Welcome to the first issue of NHS Notes! Lots of things are happening in the Division of Natural & Health Sciences and we felt it was about time that we do a better job of communicating with our alumni and friends.

Perhaps we should start with an explanation for the name change of the division itself. Formerly called the Division of Natural Science, we revised our name at the beginning of this academic year to better represent all of the departments and courses that are included within our division. This includes the Wellness course and the activity courses, which are now part of the Department of Kinesiology in our division.

Our faculty continue to work hard to provide excellent teaching, advising, and mentoring of students, while also engaging in various scholarly and service activities. In each issue of the NHS Notes, we will be trumpeting the achievements of our faculty and students.

Whether it be winning awards or grants, as you will hear more about in this issue, or simply helping students to achieve their career goals, we hope that you will celebrate with us the ways in which God is being honored and glorified by the work that we are doing here. Thanks for standing with us in prayer as we continue to trust God to provide for this important work.

Dr. Don Siemens, Professor of Mathematics, assists freshman, William Coover.

Math Professor Retires

After 28 years at John Brown University, 19 years in the Division of Teacher Education and 9 years in the Division of Natural and Health Sciences, Professor Don Siemens will be retiring. The relationships he has formed with students and colleagues have been one of the major highlights of working at JBU. During his years here, he has been glad to see the university continue to grow and stay true to its spiritual mission.

His sabbatical during 1993-1994 to Faith Academy in the Philippines had a major impact on his life and the life of his family. Since that time he has seen many students from Faith Academy choose John Brown University as the place to pursue their undergraduate education.

According to Dr. Siemens, a “midlife crisis” resulted in a career change for him in the fall of 2003. He was eager to return to the fields of math and science, and this was made possible by an opening in the Mathematics Department at JBU. He has thoroughly enjoyed the problem-solving aspects of teaching math and delights in helping students make difficult concepts in math easy to understand.

Fortunately, Dr. Siemens will continue teaching Intermediate Algebra at JBU for the next two Fall semesters as an adjunct professor in the Math Department. He also hopes in the next couple of years to finalize several on-going projects.

Dr. Siemens is open to continuing to pursue his passion for teaching math by returning to the classroom either in a high school here in the U.S.A. or overseas. He hopes to also spend some time traveling with Cindy, his wife of 41 years. He will take with him great memories of his relationships with students at John Brown University!

Dr. Brian Greuel
Chair of the Natural & Health Sciences Division and Professor of Biology

Bell Science Hall is the home of most departments within the Division of Natural & Health Sciences.
Chemistry Welcomes New Professor

The Department of Chemistry welcomed Dr. Francis Umesiri to the Division of Natural and Health Sciences this fall. Dr. Francis Umesiri, a native of Nigeria, came to John Brown University by way of Ohio and Indiana.

Dr. Umesiri completed his undergraduate studies at the University of Lagos in Nigeria. His Master’s Degree was obtained from Central Michigan University. He received his doctorate from the University of Toledo. In Ohio, Dr. Umesiri was a teaching assistant at the University of Toledo. He joined JBU after a brief stay as a lecturer at Franklin College, in Indiana.

Dr. Umesiri was drawn to John Brown University because of its Christian perspective. He values the opportunity of working and serving in a Christ centered culture. Dr. Umesiri looks forward to exciting his students about Chemistry as he helps them to learn effectively, especially in the area of organic chemistry.

Dr. Umesiri is married to Toyin and they have a son, Isaac, who turned one year old on January 21st. When Dr. Umesiri is not busy with his teaching responsibilities, he enjoys reading mystery novels, writing non-fiction spiritually motivating books (one of which has been published) and especially spending time with his wife and young son.

Dr. Umesiri looks forward to working with students and colleagues at John Brown University.

Congratulations, Dr. Funk!

“New equipment will enhance the study of Science at John Brown University.”

Dr. Joel Funk, Assistant Professor of Biology, received news that his equipment grant has been funded by the Arkansas INBRE (IDeA Network of Biomedical Research Excellence) Program for $25,000.

The grant will provide funds to purchase equipment (a microplate reader and an ultracentrifuge rotor) that will be used in laboratory courses and will greatly enhance the student research capabilities in the Division of Natural and Health Sciences.

Spring Visitors Learn More about Anatomy

JBU is one of only two universities in the state of Arkansas that makes cadaver dissection available to undergraduate students. Here at JBU, Human Anatomy students are given a rare opportunity to participate in cadaver dissection in the fall semester.

However, in the spring, Dr. Tim Wakefield, Associate Professor of Biology, has extended an invitation to AP science students, junior college students and students of med tech fields to come and view the cadavers and further their education. These visits are coordinated through Jared Burgess, Director of the Visitation Program, and graduate of the JBU Biology Dept.

Because of our high-quality program at JBU, these visitors have an opportunity to see cadavers and learn more about human anatomy. This year Dr. Wakefield has graciously hosted anywhere from 1-2 visits weekly. Currently 92 students have visited Bell Science Hall with a 100 more estimated for the rest of the semester. Visitors include students from Shiloh Christian School, Blue Cliff College, NE Tech Center & Ozark Adventist Academy to name a few.

These visits encourage learning but also highlight the strengths of the Biology & Kinesiology Departments at JBU.
New Kinesiology Professor

This fall Dr. Danny Essary joined the Division in the Department of Kinesiology. A Texas transplant, Dr. Essary has taught health and science courses at varying levels from primary school to university. He has also taught in both public and private schools. For the last 11 years, Dr. Essary has been teaching in Marshall, Texas at East Texas Baptist University.

Coming to Siloam Springs was like coming home for Dr. Essary; who grew up not too far over the state line in Northeast Oklahoma. His own children’s interest in JBU played a part in his pursuing the opening in the department. Seeing the potential for growth in the Department of Kinesiology was a key factor in his interest to teach here.

He looks forward to the contribution he can make and the perspective he can bring to the Department of Kinesiology while participating in the revitalization of this important area of the university.

Dr. Essary is married to Susan and they have 6 children from 12 to 25 years old. Their two oldest children are grown and out of the home. Dr. Essary’s oldest daughter has blessed him and his wife with their first grandchild. Two of their children at home are attending JBU and the other two are being homeschooled. Dr. Essary did his undergraduate work at Stephen F. Austin State University. He attended East Texas State University for his graduate studies and received his doctorate from Texas A & M—Commerce.

When Dr. Essary is not teaching, grading, meeting, planning or working, he enjoys relaxing. Dr. Essary welcomes the many new opportunities and challenges that await him at JBU.

Updated Water Systems Arrive at BSH

Bell Science Hall received a new set of water systems to replace the ones installed when the building was originally completed in 2003. The average life span of these devices is about seven years.

The Chemistry Department had no working water polisher, and several of the reverse osmosis systems in Biology and Chemistry were not functioning properly.

The new systems were installed before the end of the spring semester on Wednesday, April 4th.

SUCCESS Scholarship Opens Doors for JBU Students

The Division of Natural & Health Sciences is pleased to make the SUCCESS Program available to academically talented undergraduates with financial need who are majoring in Chemistry, Biochemistry, or Biology with a Chemistry minor.

SUCCESS, which stands for Strengthening Undergraduate Curriculum and Community to Engage Science Students, is opening a door of possibilities for students who otherwise might not be able to pursue their interest in science.

Awardees receive yearly scholarships of $5,000-$10,000 (actual amount based in part on need) and is renewable for four years. Students participating in the program find activities specifically designed to help them achieve their educational and career goals.

Dr. Carla Swearingen began writing this grant proposal in 2009. After persevering through an initial rejection and rewriting the proposal two more times, Dr. Swearingen received notification in April, 2010 that the National Science Foundation had approved the grant for funding at JBU.

In 2011-2012, eleven students have been awarded the SUCCESS Scholarship. This year’s students include four young men and seven young women. Under Dr. Swearingen’s supervision these students are pursuing their areas of interest in science. Currently there are twenty-nine applicants for the SUCCESS Program for fall, 2012.

More information about the SUCCESS Program is available at: www.jbu.edu/science/success/.
Original Oil Painting Commissioned for Bell Science Hall

“Science Matters” is a new non-objective abstract oil painting on canvas that now adorns the foyer in Bell Science Hall. The artist, Dennis Johnson, is an internationally recognized contemporary painter who enjoys working with recognizable elements to create a visual structure that has never been seen before.

This piece was commissioned for Bell Science Hall by a member of JBU’s Board of Trustees. To create the painting, JBU’s science faculty submitted symbols to the artist to represent the disciplines of Biology, Chemistry, Kinesiology, Math and Physics.

Come and visit Bell Science Hall and see if you can find all of the elements in the painting!

Students Present STEM Posters at Capitol

By Brent Swearingen

Six JBU students, accompanied by Mr. Brent Swearingen, Coordinator of Undergraduate Scholarship and Dr. Carla Swearingen, Associate Professor of Chemistry, traveled to Little Rock on February 15th to present at the annual “Arkansas STEM Posters at the Capitol”.

The poster session took place in the rotunda of the Capitol building where over 80 students from 13 Arkansas colleges and universities presented their work. It was held while the state legislature was in session so that legislators could stop by and visit with the students. Arkansas Governor Mike Beebe and Miss Arkansas Kristen Glover were among those who stopped by to see the presentations.

Presenters included Rebekah Henderson and Suyen Espinoza (advisor Dr. Susan Newton), Jake Meinzer and Anna Lane (advisor Dr. Tim Wakefield), Clark Scholz (advisor Dr. Daniel Main), and Amanda Hicks (advisor Dr. Carla Swearingen). JBU students did a wonderful job presenting their research and fielding questions. Suyen and Rebekah also had a surprise visit with one of the scholars that they referenced on their poster.

Dr. Swearingen did the work of contacting science faculty and recruiting student presenters. Thanks go out to the faculty advisors for their great work mentoring students!

A luncheon was held after the session, and the director of the UALR Nanotechnology Center talked about his work in nanotechnology and the importance of interdisciplinary research. Luncheon and presentation fees were provided by the Office of Undergraduate Scholarship and Prestigious Fellowships, and travel costs were paid by Dr. Rob Norwood, Dean of Undergraduate Studies.

Clark Scholz, a junior Mathematics major, discusses his poster at the Capitol event. The same poster was given with his mentor, Dr. Daniel Main, at the Division of Plasma Physics Annual Meeting in Salt Lake City in November.

Tidbits

Jane Beers, Assistant Professor of Biology, was the recipient of the 2011-12 Faculty Excellence Award.

Dr. Susan Newton, Assistant Professor of Chemistry, participated in the EPA Peer Audit for a week in April at Texas Lutheran University in Seguin, Texas.