Ed Hale

The Physics Department continues to have the best undergraduate students at UMR. The department has the highest grade point average of any large department on campus, as well as the highest percentage of honor students (about 2/3 of our 55 majors). Six of our students have an overall grade point average of 4.0 (straight A). The national trend in physics majors is still declining, as is the quality of the students. This has become somewhat of a problem in academia and I was recently at a national physics conference where one of the invited talks was entitled “The Current Crisis in Physics.” We are delighted to be a somewhat isolated pocket of excellence.

With strong recruiting, we hope to continue to buck the trends. Our program is really outstanding and clearly appeals to students who come to visit the campus. However, this has only been possible because of the generous donations from our alumni and friends. Many of our students are on well deserved scholarships. The university contributes to the funding for these scholarships, but it is the department’s additional contributions which makes the difference and enables us to attract the very best students. Most of the department’s contribution to freshmen scholarships comes from the money you donate to our phonathon (which is coming up soon, as discussed elsewhere in this newsletter). I would like to sincerely thank the many of you who annually contribute to the department and help with these scholarships.

Scholarships for upperclassmen come primarily from endowed, named physics scholarships, such as the Harold Q Fuller Scholarship/Loan, the Leon E. Woodman Scholarship (whose endowment was significantly increased recently by Ellen Woodman Doll), and the Charles M. Rice Scholarship (which is currently generously funded on an annual basis and will ultimately be endowed).

Please consider endowing a scholarship. It takes $10,000 minimum or a pledge of a similar amount over several years. You will also become a member of the Order of the Golden Shillelagh -- a group of strong UMR supporters who annually meet at a black tie event to help boost the university. This year the meeting is at Chateau on the Lake in Branson. This group has grown rapidly in the early phase of MSM/UMR’s $60 million Full Circle Campaign and, no doubt, will continue to grow as the campaign nears its goal early in the next century. Many of our physics faculty strongly support the university and currently 1/3 of them are members of the Order of the Golden Shillelagh.

The job market continues to be very strong for our majors. In contrast to a decade or more ago, many of our best students now go into industry, at least for a few years, rather than go on to graduate school. Most of them who refine their interview skills continue to get multiple job offers. Many of these jobs have a strong computing component, but traditional physics jobs are also available if a student so prefers. Dr. Chuck Bryson recently returned to UMR to receive a Professional Degree at the December commencement. He and I discussed where and why physics majors are being hired. His firms, Surface/Interface and associated companies, have a large fraction of physicists and find their logic and versatility to be a big asset.

The physics faculty and students enjoy visiting with our alumni. We strongly encourage you to stop by whenever you get close to Rolla. If we can be a help to you in any way, please email, call, or write. Best wishes as we near the end of this millennium.

*Consider this peculiar situation: Although we will celebrate the next century in less than a year, this is mathematically unsound! The Roman calendar never had a year zero (since there was no Roman numeral for zero). Thus, the new century should really be celebrated at the beginning of the year 2001, but most are ignoring this timing anomaly, especially in light of the Y2K issue.

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Congratulations to Our 1998 Degree Recipients!

**Bachelor of Science**
- Ryan Feeler
- Timothy Gasmine
- William Halliburton
- Bita Khazai

**Master of Science**
- Kiran Sonnad
- Jun Wu

**Doctor of Philosophy**
- Shawn Kathmann
- Michael Way

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Return to Rolla for Homecoming!

The Physics Department warmly invites our alumni back for Homecoming during the weekend of October 1-2, 1999. On Friday afternoon, October 1, the department will hold an open house for its alumni and friends, with special programs presented. Tours of laboratories and interactions with students will be available.

Following our tradition, a physics alumni or alumnus will deliver the 1999 Homecoming Colloquium at 4 p.m. on Friday, October 1. Professors Ed and Barbara Hale will have a reception that evening in their home for all returning alumni. Come home to your college roots, and celebrate our past and future!

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To Contact UMR Physics

If you would like to contact us for any reason, you can reach us by phone at (573) 341-4781 and by e-mail at physics@umr.edu. You are also cordially invited to check out our evolving Web page at http://www.umr.edu/~physics