

# GRADUATE NEWS

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## *Complex Relationships*

Graduate assistants in instruction (A.I.s) and the undergraduates they teach have an inherently complex relationship. The age difference between them is often small, while the power differential is great. Yet despite the complexity they can become friends—and remain friends for years.

John Cameron \*69, for instance, who was an A.I. in French, has been visited by former students in places as far afield as New Zealand and Switzerland. “I now live in Western Australia,” he said, “which is a bit far for visitors, but I live in hope.” Andrew Conrad \*77 has also kept up with a number of his one-time students. Now dean of the division of liberal arts at Mercer County Community College, he was particularly pleased when he ran into Edmond Ianni '78 at last fall's Leadership Assembly on campus. When Conrad was an A.I. in the English department, Ianni took his class in public speaking. “Ed was quite a remarkable young man,” Conrad recalled. Ianni is now a vice president of the Wilmington Trust Company.

When she attended the same Leadership Assembly, Janice Stultz Roddenbery \*77 was mourning the recent death of her mentor, Professor Armand Hoog. After Hoog retired from Princeton's French department, she lost contact with him. “I never had a chance to tell him how much he'd done for me,” she said. At the Leadership Assembly she met Richard Pivrotto '77, one of her favorite students when she was an A.I. in French. Pivrotto sought her out in order to thank her. As a freshman, he told her, he was very young and felt overwhelmed; she and her class were a kind of lifeline during a difficult period. (Pivrotto is now a manager at Morgan Stanley Dean Witter.) Hoog's death had left Roddenbery with the feeling

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### Student News

#### Reunions 2000

- Nearly 500 graduate alumni attended
- 43 current and historic departments were represented
- Attendees came from as far as Bangladesh and Brazil, England and India, Nigeria and Norway, Senegal and Singapore
- Harold T. Shapiro \*64 moderated a panel in Richardson Auditorium titled “Educated Guesses: Cross-disciplinary Predictions for the Next Century” featuring Margaret J. Geller \*75, Rebecca Goldstein \*77, Robert E. Kahn \*64, Andrei N. Lupas \*91 and Harrison C. White \*60
- Over 650 graduate alumni, students and guests marched near the front of the P-rade

Make plans to attend in 2001, June 1-2!



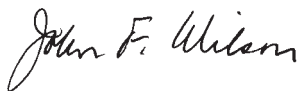
From the Dean

The Graduate School's Centennial provides an occasion to reflect on its significance for the University. From Princeton's earliest years, some students took advanced work after completing their baccalaureate degrees. Until the late 19th century, however, graduate studies were essentially ad hoc.

James McCosh imprinted Princeton with new scholarly ideals. He thought that it could not remain in the front rank of universities unless an outstanding faculty worked with advanced (graduate) students. Thus, founding the School in December 1900 marked Princeton's commitment to secure arts and sciences—and eventually engineering—disciplines at its core.

The Centennial year reminds us that about 25 percent of Princeton alumni hold advanced degrees. More important, it celebrates the synergy at this University between graduate and undergraduate programs. A single faculty, engaged in research at the frontiers of knowledge, works with first-year students as well as doctoral candidates. Interaction among undergraduates, graduate students, post-docs and faculty provides the stimulation critical for all—and gives us a unique profile among the great research universities.

All alumni and others are welcome to join in Centennial activities celebrating Princeton as it enters the 21st century, a powerful center of research and teaching whose influence reaches around the globe.



John F. Wilson  
Dean of the Graduate School



## Complex Relationships

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that something important in her life was incomplete; Pivrotto's words somehow brought her full circle.

Roddenbery, who loved being an A.I., believes that there's much more to it than imparting facts to students; for better or worse, a teacher can change a student's life. "Teaching is a tremendous responsibility," she said.

All four of the graduate students who won the APGA's Teaching Awards in 1999 are friends with some of their students, and all agreed with Roddenbery that teaching is a great responsibility. Their comments reflect the complexity of the A.I.-student relationship.

"Especially in huge introductory courses where the professor can't get to know many students personally, A.I.s carry a lot of responsibility," said Stephen Wu (Economics). Erik Gray (English) suggested that assistants in instruction probably feel the responsibility more because they're new to teaching. Daniel

Student News (continued)

Magilow (Germanic Languages and Literature) believes that in language classes the dynamics put a special onus on the graduate assistant. "In my department, the A.I. is the only teacher the students have contact with," he explained. "We speak only German in class. In the beginning, the students are complete illiterates and have to rely on us for every bit of information."

The four graduate students agreed that the student-teacher relationship can be difficult at times. Magilow mentioned "the student from hell," the occasional undergraduate who takes the class but really doesn't want to be there. "When you make a funny comment, this guy just sits there with a steely, cold face," he said. Gray found giving grades painful. "You feel less distance from the students than a professor would, which is a good thing," he said, "except when you have to assert your authority by grading them."

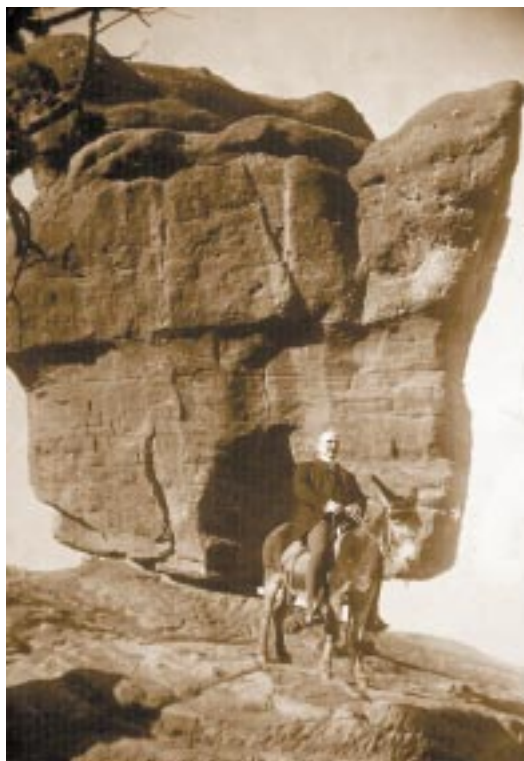
There are other basic challenges built into the job. Lisa Taneyhill (Molecular Biology) struggled to strike a balance between the teaching load and work both on her thesis and in the lab. Her advisor was supportive of the time she invested in teaching, but she knew other graduate students whose advisors instructed them to "blow off" their precepts in favor of more lab work. For Wu, the fact that undergraduates came to his precepts with very different math aptitudes posed a challenge: how to explain enough for the less advanced students without boring the others.

What was most rewarding about being an A.I.? Magilow found it refreshing, after several years devoted to research, to turn to something as hands-on as teaching. Gray especially liked the one-on-one contact with students during office hours. Wu enjoyed seeing the light dawn as a student understood a concept. Taneyhill was particularly pleased when she found that her precept was always almost completely full. "I used to bake them brownies," she confessed, "but I tend to think that's not the only reason they came to precept. They were really interested in the subject. And I got comments like, 'This is the best precept I've had at Princeton.' Some students said they really appreciated the effort I put in. When you make that extra effort or pay particular attention to someone who seems to be having a hard time, I guess it really can make a difference in their lives." ●

# The Graduate School Show

The great American lecturer, Lowell Thomas \*16, once said, “Never call a lecture a lecture. Call it a show.” J.T. Miller '70, writer, photographer and historical consultant to the University, has taken Thomas' advice. His new Graduate School slide presentation is definitely “a show.”

Previously, Miller created a highly popular presentation to celebrate Princeton's 250th anniversary. To develop a similar slide show for the Graduate School's Centennial, Miller spent months combing the University archives for amusing or poignant images. He looked particularly for pictures of distinguished alumni as students or in unusual situations. “The formal photographs taken of successful people in middle age often fail to depict their true humanity,” says Miller. He particularly likes the photo below of Andrew Fleming West (class of 1874), first dean of the Graduate School, on a donkey somewhere out west.



An image from J.T. Miller's new slide show: Andrew Fleming West, first dean of the Princeton Graduate School, in an atypical pose.

from Princeton in 1910.” There were also surprises in the lives of distinguished alumni. Lowell Thomas was just one year out of Princeton when he discovered the British desert adventurer, Lawrence of Arabia, and made both of them famous through his “shows.”

To book Miller's Graduate School slide show for a local alumni association or to find out when it will be in your area, contact Paula Bryan, Assistant Director for Regional Affairs for the Alumni Council. E-mail: paula@princeton.edu. Phone: 609-258-3351. 📞

## School News

From the President

As Princeton launches its celebration of the Centennial of the Graduate School, graduate alumni are getting involved in record numbers—Reunions 2000 being just one example. Graduate alumni gifts to



Princeton are growing, and the APGA made a strong start on the Endowment for Graduate Students that will

fund Teaching Awards and Summer Travel & Research Grants. Responding to another APGA initiative, alumni now serve as department liaisons.

The APGA sponsored career brunches enabling graduate students to network with alumni pursuing careers beyond the academy. We organized social events for graduate students—providing the APGA with opportunities to listen and respond to their concerns. In addition, we worked closely with undergraduate alumni through the Alumni Council, which is supporting several Centennial initiatives and longer-term projects to connect with graduate alumni.

During our Centennial year, we would like to increase APGA's membership significantly. Through your contributions, we will strive to fulfill our goal of raising \$400,000 for the new endowment—a level capable of providing benefits to graduate students in perpetuity. We also look forward to the opening of the Frist Campus Center, which will bring undergraduate and graduate students together in new ways and lay the groundwork for closer relationships.

Todd J. Mitty \*93  
President, Association of  
Princeton Graduate Alumni

Public Lecture Series:  
Frontiers of Knowledge  
Begins in September

Paula Fredriksen \*79, first of six distinguished graduate alumni to be featured in the Centennial Public Lecture Series, will give a talk at Princeton titled *Jesus, the Crucifixion, and the Origins of Christianity on Sunday*, September 17, 2000, at 4:00 pm.

Professor Fredriksen is the Aurelio Professor of Scripture in the Department of Religion at Boston University. She studied ancient Christianity at Wellesley, Oxford, and Princeton, and has subsequently taught at Stanford, Berkeley, and the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. Her books include *Augustine on Romans* (1982), *From Jesus to Christ* (1988), which won the Yale University Press Governors' Award for Best Book, and *Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews* (1999), which won the National Jewish Book Award.



THE CENTENNIAL OF  
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

Princeton University

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## Sky Hunt for Quasars

Graduate student Xiaohui Fan (Astrophysics) made the national news recently when he and his collaborators discovered the most distant object ever observed, a quasar 12 billion light years from Earth. It is so far away that its light, now reaching Earth, left it when the universe



Jacobus Fellowship winner Xiaohui Fan.

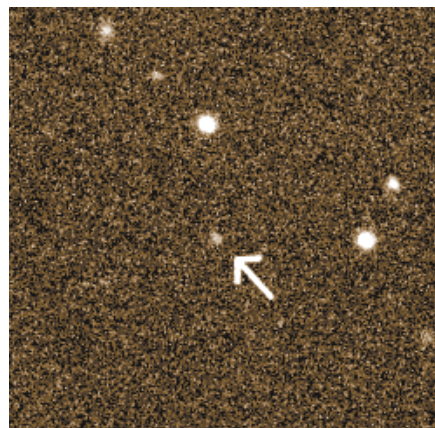
was less than a billion years old. Quasars look like stars but they are actually distant galaxies with a massive black hole in the center. A quasar's light is produced by matter, pouring into the hole.

Fan's previous research earned him the Jacobus Fellowship. He's one of the scientists taking part in the Sloan Digital Sky Survey, a five-year project that will map one quarter of the sky. The survey uses a powerful camera, built by

### Current Students

Professor James Gunn of Princeton astrophysics, to make digital images of the sky that contain millions of

objects. Software analyzes the objects. Fan said, "We determine which are likely to be quasars by looking at their colors." From the basement of Peyton Hall on campus, Fan and his colleagues remotely operate a telescope on a New Mexico mountaintop to measure the distance of the quasars; data captured in New Mexico reaches Princeton via the Internet.



The most distant known quasar.

Last March, Fan and his advisor, Associate Professor of Astrophysics Michael Strauss, identified 20 or 30 possible quasars. Fan flew to Hawaii, together with three other astronomers, to use the powerful Keck Telescope. They took a light spectrum of each quasar candidate, splitting the light into its component colors. As the universe expands, light from distant objects becomes stretched; these longer wavelengths look redder. The greater the distance light has traveled, the greater the redshift.

In the middle of the night on April 5, Fan called Strauss to report that they'd found the farthest quasar yet.

The Sloan survey has mapped just five percent of its target area. With so much sky still to cover, Fan says, "At some point, we will break this record again." ●