

Center for Teaching and Learning Newsletter

Vol. 11 No. 6

February 2006

Dates to Note!!

Tuesday, February 28

Performance Tasks: What They Can Tell Us about Student Learning

2 p.m.
Library 412

Wednesday, March 15

Managing Audio Files

2 p.m.
Library room 412

Tuesday, March 21

Faculty Growth Grant Presentations

*Stephen Miller
Chris Bazinet
Steven Mentz*

2:30 p.m.
Law School 115

Tuesday, April 4

Teaching and Technology Fellows Program

12:15
Bent 447, Q
Flynn Board Room, SI

Wednesday, April 19

Other Passions

2 p.m.
Bent Hall 277A

Tuesday, April 25

CTL Fellows' Presentations on Research in Teaching and Learning

2:30 p.m.
Bent 277A

To **RSVP** phone us at ext. 1859 or email us at CTL@stjohns.edu.

Factors Influencing Students' Decisions to Attend St. John's University

Results from the CIRP Freshman Survey: Information from the Office of Institutional Research www.stjohns.edu/about/ir/

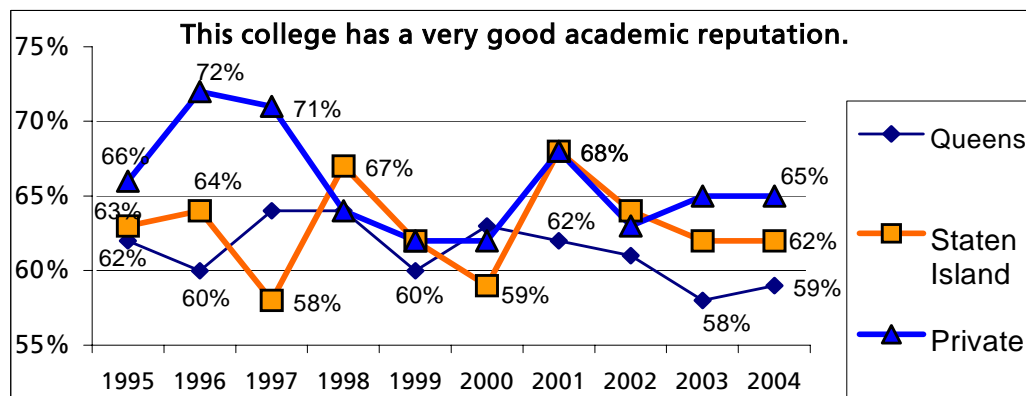
The CIRP Freshman Survey, initiated in Fall 1966, is a project of the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP), a continuing longitudinal study of the American Higher Education System housed at the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) in the Graduate School of Education & Information Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles. The survey is designed to collect comparative data on entering undergraduate students. The data can be used in institutional decision-making, research, and assessment activities.

Presented are St. John's 10-year trend data (1995-2004) related to factors that have influenced students' decisions to attend St. John's University. The results are shown by campus, and the data for the private universities of medium selectivity are also provided for comparison purposes. The selectivity level is based on the average composite SAT score of the entering class. The private universities of medium selectivity in 2004 are the institutions whose average composite SAT scores range from 1,174 to 1,309.

The 10-year CIRP data reveal that the ranked order of the top five factors influencing students' decisions to attend St. John's are: 1) the academic reputation, 2) graduates' employment, 3) financial aid, 4) graduates going to top graduate/professional schools, and 5) the reputation for social activities. Other factors include living near home, the University offering special education programs, the size of the University, and college rankings.

This college has a very good academic reputation.

Over the 10-year period, St. John's academic reputation continues to be one of the most important factors influencing students' decisions to attend St. John's University. The percentage in the chart below is the percentage of first-time freshmen who selected this factor as a very important one that influenced their decisions to come



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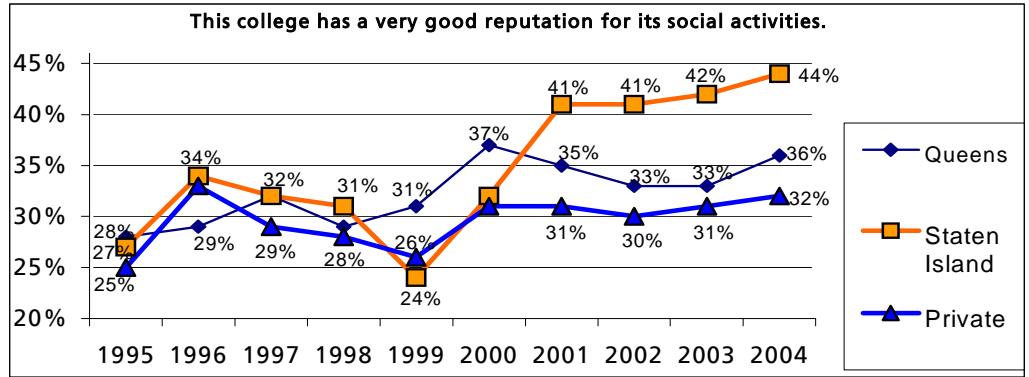
This newsletter is published monthly during the academic year by the Center for Teaching and Learning.

Managing Editor:
Lisa Getman

to St. John's. As the chart indicates, the figures for both Queens and Staten Island campuses are around 60%, though with fluctuations. For the comparison group, it is around 65%, with sharper fluctuations.

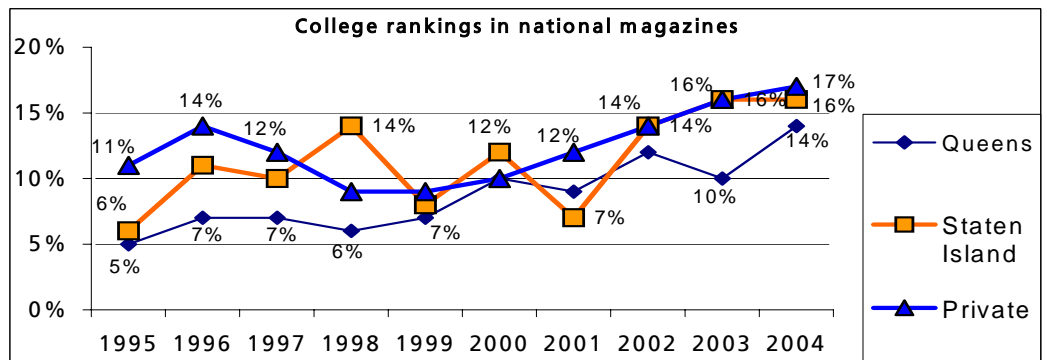
This college has a very good reputation for its social activities.

The importance of St. John's reputation for its social activities in students' decisions to attend St. John's reveals an upward trend for both campuses: from 28% to 36% for Queens, and from 27% to 44% for Staten Island. The same is true for the comparison group, from 25% to 32%.



College rankings in national magazines

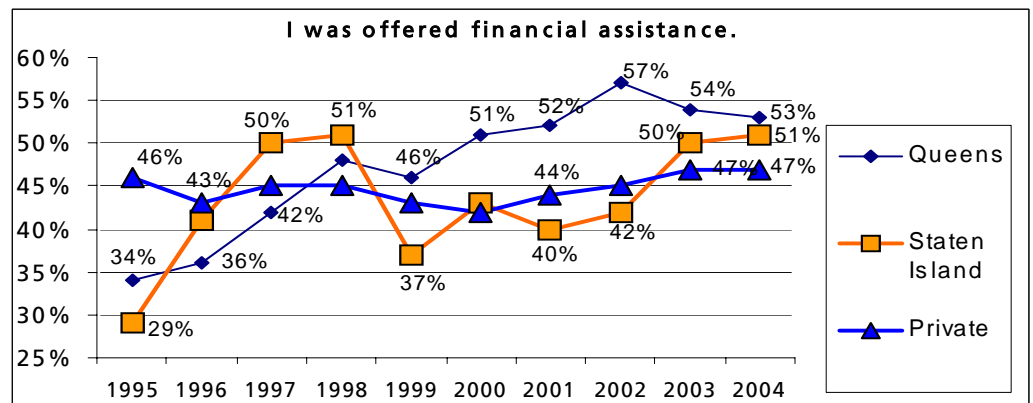
The influence of college rankings in national magazines also increased in the 10-year period, from 5% to 14% for Queens, from 6% to 16% for Staten Island, and from 11% to 17% for the comparative group. The influence of the rankings, however, is much smaller than either the academic reputation or the reputation for social activities.



I was offered financial assistance.

The influence of financial assistance in students' decisions to come to St. John's also increased for both campuses, from 34% to 53% for Queens and from 29% to 51%.

(continued on page 4)



Faculty News

February 2006

Professor Joseph Adolphe (Fine Arts, adolphej@stjohns.edu) created a new website entitled www.josephadolphe.com.

Dr. Hannah Berliner Fischthal, (English, fischthh@stjohns.edu) published a review of *Poetry* by Clara Moraff, a bilingual Yiddish and English text, in *Studies in American Jewish Literature* (2005).

Dr. Michael Dempsey (Humanities, dempseym@stjohns.edu) has published two articles: "What Bearing, If Any, Does the Christian Doctrine of Providence Have Upon the Operation of the Market Economy?" and "A Response to Robin Klay and John Lunn" in the *Journal of Markets and Morality* (2005).

Professor Dave Gregory (Law School, gregoryd@stjohns.edu) published "Resolving the Culture War on Religion," a book review essay of Kevin Hasson's *The Right to be Wrong: Ending the Culture War over Religion in America* in *The Catalyst* (December 2005).

Dr. Dipak Haldar (Biological Sciences haldard@stjohns.edu) invited to a dinner hosted by Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh as one of the 1851 Royal Commission alumni (Overseas Scholars) at Buckingham Palace (February 2006)

Dr. Grace Ibanez Friedman (Early Childhood, Childhood and Adolescent Education, friedmag@stjohns.edu) made three presentations: at NYCAEYC's Annual Conference on the topic of Home School Communication, at the Staten Island campus of St. John's University's chapter of Kappa Delta Pi on Family Literacy, and at the Educational Alliance of Brown University's conference on the topic, "Models of Family Engagement;" also represented the School of Education at the semi-annual meeting of the NYS Task Force on Quality Inclusion Schooling.

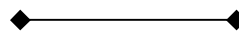
Dr. Augustin Riska (Philosophy, riskaa@stjohns.edu) published an article, "An Aristotelian Theory of Power (Metaphysical Reflections)," in *Studia Neoaristotelica* (2005).

Dr. Richard Stalter (Biology, stalterr@stjohns.edu) published an article entitled "Seedling Recruitment on Plots Liberated from Extended Wrack Cover in a *Spartina alterniflora* Salt Marsh, Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge, New York" in the *Long Island Sound Research Conference Proceedings* (2006).

Dr. Jennifer Travis (English, travisj@stjohns.edu) published *Wounded Hearts: Masculinity, Law, and Literature in American Culture* (University of North Carolina Press, Gender and American Culture Series, 2005); presented a paper, "Trains, Pains, and Scenes of Emotional Harm: Edith Wharton and the Railroad," at the Modern Language Association Convention (December 2005).

Dr. Gregory Wilson (English and Speech, wilsong@stjohns.edu) presented two papers: "'His Duty to Ireland': Language, Identity and Power in *John Bull's Other Island*" for the 2005 Mid-Atlantic Regional American Conference for Irish Studies at Drew University (November 2005) and "'A Spectacle of Strangeness': Liminality and the Social Message of the Court Masque" for the College English Association's 2005 Conference in Indianapolis (April 2005); published two articles: "'This Insatiable Hunger for Sympathy': Virginia Woolf's Vision of Unity in *Mrs. Dalloway*" in *The CEA Critic* (Spring 2005) and "'The Lurid Story Narrated': Narrative Style and the Commodity of the Story in the 'Eumaeus' Chapter of Joyce's *Ulysses*" for *In_Between* (Spring 2005); also became a theater critic for *CurtainUp*—reviews may be found at www.curtainup.com.

Dr. Julia Upton, R.S.M. (Theology and Religious Studies, uptonj@stjohns.edu) published an article, "A Church for the University: St. Thomas More," in *Church* (Winter 2005).



Faculty News

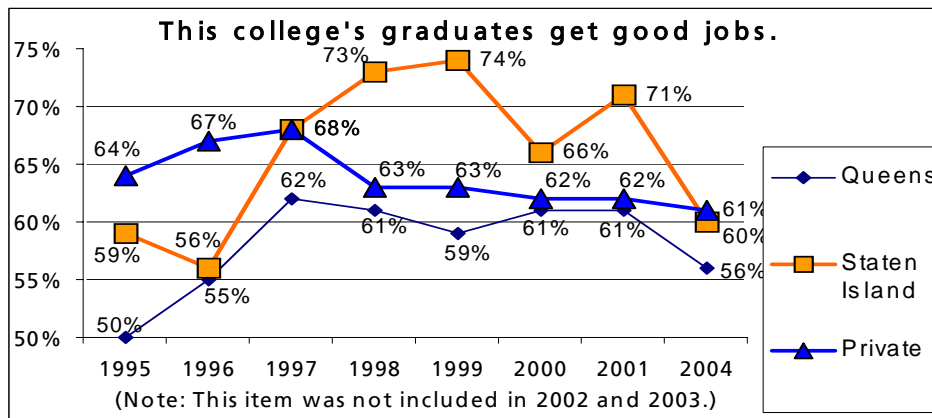
If you would like to send an entry to "Faculty News," the deadline for the March issue is **March 3**. We prefer that you email the information to CTL@stjohns.edu. We reserve the right to edit all material received. Material included in CTL Faculty News will be sent to Dominic Scianna for distribution in a news release.

(continued from page 2)

for Staten Island, while the line for the comparison group remains flat. The increase in the influence of financial assistance is consistent with the increase in St. John's financial aid budget, from \$19.4 million in 1996 to \$91.5 million in 2005.

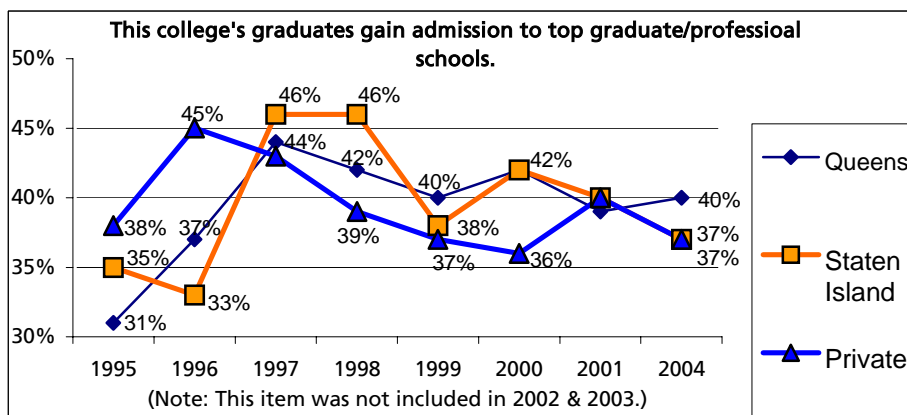
This college's graduates get good jobs.

Over the 10-year period, the influence of "this college's graduates get good jobs" experiences a curve, first upward and then downward, for both campuses. The Queens campus started at 50%, reached as high as 62%, and then decreased to 56% in 2004, while the Staten Island campus started with 59%, reached as high as 74%, and then decreased to 60%. The data for the comparative group reveal a slightly downward trend.



This college's graduates gain admission to top graduate/professional schools.

The influence of "this college's graduates gain admission to top graduate/professional schools" draws a similar upward and then downward curve for both campuses as well as the comparative group. For the 10-year period, the Queens campus started at 31% and ended at 40%, a 9% increase, while the Staten Island started at 35% and ended at 37%, a 2% increase.



In another survey, the HERI-Faculty survey, St. John's faculty viewed "to enhance the institution's national image" and "to increase or maintain institutional prestige" as two of the University's top priorities. The reputation of a university may seem very abstract, but building the reputation needs constant, concrete effort by each individual in the university community, including faculty members, administrators, staff, alumni, etc. A university's reputation and other factors are actually interrelated: A good reputation attracts students and helps its graduates find good jobs and go to top graduate schools, and its students' and graduates' accomplishments, in turn, contribute to the university's reputation.

This article is part of the new collaboration between the Office of Institutional Research (IR) and the CTL, we are featuring highlights of studies on various aspects of University life prepared by IR for institutional assessment and improvement.

A Baker's Dozen of Free Reference Sites

William Keogan (*University Libraries*, keoganw@stjohns.edu)

Below are a group of sites that I hope you will find useful. Although I tend to use databases to which the library subscribes when answering reference questions, I have used these web pages and find them generally accurate. Perhaps the most controversial site here is Wikipedia, and I discuss its pros and cons in the annotation. There are many other sites I could have included here. I whittled down this selection from a much larger group. As a collector of these sites I'd love to hear from anyone who has a favorite one to share.

GENERAL REFERENCE

Refdesk

www.refdesk.com

A wonderful array of reference tools and other diversions. See especially the Refdesk Facts Subject Index: <http://www.refdesk.com/facts.html>. A similar site is available at <http://www.reference.com>.

Bartleby

www.bartleby.com

Offers a range of reference sources that can be searched all at once, in groups, or individually. It includes links to dictionaries, books of quotations, the 1996 edition of the *Columbia Encyclopedia*, and the *Dictionary of Cultural Literacy*, among others.

Merriam-Webster

<http://www.m-w.com/>

A dictionary and thesaurus which provides audio pronunciations.

Wikipedia

www.wikipedia.com

This fast-growing site has some 929,000 entries in English written by its readers. Wikipedia was the focus of a number of critical news articles some months ago when a prankster entered a biographical sketch of Kennedy aide John Siegenthaler that implied he was involved with the assassinations of John and Robert Kennedy. See: http://www.usatoday.com/news/opinion/editorials/2005-11-29-wikipedia-edit_x.htm

More recently, the website's reputation got a boost when the journal *Nature* said the science information in Wikipedia compared favorably with the information in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. See: <http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/v438/n7070/full/438900a.html>

COUNTRY AND DEMOGRAPHY SITES

Census Quick Facts

<http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/index.html>

Summary census statistics on the national, state, city, and county level.

American Fact Finder

http://factfinder.census.gov/home/saff/main.html?_lang=en

Offers demographic information by zip code. Very useful.

World Factbook

<http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/index.html>

Offers useful statistical information for each country about geography, demographics, government, economy, communications, transportation, military, with hotlinks to comparative charts.

Nation Master

<http://www.nationmaster.com/>

Offers a variety of statistical tables and other news about countries of the world. A good complement to the World Factbook.

MEDICINE AND HEALTH
National Institutes of Health
www.nih.gov

This site has links to solid information on all aspects of health and medicine: diseases, pharmaceuticals, vitamins, nutrition, etc.

AMA Doctor Finder
<http://webapps.ama-assn.org/doctorfinder/home.html?aps/amahg.htm>

Search this database by physician name or by medical specialization to find a doctor's background information—address, education, certifications, type of practice and hospital affiliations.

ENTERTAINMENT AND LEISURE
Internet Movie Database
www.imdb.com

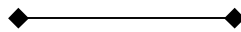
A comprehensive cinema database including information for each movie about the cast, production personnel, plotline, awards, box office data, goofs and trivia. Sometimes, there are links to video trailers.

All Music
<http://www.allmusic.com>

Are you trying to find the names of recordings put out by the Incredible String Band, or a list of cds on which Yo-Yo Ma has performed, or which performers had recorded, or track the changes of personnel in the Byrds, or find (somewhat idiosyncratic) reviews for albums? Try this site.

FURTHER LEADS
Online Reference Shelf: <http://www.princeton.edu/~pressman/genref.htm#arts>

A fine selection of online reference sources from Princeton University Library. It includes some subscription sites.



A Case for Formality in the Classroom

Richard Scorce (*College of Professional Studies*, scorcer@stjohns.edu)

Definitions

It might be a good idea to define what I mean by the term "formal" before I launch into an attempt to make a case for its application in the classroom. In the context of this article, when I use the term "formal," I am most often alluding to structure, form and traditional academic rules. By "informal," I am referring to casual or familiar use. Certainly background, upbringing, culture and work experience as well as environmental factors color the definition of the term on an individual basis.

A Premise or Two

The case that is presented here is simply that learning objectives are better achieved or realized in a classroom with a formal structure as opposed to an informal one. A premise to this argument is that it is an instructor's responsibility to provide the structure and environment which will allow the student to meet the academic goals of the class. This instructor role is distinguished from the counselor role which is broader and centers upon guiding the student regarding the setting of academic goals, good studying habits, course, major and degree choices, etc. I am basically putting forth the argument that an instructor can better serve his students in meeting the class objectives with a formal, as opposed to an informal, classroom environment.

The Case

It is proposed that a moderate level of formality

- fosters an enhanced learning environment and allows the instructor to teach more effectively
- provides the foundation for a serious and lasting relationship between the student and instructor
- allows for better classroom management
- sends a message regarding expectations and level of scholarship

- encourages a higher level of participation and achievement by the student

Texts and articles on the subject of academic learning invariably mention that students themselves are seeking a formal class structure, setting of expectations and effective classroom management. Many of us can recall disappointing experiences when we attended a long awaited conference or seminar that was conducted on a too casual basis, marked perhaps with an air of over familiarity and friendliness, perhaps even good humor, but lacking structure, learning objectives and formality.

Formality Means/Does Not Mean

A formal classroom environment does not mean that an instructor

- lacks compassion
- does not assist his students
- is not concerned about his students' level of achievement
- does not provide advisement regarding successful completion of the course
- is not a nurturing person
- stifles students' communication attempts
- lacks a sense of humor
- is not approachable

Conducting the learning process in a formal classroom environment, does imply that

- an appropriate, well structured academic setting is in place
- high expectations are communicated to the students
- students will be called upon often
- a classroom code of conduct will be followed
- students will be addressed by their last name
- provision of and adherence to, detailed course syllabi, outlines, assignment due date documents, etc.
- strong classroom management

Examples

In industry, the better managers keep an arm's length from becoming over familiar, or too informal, with their subordinates in order to maintain their ability to manage fairly and effectively. High levels of formality also surface in the military, prep schools, government administration, the ranks of diplomats and in many foreign cultures. In these areas superiors, peers and even subordinates are often addressed by last name or by a title instead of the more familiar first name which indicates a level of informality.

We expect a level of formality in our daily lives such as when dealing with merchants, financial advisors, doctors, and the clergy, etc. A high level of informal behavior would tend to make us uncertain and uncomfortable regarding their dealings with us. On the other hand, more formal settings and behavior tend to leave us with a sense of organization, structure and expectation of quality.

Perils of Classroom Informality

In a higher education environment, if a student perceives that the classroom atmosphere or an instructor's style is an informal one, then many aspects of the class, such as assignment due dates, attendance, and quality of work can be viewed by the student as having a level of informality about them as well. Such perceptions may give cause for the student to apply this casual approach in the pursuit of his studies.

Summary

When an instructor lends a level of formality to the classroom environment and in his dealings with students, the message that is imparted is simply, "Your education is a serious matter and our formal structure and manner are intended to confirm the importance of this class."



New Faculty Blog

Maryann Maslak, Associate Professor in the Department of Human Services and Counseling, is on a Fulbright Fellowship in Asia. She has created a blog with highlights of her work. It can be found at <http://maslak.blogspot.com>.



Opportunities to Participate in Online Workshops

The Sloan Consortium on Quality Online Education (Sloan-C) is offering workshops dealing with a variety of issues. The University has subscribed to the Sloan-C College Pass which means that 15 St. John's faculty or administrators can sign up for each workshop without charge. The charge for a non-member without the pass is \$295 per workshop. The first five workshops for the 2006 season with tentative starting dates are:

Copyright Compliance for Online Educators (February 22)

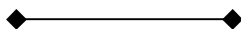
Cognitive, Social and Teaching Presence to Support Collaboration (March 1)

Online Course Development for Beginners (March 6)

Assessing (and Encouraging) Collaboration (March 22)

Interinstitutional Collaboration (April 5)

If you would like more information on these workshops, go to <http://www.sloan-c.org/info/colpassworkshop.asp>. To enroll in a workshop, please email us at CTL@stjohns.edu and we will send you the code needed to enroll online. It is recommended that you enroll in a timely fashion because the University is limited to 15 participants in each workshop.



Junior Faculty Research Colloquium

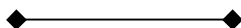
The Junior Faculty Research Colloquium is pleased to announce its schedule for Spring 2006. Unless otherwise noted, all the presentations will take place in the Writing Center located in St. John Hall, Room 203 from 12:15 to 1:30 p.m.

Daniel Porcella, Grants Office, "Funding Source Database Workshop," Thursday, February 23, 2006, Library Room 304. This workshop is for faculty who wish to learn how to create a profile in Genius/Smarts. By creating a profile, you will receive daily e-mails of funding opportunities specific to your area of research interest.

Trent Hamann, Department of Philosophy, "Control and Expose: The Work of Neoliberalism," Thursday, March 2, 2006.

Brian Lockey, Department of English, "Royalists and Cosmopolitans: Aphra Behn's Post-Colonial Plagiarism of Thomas Killigrew," Thursday, March 30, 2006.

Susie Pak, Department of History, "Finance Capital, Race, Empire, and Harvard: J.P. Morgan & Co. and the Social History of American Capitalism," Tuesday April 18, 2006.



Detail Roster with Photo

Information Technology has provided a valuable tool for faculty members in adding student photos to a roster in UIS. One faculty member was even overheard to say that now he can memorize the students' names before he meets them the first day of class. Be sure to check out this useful tool by logging onto St. John's Central (www.stjohns.edu/central) and clicking in turn on the "UIS" tab, "Click here for UIS," and "Detail Roster with Photo." You will then be asked to submit the term and course.