids and adults with multicultural tales of life around the world in “Globetrotting with Bobby.” Norfolk will spin his tall tales as part of the campus’ Fall 2004 Kids’ Series at 7 p.m., Tuesday, Oct. 12 in the GCC Cafeteria. In this one-man show, Norfolk tells tales of life in the Far East, Africa, Europe and America. For more information, contact Jill Lorance at extension 6642.

Southwestern’s Culinary Arts Club is holding a Trivia Night at 7 p.m., Friday, Oct. 8, at the Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows, 442 S. DeMazenod Drive in Belleville. The entrance fee is $15 per person. Teams can consist of 6-8 members. Reservations are recommended but walk-ins are welcome too.

The fundraiser will provide support for the Chef Ollie Sommer Scholarship Fund and a stipend for Sommer to go to Lyons, France to be inducted into the Escoffier Society, a fraternal order of chefs.

To reserve a table, call Steve Nigg, at extension 6689.

from the Red Bud Campus...

State and local representatives, advocates of transportation services and staff from successful mass transit districts will converge for a Rural Transportation Summit from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., Tuesday, Oct. 19 in the Performing Arts Room. The informational meeting will look at ways to establish a public transportation system in Monroe and Randolph counties. The event is cosponsored with the Monroe Randolph Transit District.

It’s not too late to get your tickets for “Muuurder at Maaaayberry!” The dinner theatre curtain lifts at 6 p.m., Saturday, Oct. 16 at Lau Nae Winery. Call extension 8114 for reservations. Tickets are $30.

Also, bring your kids to see “Little Red Riding Hood” and “Ferdinand the Bull” this month. See Happenings or visit www.swic.edu/redbud for details.

Need a Ride Home?

Counselor Michelle Luraschi, right, speaks with Kimberly Cella, program director for Citizens for Modern Transit, left, at the Transit Fair held recently at the Belleville Campus. Cella was on hand to spread the word about the Guaranteed Ride Home Program, a subsidized cab ride home in case of a personal emergency, sickness or unexpected overtime offered to college employees. For more information, contact Sherry Favre Johnson at extension 5534.
From the Office of Human Resources...

Layoffs at PSOP

On August 27, 2004, Southwestern Illinois College learned it had lost external funding for the Senior Nutrition Program from the Area Agency on Aging of Southwestern Illinois. President Elmer Kirchoff, Ph.D. and Vice President Valerie Thaxton, Ed.D. quickly arranged a meeting that afternoon to inform the employees of PSOP of the facts.

As a result of the funding loss, Southwestern Illinois College regretfully issued a layoff list of 20 PSOP employees, effective September 30, 2004. This action in no way reflected on the job performance of the employees on the layoff list, as their contributions to PSOP have been commendable.

The college is making every effort to find alternative suitable employment for everyone on the layoff list who would like to continue working. Prior to the layoff date, a meeting was held at PSOP for everyone involved. In attendance were 16 of the 20 employees facing layoff; Vicki Rose, executive director of PSOP; Dr. Valerie Thaxton; SWIC EE Union President Marcia Boone; Mickey Meddows from IETC; Carol Moffitt from the Career Activities and Employment Center; and Sherry Favre Johnson from Human Resources. Human Resources provided information about how these employees would be granted an interview for every SWIC EE position for which they qualify and will continue to be sent to those on the layoff list. Resume and interview assistance, job matching services and skill enhancements were offered by the Career Center and IETC. A question and answer session followed the meeting.

Layoffs are difficult at best. The college community is encouraged to lend PSOP support however they can as we work together to re-employ those affected by this layoff.

Kudos

Donna Biffar has a new book of poetry coming out in October with BeWrite Books in England. Vinegar Moon includes 136 pages of poetry and a brief interview. For now it will be available in print or in e-book format at Amazon.com and also on the publisher's Web page at www.bewrite.net.

Jessie Dunn, driver for PSOP’s Alternative Transportation System, recently was named co-driver of the month for his heroic efforts to put out a car fire. After spotting the fire on Bunkum Road during one of his shifts, Dunn safely pulled over and used the fire extinguisher from his bus to help put out the fire. After insuring that all was safe and the fire was completely out, he simply continued his route, not wanting to fall too far behind and be late.

Programs and Services for Older Persons volunteer Jim Lock recently was awarded the Presidential Service Award at this year’s annual Retired and Senior Volunteer Program luncheon. Along with five other recipients, Lock has contributed more than 4,000 service hours. Lock has been a volunteer for more than five years and has given his time to the Make A Wish Foundation, The Cerebral Palsy Board, Union and Lebanon Schools, St. Elizabeth’s and Southwestern’s Project Read tutoring program.

Student Trustee Cherrelle Steptoe recently was appointed to the Illinois Community College Board Student Advisory Committee and elected vice chair by fellow SAC members. The committee’s purpose is to review proposed ICCB policies and inform the organization of issues that impact community college students. In her position as vice chair, Cherrelle will represent the SAC on the Illinois Board of Higher Education Student Advisory Committee and serve as its parliamentarian.
October Happenings

1  Mystery Dinner Theatre, 6 p.m., BC Cafeteria
   Sold out show

2  History Club Trivia Night, 7 p.m., O’Fallon VFW,
   221 W. First St., RSVP extension 5406, $10

5  Career Activities and Employment Center Job Fair, 9 a.m. to noon, BC, ISB second floor lounge

6-7 United Way Auction, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.
   GCC Front Hall, extension 6600

7  Business After Hours cosponsored by PSOP and the Belleville Chamber of Commerce, 5 p.m., Bellemour Manor, 225 East A St.

8  Trivia Night sponsored by the Culinary Arts Club 7 p.m., Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows
   RSVP, extension 6689, $15

12 Concert in the Café: Joey James, 7 p.m., BC Cafeteria

12 Children’s Series: Little Red Riding Hood, 7 p.m., RBC Performing Arts Room, Admission: $2

16 Mystery Dinner Theatre: Meeurder at Maaayberry!, 6 p.m., Lau Nae Winery, 1522 State Route 3, Red Bud, Tickets: $30;
   extension 8114

16 Kids Rule! Pumpkin painting and tour, Schmidt Art Center
   11:30 a.m., $2 per child, register at extension 5278

19 Rural Transportation Summit, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., RBC
   Performing Arts Room, Admission: $5; call Jesica Gentry at
   (618) 443-4433, extension 105, by Oct. 11

20 Children’s Series: Dave Rudolf’s "Halloween Spooktacular."
   6:30 p.m., BC Theatre

21 Mini Job Fair, 4-7 p.m., RBC

22 The 2004 Generations of Success Awards Ceremony, 6 p.m.,
   St. Clair Country Club, extension 5215.

25 Red Ribbon Rally, 8 a.m., BC Varsity Gym

25, 26 Red Ribbon Week, 10:30 a.m. to noon and 6-7 p.m.,
   GCC Front Hall, extension 6600

26 Concert in the Café: Don James, 7 p.m., BC Cafeteria

26 Children’s Series: Ferdinand The Bull, 7 p.m.,
   RBC Performing Arts Room, Admission: $2

28 Wellness Clinic, RBC, contact Karen Long, extension 8113,

29 Halloween Costume Contest, noon, BC Cafeteria

29 Career Day, 10 a.m. to noon, BC Varsity Gym

From the Office of Financial Aid and Student Employment...

Financial Aid Phone Scam

It was brought to our attention recently that someone claiming to be a representative of the U.S. Department of Education is calling students, offering them grants, and asking for their bank account numbers so a processing fee can be charged. Specifically, the caller tells the student he understands the student has federal student loans and offers to replace the loans with an $8,000 grant. The caller explains that a processing fee must be charged and obtains the student’s checking account information.

We urge you to remind your students that there is no program to replace loans with grants and that there is no processing fee to obtain Title IV grants. Furthermore, students should never provide their bank account or credit card information over the phone unless they initiated the call and trust the company they are calling.

We recommend that you immediately e-mail or otherwise contact your current and incoming students to warn them about this scam.

For information about identity theft prevention, you and your students may visit www.ed.gov/misused. For information about preventing financial aid scams, visit www.studentaid.ed.gov/lsa.

BIRTHDAY GIRL

Happy Birthday to You, Happy Birthday to you.
The Kids’ Club recently celebrated the 5th birthday of Isabel Dolter, right, daughter of Assistant Professor of Chemistry Ted Dolter, center. Also enjoying the birthday treats and festivities is DeJah Jimerson, daughter of Southwestern’s Illinois Employment Training Center student worker Nachun Jimerson.