

# Family newsletter

## MSU-led team finds new type of fuel in Patagonia fungus

By Evelyn Boswell, MSU News Service



Gary Strobel found diesel-producing fungus in this Patagonia rainforest.

of plant sciences and plant pathology. The find is even bigger, he said, than his 1993 discovery of fungus that contained the anticancer drug taxol.

Strobel, who travels the world looking for exotic plants that may contain beneficial microbes, found the diesel-producing fungus in a Patagonia rainforest.

Strobel visited the rainforest in 2002 and collected a variety of specimens, including the branches from an ancient family of trees known as "ulmo." When he and his collaborators examined the branches, they found fungus growing inside. They continued to investigate and discovered that the fungus, called *Glaciocladium roseum*, was producing gases. Further testing showed that the fungus -- under limited oxygen -- was producing a number of compounds normally associated with diesel fuel, which is obtained from crude oil.

"These are the first organisms that have been found that make many of the ingredients of diesel," Strobel said. "This is a major discovery."

Strobel is the lead author of the paper published in Microbiology. His MSU co-authors are Berk Knighton and Tom Livinghouse in the Department of Chemistry/Biochemistry, and Katreena Kluck and Yuhao Ren in the Department of Plant Sciences and Plant Pathology.

[Click here to continue reading.](#)

[Click here to listen to NPR's coverage of this story.](#)

BOZEMAN -- A team led by a Montana State University professor has found a fungus that produces a new type of diesel fuel, which they say holds great promise.

Calling the fungus' output "myco-diesel," [Gary Strobel](#) and his collaborators describe their initial observations in the November issue of *Microbiology*, [which carries a photo of the fungus on its cover.](#)

The discovery may offer an alternative to fossil fuels, said Strobel, MSU professor



Percy Nunez Vargas, left, Gary Strobel and Angie Mitchell examine the fruits of this tree in Ecuador. [Read more about undergrad Mitchell's experience doing research with Strobel in Ecuador.](#)

## Important dates and deadlines

### FEBRUARY

**Feb 5-Apr 17** Dropped classes are graded "W"

**Feb 20** Bobcat Open (Men's and Women's Track and Field)

**Feb 21** [MSU's International Food Bazaar](#)

**Feb 26** 4th Annual ["Almost" Spring Job and Internship Fair](#)

**Feb 28** Men's and Women's Basketball vs. Northern Colorado

### LOOKING AHEAD...

**Mar 7** Parent/Family [Board Meeting](#)

**Mar 14** Residence Halls close at 12pm

**Mar 14-20** Spring Break, offices open

**Mar 22** Residence Halls open at 12pm

**Mar 30** Summer Registration begins

**May 1** Last day of classes

**May 4-8** Final Exams

**May 9** [Commencement](#)

**May 15** Fee payment deadline for summer term

**October 30–November 1, 2009**

[Parent/Family Weekend!!](#)

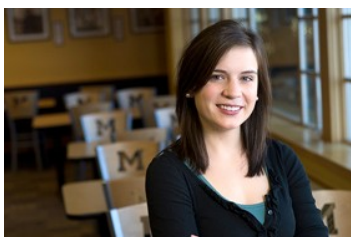
# Academic spotlight

## College of Letters & Science

The College of Letters and Science is the largest center for learning, teaching and research at Montana State University, offering students an excellent liberal arts education with 15 departments, 45 majors, 25 minors, 27 graduate programs and more than a dozen affiliated centers. Within the four areas of humanities, natural sciences, mathematics and social sciences, the College of Letters and Science prepares students for the opportunities and challenges of the 21st century through its dedication to the ideals of a liberal arts education. This "renaissance" approach to education continues to attract growing numbers of students who recognize the value of a liberal arts education in a rapidly changing world.

The College is a place of serious intellectual activity, with an outstanding faculty dedicated to excellence in teaching and scholarship. Many are well known nationally and internationally for their contributions to their field. Because senior faculty members regularly teach undergraduate courses, students have the opportunity to work with truly distinguished teachers.

The [College of Letters & Science](#) is home to more than 2,000 undergraduate students and 400 graduate students in the following 15 departments: [Cell Biology & Neuroscience](#), [Chemistry & Biochemistry](#), [Earth Sciences](#), [Ecology](#), [Economics & Agricultural Economics](#), [English](#), [History & Philosophy](#), [Mathematical Sciences](#), [Microbiology](#), [Modern Languages & Literatures](#), [Native American Studies](#), [Physics](#), [Political Science](#), [Psychology](#), [Sociology & Anthropology](#).



**Excellence Award Winners:** The MSU Alumni Association and Bozeman Chamber of Commerce honored forty seniors, including 11 from the College of Letters and Science with Awards for Excellence at their annual banquet on February 17th. View a slideshow of the recipients, [here](#).

## Making Connections: CLS 101 Provides a Foundation for Learning

Imagine a freshman course that asks questions instead of providing answers. A course that emphasizes critical thinking rather than note taking, favors lively discussion over faculty-led lectures, and draws on texts from a wide variety of disciplines. At MSU, that course is called [College of Letters and Science Knowledge and Community Seminar \(CLS 101\)](#), one of seven options that enable students to fulfill the University Seminar component of the core curriculum.

"When I look back, it was probably my favorite class as a freshman," said Crystal Zomer, a biomedical sciences major. "I thought it was really unconventional."

CLS 101 helps students expand their intellectual interests, improve your thinking and communication skills and enjoy conversation in a community of learners. This course is different from nearly any other course students are likely to take at MSU. It is small, it approaches the subject matter from multi-disciplinary perspectives, and it gives students an opportunity to work closely with a faculty member and other students. The course is designed to engage students in university life and college-level learning through reading, thinking and dialogue.

After starting out with just seven sections, CLS 101 has grown to over 50 sections today and is taught by faculty from every college on campus. CLS 101 is open only to first-year students.

## New Chemistry & Biochemistry Building Completed



Construction of the new Chemistry and Biochemistry Building was completed in September 2007. The building is devoted to research, and houses offices, an intimate auditorium, informal gathering spots and laboratories that will be used by faculty, graduate students and many undergraduate students. Undergraduates will

have the opportunity to work on research projects in the new building. "The research experience helps them make the transition from being net absorbers of knowledge to net emitters of knowledge," said department head David Singel. "It is a fundamental component of undergraduate education at MSU." Gaines Hall, which houses classrooms and instructional labs where students learn lab techniques and basic lab principles, is also currently being renovated.

## Multimedia Language Resource Center

This cutting-edge, digital-based multimedia language resource center has 25 student stations equipped with computers. The facility allows language instructors to enrich student language acquisition with drills in which students may compare their spoken statements to those of a native speaker. Visual as well as audio feedback guides both the student and the instructor in correction of specific problems of student's speech production. Among the most popular features of the new equipment is its ability to randomly pair students, allowing them to carry on "telephone" conversations in the foreign language. Other features permit the student to view foreign language television programs via satellite, pre-recorded foreign language films in both VHS and DVD formats, interactive CD-ROM programs created for language acquisition, and of course the rich variety of foreign language material found on the Internet including radio, television and newspaper Web pages. [MLRC website](#)



**CONGRATULATIONS** to CHELSEA SCHMIDT, PFA/Communications and Public Affairs student intern for the past two years, for successfully competing against 60+ applicants for a prestigious internship. Chelsea, a senior in psychology who is also taking a number of business classes, has been instrumental in redesigning the Parent/Family Weekend, founding the Downtown Discovery and designing and maintaining both the PFA web site and the Family Newsletter.

# On-campus living

## Office of Community Involvement

The Office for Community Involvement (OCI) is an office on MSU's campus that is dedicated to connecting students with non-profit, school and governmental organizations through out the community. It is an excellent campus resource that not only encourages students to volunteer, but also provides them with the necessary information and contact info for over 400 not-for-profit organizations through out the Gallatin Valley. The OCI and MSU, believe that it is extremely important for a student to get involved and volunteer because it not only benefits the community but the student's life as well.

## What are the benefits of volunteering?

1. **Learn or develop a new skill**
2. **Build confidence**
3. **Expand resume**
4. **Increase career options**
5. **Be apart of the community**
6. **Find motivation or sense of achievement**
7. **Improve health**



**Parent Tip:** Encourage your student to volunteer, explain to them the benefits. Whether they can donate an hour or ten, it is guaranteed that they will make a difference.

## Where can your student volunteer?

One way is through the OCI managed program [MSU America Reads\\*American Counts](#). The mission of this program is to work with and support area children to achieve and succeed academically. MSU students are given the opportunity to work one-on-one with pre-k through 8th grade students struggling with literacy or math skill development. This program employs 35 to 45 work-study eligible students in tutoring work as paid employee and recruits another 30 or more volunteer tutors annually to meet the needs of approximately 10 area schools.

Another option is to get involved with one of the several [service clubs](#) on campus. Although each of the clubs have different missions and are focused on specific interests, their purpose is the same: to encourage positive relationships and build a better a community!

Too look at other options or to get more information please contact:

### Office for Community Involvement

Montana State University

330 Culbertson Hall

Tel: (406) 994-6902

E-mail: [community@montana.edu](mailto:community@montana.edu)

*"We make a living by what we do, but we make a life by what we give."*



**Parent Tip:** Official transcripts can be ordered via standard mail by sending [this form](#), or through this [online clearinghouse](#). If your student is considering Graduate School or needs an official transcript, now is a good time to get it ordered. They can request it be sent following the end of the semester.

## 4th Annual "Almost" Spring Career Fair

Spring is near, well almost, and it is time for MSU's 4th Annual "Almost" Spring Career Fair. Companies from across the country will be descending upon MSU's beautiful campus looking for eager students to fill jobs and internships for every discipline! This year's fair will be held on Thursday, February 26th, 2009, from 9:00am to 3:00pm in SUB Ballrooms. This is a great opportunity for students, encourage yours to attend!



**Parent Tip:** MSU's Career, Internship & Student Employment Services offers services for Parents/Family that want to take part in the career planning process with their student. [Click here to check it out!](#)

## Students use new traffic simulator to help prevent car-bike crashes

February 11, 2009— Michael Becker, MSU News Service

BOZEMAN -- Montana State University engineering students Penny Atkins and Gordon Nelson will get a chance later this month to do something that nobody else at MSU will ever get to do: conduct the first research project in MSU's new large-scale traffic simulator.



"It's so exciting to be the first ones," Atkins, 21, said. "Most of the time, you'd be lucky to even get to drive the simulator."

Atkins, 21, was referring to the new \$915,000 [traffic simulator](#) installed at MSU's [Western Transportation Institute](#) in November. The simulator uses a real vehicle body on a motion platform, complex computer hardware and 240-

degrees of projector screens to replicate the experience of behind the wheel. Atkins and Nelson, also 21, are using that simulator to research a warning system that would use radio signals and GPS to warn drivers about the presence of bicyclists on the roadway.

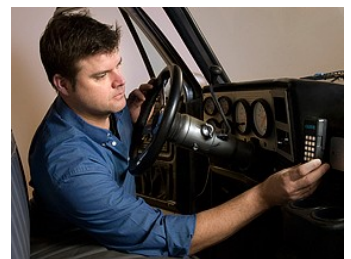
[Click here to continue reading](#)

## MSU student's business aims to keep drunken drivers off the roads

February 09, 2009 -- Anne Pettinger, MSU News Service

Gallatin County's roads may soon be safer thanks to a business that sprouted from a Montana State University classroom.

Big Sky Ignition Interlock grew out of a semester-long class project of five MSU business students. The Bozeman-based business will install, lease and maintain devices designed to prevent inebriated people from driving.



Ignition interlock devices require drivers to blow into the device before starting their cars. If the person is sober, the device allows the car to start. If the device registers a blood-alcohol concentration over the legal limit, the ignition remains locked.

Big Sky Ignition Interlock's clients will pay a \$150 installation fee for leasing an ignition interlock device, which also covers the cost of the removing the device. The monthly fee -- which includes recalibration each month and service calls -- is about \$65.

[Click here to continue reading](#)

# Off-campus living

# Question & answer

## Financial aid resources for your student

### What is the Office of Financial Aid Services?

A resource center for publications, work-study opportunities, fact-sheets and applications for financial aid programs and services. The office has an experienced and well-trained staff available on a walk-in basis to assist students and answer questions. Office hours are from 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. and phone lines are open 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. weekdays. The phone number is (406) 994-2845.

### How does my student apply for scholarships?

New students are automatically submitted for Western Undergraduate Exchange awards, achievement awards, and university scholarships if they complete their admissions application and electronically submit their ACT/SAT scores to the university.

Continuing students will be automatically considered for need-based scholarships by submitting their Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) to the federal processor by the priority filing date of March 1st.

You can do a first time FAFSA, or a renewal, on line at <http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/>. FAFSA on the Web Worksheets are also available in the Office of Financial Aid Services in room 135 of the Strand Union Building.

### How can my student apply for additional aid if our financial circumstances have changed since submitting the original FAFSA?

Students whose parents are recently unemployed or have new circumstances where their ability contribute towards their students expenses is limited may stop by room 135 of the Strand Union Building or call (406) 994-2845 to be put on a list to receive a Special Condition Appeal Form for academic year 2009-2010 when they become available this spring/early summer.

### How can my student find a work-study job?

Students can go to the Financial Aid web site at <http://www.montana.edu/wwwfa/> to see the job listings under the Work Study link. Then they can contact the employer where they are interested in working. Students must be awarded work study funds in order to obtain a work study job. They can refer to their award notification or call the office of financial aid if they are unsure.

### Where can I find answers to all of my financial aid questions?

Visit the website at <http://www.montana.edu/wwwfa/> for a wealth of information, or call the office from 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. weekdays. The phone number is (406) 994-2845. Feel free to drop by the office anytime during regular business hours in room 135 of the Strand Union Building.



**Parent Tip:** Need help applying for financial aid or don't know where to begin? College Goal Sunday is nationwide volunteer program that provides free information and assistance to students and families who are applying for financial aid for post secondary education. Find out your closest College Goal Sunday site by clicking here: <http://www.collegegoalsundayusa.org/>.



## Parent/Family Association update

Dear Families,

Thank you for the strong support that you have provided to the Parent/Family Association throughout the past year. Knowing the extreme challenges in our economy, I am particularly grateful to all of you who made generous donations to our annual fund drive. Your monies will be put to good use and you can even be a part of the allocation process by simply joining the [Board](#). If you made a pledge, but have not been able to send the donation yet, please know that we understand. There is no deadline so please send the payment when you are able.

I also very much appreciate all of you who take the time to send your thoughts regarding content of this newsletter, positive things happening with your students, negative encounters you may have from time to time, etc. All of the feedback and input from you is very valuable in shaping our future. If you haven't had a chance to look at the new Bobcat Bulletin, please do so at [www.montana.edu/bobcatbulletin](http://www.montana.edu/bobcatbulletin). This is another opportunity for you to receive regular information about what happens at MSU and in the Gallatin Valley. You must subscribe to receive the Friday email.

In the next months, we will be preparing some short audio/video files to assist you with processes at MSU which can sometimes be confusing or tedious. To be sure that we address your concerns, I would very much appreciate your email regarding questions that you had when you paid fees for the first time, or about understanding your bill, or following up on grant/scholarship payments to your student's account, etc. The PFA wants to help make the entire process as stress free as possible. Please tell me what you need!

Please send me a note or give me a call if you have questions. ([jdelay@montana.edu](mailto:jdelay@montana.edu) or 406.994.2502.)

Sincerely,

Jodie DeLay

Published by the MSU Parent/Family Association and distributed electronically every month.

Editor: Jon Esslinger, Parent from Virginia

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