Lyman Briggs College is an undergraduate, residential college founded in 1967 by dedicated individuals hoping to bridge the widening gap between sciences and humanities. The first of its kind, the college has become known as the institution students go to for an excellent foundation in science and mathematics with additional focus on history, philosophy and sociology of science.
MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN

To the average observer, a class at Lyman Briggs College may appear like any other class at Michigan State University. However, those of us who have taught and attended classes at Briggs know the difference.

Our courses are designed by incredibly innovative faculty, incorporate transformative techniques, and draw on the residential framework of the college to provide true experiential learning. Best of all, because the faculty care so much, classes are often simply more fun (see the page 4 feature on Dr. LaDuca).

As alumni and friends of Briggs, you know what makes us different and what makes all the hard work in Briggs classes worthwhile. Because you are a key part of this equation, we want to do better in communicating with you.

In recent years, we have lagged in maintaining reliable connections with our alumni and friends as we went through some major transitions. Now, I would like to reaffirm our commitment to partnering with you to provide the best possible Briggs Experience to all of our students.

With new staff and support in our communication and alumni relations office, it is my hope that we can re-engage with you, our faithful alumni and friends, through our new website and this, the newest edition of the Briggantine newsletter. And we hope that you will want to re-engage with the college and spend time helping our students think about what their futures should look like.

So please take a moment to read the stories in these pages -- and then take a further moment to visit our website, reconnect, and let us know how you’d like to get involved. We have redesigned our homepage and created a news and events page to help keep you better informed; from either page you can also reach our various social media pages. I hope that you will take advantage of these opportunities and stay connected with Briggs.

Looking forward to hearing from (and working with) you!

Sincerely yours,

Elizabeth Simmons
dean, Lyman Briggs College
Dr. Robert LaDuca came to Michigan State University in the fall of 2004, to join the faculty at Lyman Briggs College and revitalize the chemistry program.

Among other goals, he was looking for a place that looked at more than just technique. He wanted a place that taught students to become true scientists.

What he found was a home for his incredible energy and drive, and a host of students and friends who were eager to learn from him, work with him, and share in his passion for science and teaching.

Since his start, he has raised test scores across the board, facilitated a multitude of published articles with credit given to undergraduate researchers, and lent his hand to driving innovative teaching methods, a central theme for him and his colleagues.

“Lyman Briggs College is a national treasure,” he said in a recent interview. “It is the best-kept secret in higher education, and it is beyond an honor to be a part of it.”

Dr. LaDuca chose Briggs because it is more inquiry-based, and because it offered him the chance to help students (especially those from underrepresented groups) realize that they wanted to stay in science-based careers.

And the students are what drive him to work so hard. “Student response guides the lecture,” he said.

You have to take into account where each student is coming from, where they are in life, and then probe down, he said. You have to know when to administer tough-love.

And his formula seems to be working. In April 2011, Dr. LaDuca was found to have the ‘heart-pumping capacity of a 75-year-old’. Five days after winning the State of Michigan’s Professor of the Year Award, he found himself in the operating room for open-heart surgery.

“It made me realize that life is fragile and fleeting, and each breath is a gift,” he said. And that ideal is something he tries to communicate to his students each and every day.

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“Find work that is meaningful and significant enough that you want to be there on the last day of your life.”

- Dr. Robert LaDuca
Twenty-three freshmen toured Potter Park Zoo in Lansing this week as part of their first HPS class, a class all Briggs students take in their first year to begin the exploration of history, philosophy, and sociology and how they relate to the physical sciences.

“Each year I take my students to Potter Park Zoo at the end of our unit on the history of zoos as places for science, conservation, education and recreation. Students read articles on the history of zoos and synthesize that material with the field trip for a paper,” said Georgina Montgomery, assistant professor in Briggs and the history department.

Students consistently say the field trip is great fun and a great learning experience, and many engaged in conversation with Potter Park Docent and Volunteer Coordinator Jennifer Horvatin (who led the tour) about the history of Potter Park Zoo and the exhibits found there.

“I’ve been really looking forward to going to the zoo since I found out about it on the first day of class, because I’d love to work at a zoo one day,” said Briggs freshman Natalie Rasmussen.

“This field trip was a great experience and I enjoyed every minute of it.”

Among other things, the field trip was designed to talk about considerations that went into the history of exhibits. Topics of discussion included concepts such as enrichment (how the exhibits are set up) and barriers (how they have changed over time to make both the animal and visitor safer without negatively impacting visibility for zoo guests.

Additionally, a zoo was defined as a place that not only houses animals (which could be a farm or a shelter), but one that exhibits them with the purpose of education. Other topics discussed by students included ensuring natural habitat, identifying the proper types of food and water, social planning, and enrichment.

For more photos of the field trip, including pictures of the animals, please visit our Facebook page.

As part of the recent website redesign, which included the creation of a news and events page and a donation guide, Briggs is proud to announce new web pages for alumni and friends.

Now you can stay connected and choose preferences that will allow the staff at Briggs to help you take advantage of opportunities to connect with students, attend events, etc.

Visit www.lbc.msu.edu/alumni.cfm to see the new pages.
DISNEY GRANT WILL AID IN ENDANGERED SPECIES RESEARCH

With a recent $25,000 grant from the Disney Worldwide Conservation Fund, Dr. Gerald Urquhart (assistant professor of biology at Lyman Briggs College and in the department of fisheries and wildlife) will be able to take a closer look at an endangered species long thought extinct in the Caribbean region of Nicaragua.

“The overall implication is working in human-dominated ecosystems,” he said. “We need to find a way to help endangered species survive.”

This new grant will be used to educate locals about the Baird’s tapir, a species that Urquhart calls the ‘cow of the rainforest’, and to place GPS collars on tapirs that have been found in the region.

Working with co-PI Chris Jordan, a Ph.D. candidate in the fisheries and wildlife department, Urquhart hopes to learn enough about the habits of the Baird’s tapir to give it a fighting chance in the dynamically altered ecosystem of today.

“The main threat is changes to environment as a result of globalization,” he said.

Along with Dr. Daniel Kramer, associate professor in James Madison College, Urquhart and Jordan rediscovered the tapir as part of a ‘camera trapping’ project supported by funding from the National Science Foundation and spanning 2008-2014. For more information, visit the Briggs website.

THE LIFE OF GALILEO: A STUDY ABROAD

Fifteen students from Lyman Briggs College got to experience a lifetime this summer when they went to Italy for a month to look at the life of renowned scholar Galileo Galilei.

“It’s one thing to talk about it in the classroom; but to live it...that’s powerful,” said trip leader Mark Waddell, an assistant professor of history, philosophy and sociology of science (HPS) at Briggs.

His first time leading a study abroad program, Waddell was impressed with the eagerness of the students, and how excited they were to see the history of Galileo and his impact on science and religion.

Students in the program spent two weeks in Galileo’s hometown of Florence before traveling to Rome for an additional two weeks of site visits and tours, all set amongst the amazing art and architecture that make Rome so popular with international visitors.

Cassie Wieckhorst, Briggs senior and HPS major, said “Catholicism played such a huge role in science today.” Shocked to learn how different history was from what she was taught, Wieckhorst was excited to learn more and to draw parallels with modern-day scientific research.

Historic Catholic-endorsed science versus non-endorsed is like private versus public sector research today, she said.

“You come back, you see things differently,” said Waddell. “To study abroad is to see a different culture, but more importantly, you find a new way to look at the United States,” he said.

MSU HOMECOMING BRINGS TOGETHER MORE THAN 100 ALUMNI AND FRIENDS

For the first time ever, the three residential colleges at MSU (RCAH, James Madison, and Lyman Briggs) co-hosted a homecoming event, bringing together more than 100 faculty, staff, students, and alumni.

Along with food and refreshments, participants at the event also enjoyed folk music from the Bard Owls, scientific demonstrations from Science Theater, and a quick set from the a cappella group, RCAHppella.

Though the weather was a bit wet, participants stayed warm with hot cocoa, coffee, and breakfast sandwiches; as well as great conversation.

Watching a student from Science Theater break a brick with a sledgehammer while it was sitting on the chest of another student—a student who was lying on a bed of nails—was the highlight for many of those who attended, said Briggs’ Assistant Dean Philip Strong.

“Entertainment was excellent, the food was great, and the cooperative atmosphere really set the tone for future collaboration with the other residential colleges,” Strong said about the event.

Having all three residential colleges represented by faculty, staff, and current students, as well as an appearance from President Simon herself, was a great way to show our alumni how important they are to us, which is what homecoming is all about, he said.

Details are currently being discussed for a similar event to be held next fall, and other potential events including all three residential colleges in the spring and summer.

For more information, visit the Briggs event calendar.
BRIGGS 7TH ANNUAL RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM

The 7th Annual Lyman Briggs College Research Symposium will take place April 22 and 23 in 2013. This is an excellent opportunity to learn about the exciting research projects being conducted both at the college and in partner colleges across campus.

Biology, chemistry, physics, and mathematical research papers and projects will be presented by students in the lounges of both East and West Holmes Hall. Guests are encouraged to stop by from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. both days.

The complete schedule and opportunities to meet the students behind the research will be found on the Briggs website.

Special thanks for financial support:

Visit www.lbc.msu.edu for more information.