

# Academic Updates Keep Pace with Students' Needs

When it comes to academic programs, the University of Wisconsin-Parkside is always on the move – meeting the needs of today's students in today's world. The basis for a UW-Parkside education continues to be fundamental subjects of the liberal arts. This educational foundation provides people with the literary and logic skills required for life-long learning.

Specific academic programs, however, must keep pace with changes in society. The academic environment at UW-Parkside is one in which course and program offerings continue to evolve. The foundation for this environment was established in the university's strategic plan five years ago.

In the next three issues of *Perspective*, we'll take a close look at the new academic programs. These programs are just one reason why UW-Parkside has enjoyed an increase in enrollment during the past five years.

In this issue, we'll review new degree programs. In November, we'll explore new concentrations. In March 2002, we'll look at new certificates.

To meet a growing demand for graduates in molecular biology and bioinformatics, criminal justice, and sport and fitness management, UW-Parkside has added two majors and significantly updated a third.

## Sport and Fitness Management

Because sports, athletics and recreation are some of the fastest-growing industries in the U.S., UW-Parkside developed a sport and fitness management major. It's the only comprehensive program of its kind offered in Wisconsin. A curriculum in business, communications, wellness and sport administration prepares students for careers in corporate fitness, event management, sport facility management, the sport entertainment industry, and sport marketing and promotions.

## Criminal Justice

The criminal justice program is in its fourth year. In that short time, the program has produced 82 successful gradu-

ates. Currently, there are 170 criminal justice majors, 26 minors, and another 101 students preparing to enter the program. The criminal justice major provides broad-based liberal arts education for students interested in criminal justice and the law. Students examine decision-making processes, operations and justice-related issues. The criminal justice major prepares students for professional work and graduate study in law, criminology, criminal justice, sociology, public administration and other fields.

## Molecular Biology and Bioinformatics

The molecular biology degree, initiated in 1999, has a new name to reflect curricular updates. The molecular biology and bioinformatics major is one of only two such undergraduate programs in the United States. The degree integrates molecular biology, mathematics, computer science, chemistry and physics. The program is designed for students interested in scientific research and biotechnology. Biotechnology uses information obtained from the study of life to solve problems and develop products in numerous fields including medicine, agriculture, environmental protection, pharmaceuticals, forensics, food processing and energy production.

## Master of Science in Computer and Information Systems Added

The new Master of Science in Computer and Information Systems (MSCIS) was developed by faculty members in the Department of Computer Science and by management information systems (MIS) faculty in the Department of Business.

The MSCIS program employs peer groups, collaborative learning activities and team projects involving students, faculty and the business community. The program prepares graduates for successful professional careers in information technology (IT). It also serves the needs of IT professionals who wish to continue their development beyond the baccalaureate degree.

## MBA Revised

Students enrolled in UW-Parkside's master of business administration program now have more control in setting their schedules and shaping their studies thanks to a restructured MBA program they helped design.

When the School of Business and Technology surveyed students to ask them how to improve the MBA program, students asked for more electives and faster degree completion. To meet those needs the number of credits required for graduation was reduced to 32. Courses were reconfigured to two-credit, eight-week sessions – allowing students to earn four credits in the time it once took to earn three credits. Electives were increased from six credits to 14 credits, allowing students more freedom to choose their courses.

While the MBA program has been accelerated, the high-quality educational experience remains the same. UW-Parkside is the only MBA program based in southeastern Wisconsin accredited by the International Association for Management Education (formerly the American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business – AACSB).

All UW-Parkside MBA classes are scheduled at night. Foundation courses, required by some candidates with non-business academic backgrounds, are offered online through a consortium with three other UW schools – Eau Claire, La Crosse, and Oshkosh.

## Arts Management Minor

An arts management minor, designed to complement majors in art, dramatic arts, music, communication or business, began in the fall of 1999. Its goal is to provide students with a sound business framework in their undergraduate programs to assist them in pursuing careers in art management.

As part of their course work, arts management students participate in internships in community arts organizations.

# Survey Says ...

In the business world, companies large and small understand that satisfied customers alone do not guarantee success.

Why are satisfied customers no longer enough? Think, for a moment, about the choices you make when it comes to spending your hard-earned dollars. You're probably more loyal to businesses that go the extra mile to make certain you're happy. And to businesses that seem interested in your opinion.

The same holds true in the world of higher education. Universities are providing students with more services than ever before. And they're asking graduates to evaluate their educational experience.

How do alumni from the University of Wisconsin-Parkside feel about the education they received? According to a recent ACT alumni outcomes survey, recent graduates are more positive than ever before.

For example, when UW-Parkside graduates from 1995 through 2000 were asked: "How well did experiences at your school prepare you for your current job?" more than 40 percent answered "exceptionally well," or "more than adequately." At

other public colleges across the U.S., only 38 percent of the graduates responded in that positive manner.

Graduates were also asked to rank the importance of the skills they learned at UW-Parkside. Respondents rated three categories: 1) recognizing and using effective verbal communication skills, 2) living my personal/professional life according to my own standard/ethics, and 3) recognizing and using effective written communications skills, at higher than 3.6 on a 4.0 scale.

When graduates were asked to rank the impact of school experiences, the top two categories were: 1) accessing and using a variety of information sources (3.35 on a 4.0 scale), and 2) recognizing and using effective written communication skills (3.34 on a 4.0 scale). Those same categories were also rated first and second among other UW System graduates but with slightly lower scores.

When alumni were asked about selected factors of their educational experience, UW-Parkside graduates ranked "many opportunities for student/faculty interaction" first with a score of 4.01 on a 5.0

scale. Second was "high quality academic programs" (3.82 on 5.0 scale). Third was "much cultural/ethnic diversity in the student body" (3.72 on 5.0 scale). Each of the top three categories received a higher score than when the survey was conducted in 1996. The fourth-place category, "extensive computer system/services/equipment/labs, etc.," received a score of 3.52 – up from 3.18 in 1996.

Another portion of the survey asked graduates to rank their satisfaction with certain aspects of the school. The top three categories were "general condition of buildings and grounds" (4.40 on 5.0 scale), "class size relative to the type of course" (4.28 on 5.0 scale), and "university response to older/nontraditional students" (4.01 on 5.0 scale). Receiving a score of 4.0 were "overall quality of instruction" and "quality of the program in my field/major."

Overall, the perception of the UW-Parkside educational experience improved from the last time the survey was conducted (1996) as 74 percent of the questions received a more favorable response.

## Web Helps Gather Important Information From UW-Parkside Students

A Web-based survey with active UW-Parkside students was conducted between March 26 and May 7. Of 1,500 students who were invited to take the survey, 306, or approximately 20 percent, responded.

The following statements received a satisfied or very satisfied rating of better than 70 percent:

- The overall academic experience at UW-Parkside. (81%)
- The quality of library resources and services. (77%)
- How safe do you feel on campus? (76%)
- The general helpfulness of the faculty and staff at UW-Parkside. (73%)
- The overall quality of instruction at UW-Parkside. (72%)

- The quality of instruction in your academic major. (72%)
- The physical facilities. (72%)
- The telephone registration system. (72%)
- The availability of computers. (71%)

The following statements received an agree or strongly agree rating of better than 70 percent:

- In general, the climate for diversity is good at UW-Parkside. (77%)
- UW-Parkside actively promotes events and programs that recognize distinctive cultural backgrounds (e.g. Black, Hispanic, etc.). (72%)
- Students with disabilities are accepted and respected at UW-Parkside. (71%)

Of those responding, 87 percent said they intend to complete their degree at UW-Parkside.

According to the survey, 82 percent are employed outside of class and 46 percent of the respondents work more than 20 hours a week. More than 60 percent indicated that neither of their parents has completed a four-year college degree.

Larry Duetsch, professor of economics and secretary of the faculty, said the employment information and family information is key to understanding UW-Parkside students. "For most of them, (UW-Parkside) is not the only thing going on in their lives," he said. "And because many come from homes where neither parent has a college degree, they may not receive strong support for being in school."