together

EXPLORING WHAT CAN BE

SAN JOSÉ STATE UNIVERSITY College of Social Sciences FALL 2012 NO. 03

SHARON HALL

LEARNING

[**lur**-ning]

1: the act or experience of one that learns

2: knowledge or skill acquired by instruction or study

3: modification of a behavior by experience

SHELIA BIENENFELD

in this issue

3 **Class action**
Star teacher's mission to raise social consciousness

4 **Early influences**
How San José State faculty guided an academic career

5 **Meeting of minds**
Mentoring program helps boost undergraduate performance

6 **Major development**
An alumnus promotes new urban planning program

8 **From the laboratory to the classroom**
Anthropology department's new approach to teaching

9 **Closing arguments**
Teaching students to make their best case

10 **Do you see what I see?**
Video learning with students halfway around the world

dean's message

Greetings! By the time you read this, the national election will have been decided, along with many local and statewide elections, propositions and referenda. The results of these elections will greatly affect all of us in countless ways.

Whatever your feelings about the outcome, one thing remains certain: higher education in the United States, and in California in particular, is in trouble, and no easy solution exists.

I feel a deep commitment to making a high quality affordable education widely available because I was able to earn my bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees at essentially no cost. I have enjoyed a gratifying and productive career because of them: not a bad deal by any standard., and my history is not unique.

Unfortunately, we may not be able to offer that level of support to today's generation of students. That leaves me both perplexed and very sad, as I see students struggling to support themselves, paying ever-increasing tuition to earn their degrees. For the first time in my academic career, hunger among students is a significant problem as they scramble to make ends meet.

In the meantime, we push on, to teach our students flexible skills and a deeper understanding of the world we share—and which they will inherit. For us, the bottom line has always been, and remains, teaching.

In this issue of *Together*, we look at teaching as it has traditionally been practiced, as well as new approaches that promise to help us respond to new opportunities and challenges. You will find articles highlighting the broad range of educational experiences offered here; from the traditional to the cutting edge; from in-person to online; from the conventional classroom to flexible spaces that allow a variety of educational activities.

Some of these new methods will help us save money that can then be devoted to maintaining small, hands-on classes; other approaches promise to help us to provide life-long and service learning options.

What they share in common is our commitment to continue giving back to our community by training an educated, articulate, and responsible new generation of graduates. With great pride, we highlight what we have accomplished in the past and what we strive to accomplish in the future.

I hope that you will read these articles with interest and that you will be moved to support us in our ongoing mission to serve our very deserving students.

Sheila Bienenfeld
Dean, College of Social Sciences
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KARL NIELSEN

Classroom commitment

Award-winning teacher seeks social justice through higher education

Last spring, when he opened an official-looking letter from Sheila Bienenfeld, dean of the College of Social Sciences, Ken Peter was surprised to learn that he would receive his college's new Teaching Excellence Award.

"I didn't know I'd been nominated," says Peter, a professor in the Political Science department. "Apparently, a few of my colleagues wrote letters on my behalf, which was really nice."

Teaching has been a particular passion of Peter's since he arrived at San José State University in 1990, when he quickly realized his students couldn't afford to take higher education for granted.

"In my first class at San José State, I had a homeless student who pitched his tent in the backyard of other students," Peter recalls. Compared with students at the elite private universities where Peter had been educated, "San José State students are far more diverse in terms of class, backgrounds and life experience."

Dean Bienenfeld says she envies Peter's students. "It is always such a pleasure to talk with Ken and to listen to him talk about issues of real substance," she says. "He is an eloquent speaker and a deep and very honest thinker who never talks down to people but simply speaks clearly and thoughtfully about whatever issue is on the table."

Peter's own educational journey started in rural Idaho, where his father was an art professor at a small liberal arts college. He spent his undergraduate years at Stanford University, where he studied with political theorist Nan Keohane, who later went on to serve as president of Wellesley College and Duke University.

"She was a brilliant classroom presence," says Peter, who still has his notes from her lectures. "A lot of my teaching techniques began with watching the examples of really great teachers I had."

Peter went on to earn a master's degree at the University of Chicago and his Ph.D. from Princeton University. Compared with the students attending those elite schools, San José State students brought with them firsthand experiences that often illuminated the subject matter in startling ways, Peter found.

A vivid example came as he taught the political philosophy of Thomas Hobbes and his belief that "the war of all against all" that would prevail in a government-free "state of nature."

"I had one student who never talked," Peter recalls. "He spoke up and said, 'Dr. Peter, Hobbes was right. I survived the Killing Fields. That's exactly how it was.' The class went completely silent. Suddenly, the class saw Hobbes in a completely different light."

Similarly, in introducing Karl Marx's theories to San José State students, "When you talk about the way work can be constructed to alienate people, they've lived that and can relate to it in a way that the Princeton students generally don't."

Peter's classroom experiences have transformed his ideas about the purposes of education. "The elites of the world have always understood that their children should receive an education that prepared them for power," he says. "I began to look at teaching here as focused on social mobility and political power—and not strictly an intellectual enterprise."

The typical class size at San José State, ranging from 30 to 45 students, fosters personal connections with students, Peter says. "The No. 1 predictor of student success is whether they develop a more personal relationship with a teacher along the way," he points out.

Meanwhile, he says, "The way in which I teach political theory has to be different from the ways in which my teachers taught it to me. It's more basic now—you have to start from scratch and spend a semester building a vocabulary."

ROBERT BAIN

Role models

How two San José State scholars shaped a stellar academic career

Alan Kazdin arrived on the San José State University campus in the fall of 1963 planning to major in languages, but the Los Angeles native quickly learned he had little aptitude for the subject.

Fortunately, he took a friend's advice to take an introductory psychology course from Thomas Tutko, who was already on his way to becoming a well-known sports psychologist.

"He was really interesting and good and I liked it," says Kazdin, who soon shifted his major to the study of psychology.

"I've had two or three career bumps that just changed my trajectory," says Kazdin, now the John M. Musser Professor of Psychology and Child Psychiatry at Yale University and a past president of the American Psychological Association. "The first one might be being in Tom Tutko's class."

But Tutko, who retired from teaching in the College of Social Sciences in 1999, was not the only faculty member who helped shape Kazdin's intellectual outlook.

The late Lucius Eastman, a professor of philosophy in the College of Humanities, "had one job," Kazdin says. "He was a really great thinker. He would criticize the things I did in a really constructive way."

Kazdin took two lecture courses from Eastman in which he was the only student. Eastman would deliver his talk while pacing back and forth in his small office, Kazdin says. "And I'm sitting there taking notes on the edge of his desk." Eastman never called him by his first name, always addressing him as "Mr. Kazdin."

"Philosophy was so great, because it said, 'Forget about the answer—always go after the question,'" Kazdin says.

Later, he followed in Tutko's professional footsteps and applied to Northwestern University for graduate school. He suspects Tutko's letter of recommendation must have persuaded the psychology department to admit him.

Kazdin, who earned his Ph.D. in clinical psychology, went on to teach at Penn State and the University of Pittsburgh before moving to Yale. He has published a popular advice book on child-rearing (*The Kazdin Method for Parenting the Defiant Child*) and appeared on *Good Morning America* and the *Dr. Phil Show* while heading professional associations, publishing a vast body of academic research and directing Yale's Parenting Center.

Kazdin doesn't consciously emulate the teaching styles of his mentors, but he shares Tutko's gusto for his subject matter. "I have that enthusiasm," Kazdin says. "If I'm talking to a class, by the time I finish that lecture I'm going to be very disappointed if they don't change careers."

Meanwhile, he follows Eastman's respectful custom with his undergraduate students. "In my undergraduate classes I call all my students Mr. or Ms.," Kazdin says.

After more than 40 years as a teacher, Kazdin still loves what he does—and can't quite believe that he gets to do what he loves for a living.

"It's a strange job," he says. "We're getting paid for this. It's a privilege." ◉

Yale University psychologist Alan Kazdin (during a visit to campus in October) attributes much of his intellectual outlook and his passion for teaching to two long-ago teachers he met as an undergraduate at San José State.

Graduate guides

MS candidates mentor
Mexican-American studies undergrads

For years, the Mexican American Studies department had been bedeviled with high failure rates among students of color who were taking its signature yearlong introductory historical survey course.

"We would lose 15 percent with Ds and Fs," recalls department chair Marcos Pizarro. It was apparent that the students, many of whom were the first in their families to attend a four-year college, simply weren't prepared for the rigors of post-secondary education.

In the fall of 2008, Pizarro decided to try something new. "I thought, 'We could have the master's students serve as mentors to the undergraduates.'" The graduate students could serve as role models while imparting fundamental academic skills.

Pizarro asked assistant professor Magdalena Barrera to find a graduate student to serve as a mentor in her section of the course, Mexican American Studies 10-A. "What first-generation college students need is relationships," Pizarro says. "They need to feel like this is home."

For Barrera, it was the birth of an opportunity. "We sat down and thought about ways to make this really large lecture course feel more intimate," she says.

The class, which fulfills general education requirements, has five sections of about 70 students apiece. Before the Fall 2008 semester was out, two additional mentors had been hired, each taking on two sections, she says.

These days, each section has its own master's student—and undergraduate student performance has improved, says Barrera, who continues to oversee the program. "The mentors have come to play a really integral role," she says.

For Barrera, whose own undergraduate education at the University of Chicago and doctoral study at Stanford University was conducted almost entirely in small-class settings, the large classes at San José State came as something of a shock.

"It was a big learning curve for me," she says. Together with the first graduate student she hired, Barrera created workshops for students inside and outside of the class.

"I was really inspired to try to find a way to make this big class feel a lot smaller," she says.

ROBERT BAIN

"Before the program was in place there would be a number of students who would just fall off the radar," Barrera says. "Those numbers have been reduced, and even in those cases where students face extraordinary difficulty, we at least know what is happening with them."

The graduate mentors work about 10 hours a week, she says. They attend class lectures, hold their own office hours and lead workshops. They also meet regularly with faculty and are invited to deliver a class lecture.

Although they aren't formal teaching assistants and aren't responsible for grading, "This gives them a T.A.-like experience," Barrera says. "Many of our master's students would like to continue on to Ph.D. programs."

Each student meets at least once with a mentor, who can act as the teacher's eyes and ears. "In the past it's really averted a number of crises," Barrera says. "The faculty and the mentors really try to work as a team so we can mutually identify the students who are having a hard time."

Crucially, mentors offer workshops on subjects like time management and how to take lecture notes, she says.

Because the mentors are similar to them in age and background, undergraduates "are much more comfortable sharing their challenges with them" than with the faculty, Barrera says. They're also familiar with the stereotypes and veiled negative assumptions that students may have encountered in their education, she says.

The mentorship program "has been one of the most rewarding aspects of my teaching here," Barrera says. "I come away really feeling that I've learned more from them—they've expanded my own understanding so much." ⊙

Urban encounters

SJSU alumnus pushes for new planning certification program

ROBERT BAIN

Professors Asha Weinstein Agrawal and Ralph McLaughlin are collaborating with alumnus Scott Lefaver (right) on a new real estate development certificate curriculum.

From his seat on the Santa Clara County Planning Commission, Scott Lefaver hears a lot of griping from developers about the restrictions and delays imposed by planning staff. Planners, on the other hand, think developers don't pay enough attention to the regulations.

Lefaver, a former urban planner-turned-developer, sees both points of view. "They don't understand each other," he says. "They talk a different language, and they're under different pressures."

He decided to do something about it. He and a group of local developers have raised money to fund planning for a new Certificate in Real Estate Development (CRED) to be offered by Lefaver's alma mater, the Urban and Regional Planning department at San José State University.

It's an opportunity to help both professions find common ground, Lefaver says. "What we want to do is focus on the business of planning."

Current plans call for a certificate based on four graduate-level courses that will be offered starting in the fall of 2013, says department chair Asha Weinstein Agrawal. Adjunct professors with extensive development experience are expected to do much of the teaching, she says.

"The courses will be structured so that we bring in lots of local professionals to speak," she says.

The CRED program will enable graduates to conduct a site analysis for a potential development project, evaluate the feasibility of a proposed development, know how to acquire land, identify financing sources, create joint ventures, manage the entitlement process, understand the impact of regulation and see a project to completion.

Lefaver chairs an advisory board overseeing development of the new program that also includes several independent consultants, working planners and engineers, several developers and Sheila Bienenfeld, dean of the College of Social Sciences.

Lefaver's initiative reflects the comprehensive training he received at San José State, Bienenfeld says.

"Scott is a perfect example of what we hope to nurture in our students—bold thinking, thorough preparation, commitment to the community and a willingness to work hard to make dreams come true," she says.

The new certificate program brings Lefaver full circle.

A California native, he earned a bachelor's degree in political science from San José State before entering the Army as an officer in 1968. He spent 1969-70 in Vietnam, then returned to campus to earn his master's degree in planning. "I typed up my application for graduate school in the field following a firefight," he says.

He was a member of the department's first graduating class in 1972. "The first graduating class was all males, and four were Army vets," says Lefaver, who at the time drove a Volkswagen minibus and sported long hair, a beard and a ponytail.

"My first job was for the city of Gilroy as the city planner," he says. "They were feeling the growth from San José, and the question was what kind of growth were they going to have."

In his four years there he helped develop a master plan for the city, many parts of which are still in effect. Lefaver later worked as a planner in the private sector, then returned to school at the University of Southern California to earn a Doctor of Public Administration degree. He also spent a decade teaching in San José State's Department of Urban and Regional Planning as well as the College of Business.

In the mid-1990s, Lefaver took a new direction. With a partner he started a business called Cabouchon Properties LLC, which rehabilitates apartments for low-income housing.

The company maintains 16 properties in Alaska, California, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Virginia valued at more than $150 million. It also has spent more than $30 million on rehabilitating its more than 2,100 units.

As he gained experience with his own business, Lefaver came to understand that many of the things planners take for granted are deeply aggravating for developers.

For example, he says, banks are always pressing to get their projects built by a set deadline: time is money. In addition, developers need a clearly defined list of applicable rules and regulations for their projects.

"Developers want certainty and timely decisions," Lefaver says. "Planners aren't taught that." But developers also need to understand that planners are surrogates for the public and have to look out for the public interest, Lefaver says.

"One purpose of this program is to start a conversation to talk about these issues," he says. "In the end, good development is good for the community. When you get a good deal, it does well and it brings tax revenue to the community."

Meanwhile, Lefaver points out, with cutbacks in government hiring many planning program graduates are going straight into the private sector to work for developers.

Earlier this year, he reached out to fellow developers John Vidovich, Mark Lazzarini and Barry Swenson to gather the seed money to launch the certificate project. "We've raised $100,000 already," he says. "We've got enough money to start the program." Eventually, he adds, he would like to see it fully endowed.

Agrawal, whose own background is in planning, agrees that there is a cultural divide between developers and planners.

"There does seem to be a fairly deep lack of understanding between the two groups of folks," she says. "Sometimes individuals working in development don't understand why regulations are in place. If they understand the reasoning behind them, it will make it easier for them to design a project."

Meanwhile, recent economic upheavals, coupled with new planning policies that encourage reclamation of brownfield sites, urban infill development and commercial redevelopment, create a need for new public-private partnerships that align with the CRED program goals.

The program will likely target both those studying for their master's degrees in urban planning and working real estate professionals, Agrawal says. It might even be opened to MBA candidates in the College of Business, she says.

The CRED course will probably launch in the Fall 2013 semester, with a course in the real estate development process offered through the existing master's in urban planning program. Other, courses will focus on real estate finance and market analysis and the relationship between planning and business.

A fourth course will be a studio-based capstone project relying on extensive face-to-face interaction with the instructor.

Because many students will also be working full time, classes will be held in the evening, and students will only have to attend a few sessions in person per semester. Much of the learning will be experiential, analyzing actual Northern California real estate projects, participating in peer-led discussions and conducting group-oriented studio projects that mimic realistic development scenarios. Online "virtual classrooms" are expected to add to the flexible learning environment, Agrawal says.

The CRED program will be overseen by assistant professor Ralph McLaughlin, who has taken the lead in designing the program and will likely teach one of the courses, she says.

Lefaver hopes San José State's curriculum will become the definitive development-planning program for Northern California.

"There are a lot of people who are very interested in this type of programming," Lefaver says. "There are a lot of very active local developers. This would be in their best interest."

At the end of the day, he says, there needs to be more conversation about how to best balance business interests and regulations.

"That's the type of discussion I want to see," he says. "What can we do at the local level to bring about communities that work and are economically sound?" ◉

Close to the bone

Building a new anthropology lab from scratch

It's pretty much what you would expect to find in an old-fashioned physical anthropology lab: a full-scale plastic replica of a human skeleton hangs in a glass-fronted cabinet and there's a bank of large wooden drawers filled with bones.

But following a major makeover last summer, this complex in the basement of Washington Square Hall has a few modern touches.

Now, classroom space at the west end of the lab flows seamlessly into the laboratory area. Rows of old tables have been replaced with 35 Steelcase Node chairs on wheels, allowing students to move into myriad configurations.

Many of the new tables and cabinets are portable, too. Meanwhile, there are whiteboards and computer stations scattered about.

Students have noticed, says Chuck Darrah, chair of the Anthropology department in the College of Social Sciences. "They used to refer to this room as a dungeon. I don't hear anyone saying that now."

The new lab emerged from the re-invention of the department's curriculum. About a year ago, the faculty decided that each of the traditional branches of the discipline—cultural, physical, archaeology, linguistics and applied—should be united under the "umbrellas" of human interaction with the environment, wellness and social science knowledge.

"Students were learning material in different courses but it was sometimes difficult for them to integrate it in meaningful ways," Darrah says. "We're providing a kind of alternative way for students to synthesize their knowledge and apply it to the careers that are out there in the world."

The department's lab and main classroom needed to reflect that, the faculty decided. When some money became available last spring, partly from a bequest from the late Patricia Dunning (MA '96 Anthropology), they drew up plans. Workers removed doors that had separated the lab from the classroom, painted, installed new flooring and hung cabinets.

A bank of low cabinets nicknamed "The Peninsula" informally divides the classroom into a lecture area and a workspace equipped with tables. The space flows seamlessly into the lab, which will be equipped for database management, audio transcription and video editing, says Darrah.

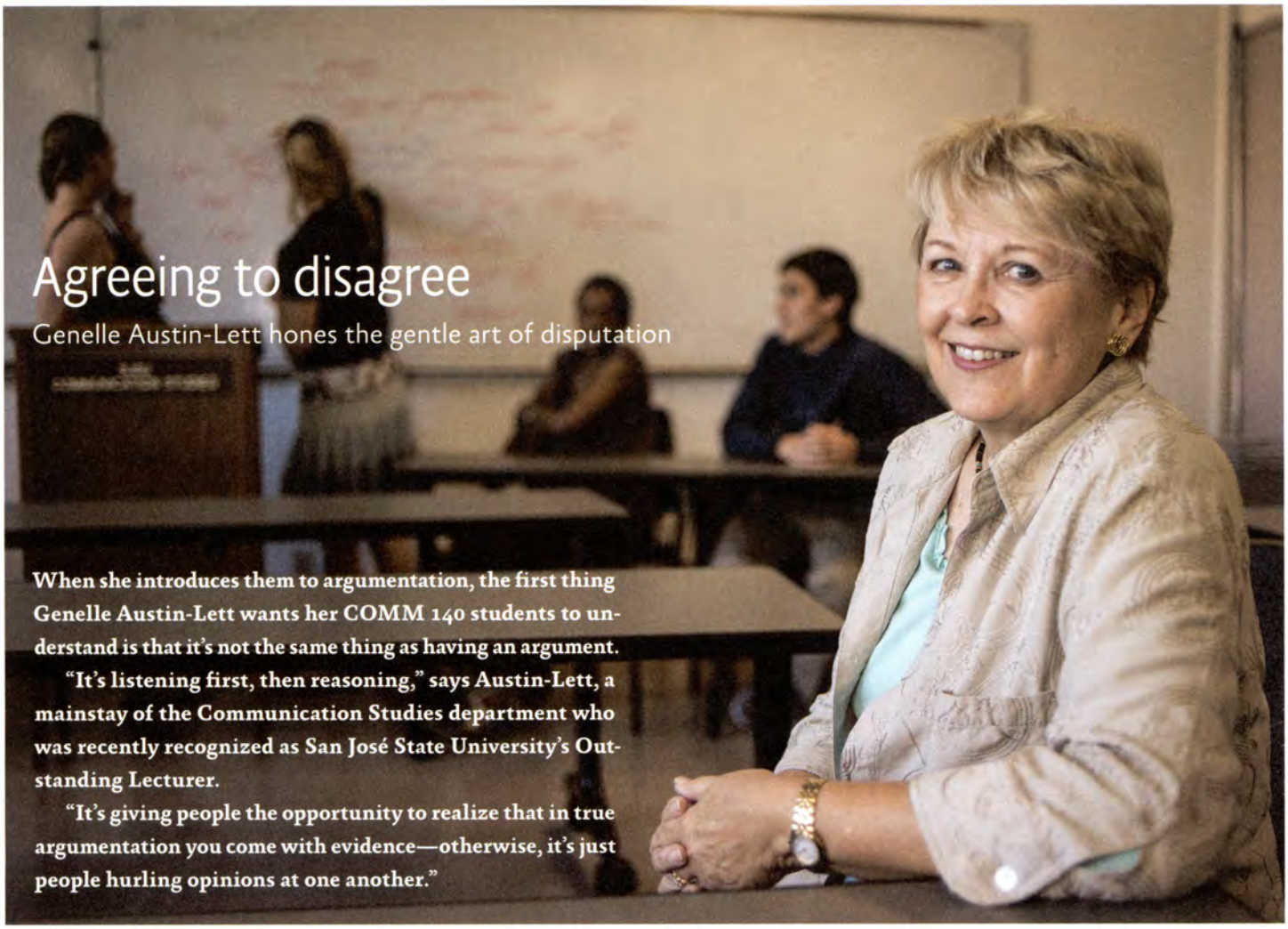
Associate professor Elizabeth Weiss has her physical anthropology students shift from their rolling chairs to tables, where they gather to examine bones that have been laid out on towels.

"One of the beautiful things about this is because the teaching collection is right behind me, the students can easily come back here for the activity," she says.

Weiss's colleagues share her enthusiasm, Darrah says. "We're just getting started," he says. "This is a once-in-a-career thing for all these people, and they know it." ⊙

Associate Prof. Elizabeth Weiss examines bones with student in the new Anthropology Department lab.

KARL NIELSEN



Agreeing to disagree

Genelle Austin-Lett hones the gentle art of disputation

When she introduces them to argumentation, the first thing Genelle Austin-Lett wants her COMM 140 students to understand is that it's not the same thing as having an argument.

"It's listening first, then reasoning," says Austin-Lett, a mainstay of the Communication Studies department who was recently recognized as San José State University's Outstanding Lecturer.

"It's giving people the opportunity to realize that in true argumentation you come with evidence—otherwise, it's just people hurling opinions at one another."

KARL NIELSEN

Although Austin-Lett has taught many subjects in her career, "I've never loved anything more than argumentation," she says. "It's different every day, depending on what's in the news."

That love has carried over to her work as coach of the university's award-winning Forensics Speech and Debate team. "It's not just teaching them to be good speakers and debaters and interpreters," she says. "It's about teaching them life skills."

In spending time traveling with her team members, "You see students from an entirely different vantage point than just in the classroom," she says. On occasion she has supplied a clean, pressed dress shirt or tied a necktie for a kid who's never worn one before.

Austin-Lett was born to teach. Growing up in Chicago, she tutored her siblings and gave them writing assignments. "While the family watched Gunsmoke, I had papers to grade," she says.

After earning degrees from the University of Illinois-Chicago and Northern Illinois University, she taught in both public and private schools and coached college debate teams. She became a lecturer at San José State in 1991.

"The thing they hired me to do here was to be the director of forensics," says Austin-Lett, who adds, "I'm forever at dinner parties explaining that I don't go to crime scenes."

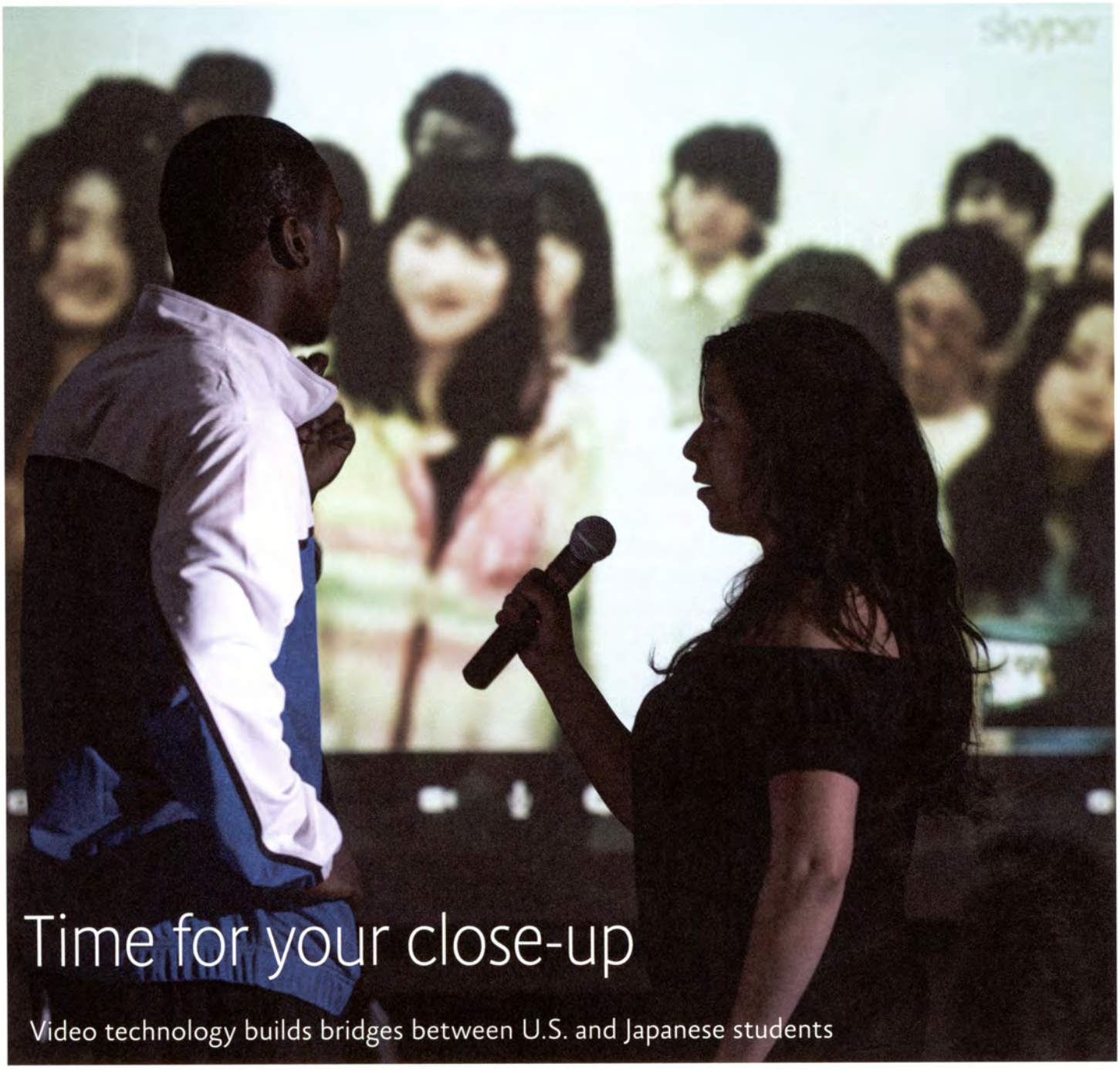
Her first day on the job, there was talk of cutting her program for budgetary reasons. "I thought, 'I can worry about this, or I can make this a program no one wants to cut.,'" Austin-Lett says. "I'm still here, so I guess it worked."

This semester, her students debated California's ballot propositions. "I feel that I'm helping them become better citizens because they're being forced to look at the issues and then know both sides of the decisions," she says.

Her students have gone on to become lawyers, doctors, academics, politicians and debate coaches, but Austin-Lett makes sure to impart some core values.

"I try to tell them that when you leave here you're going to be using it in your life," she says. You're going to practice it every day you're here."

And she reminds them, "If you think winning is more important than the person you're having an argument with, you're going to have a lonely existence. If the person means more to you than winning, drop the argument. You'll find another time to have a discussion."



Time for your close-up

Video technology builds bridges between U.S. and Japanese students

KARL NIELSEN

The Japanese college students smile nervously at the video camera as the American student on a computer screen addresses them from halfway around the world.

"Hello," she says. "My name is Marissa."

"Marissa? Nice to meet you," a young woman answers shyly.

The tentative introduction, carried out via Skype between students at Kwansei Gakun University students and a roomful of Ruth Wilson's undergraduates at San José State University, breaks the ice.

A few minutes later, when one of the Japanese students reveals it's her birthday, the Americans burst out in a boisterous version of "Happy Birthday." She beams.

It's a typical encounter in AFAM 196, better known as Global

Youth Culture, the brainchild of Wilson, chair of the African American Studies department in the College of Social Sciences, and her brother, John Wilson, who teaches English at Kwansei Gakun, a non-denominational Christian college.

The class, being taught simultaneously on both university campuses, is like a virtual student exchange, allowing young people to share their experiences and explore their differences with the help of technology.

Wilson, who often travels internationally with her brother, got the idea from realizing the ubiquity of technology among young people around the world.

"Wherever I go, I see youth tied to phones," she says. "I was wondering how this has impacted face-to-face interaction. I wanted to explore what was going on internationally."

Wilson admits she comes from an old-fashioned background, in which there was a premium placed on face-to-face interaction. "I grew up in an environment where 'the visit' was important," she says. "They do this text business—sending brief messages with the hope of having a meaningful exchange."

But it is modern telecommunications technology that makes classroom exchanges like the ones in her class possible. During the group video sessions, students get up one by one to introduce themselves, share their stories and answer questions from their counterparts.

Outside of class, the Japanese and American students also text and email with one another on their own. "We don't monitor the one-to-one interactions," Wilson says.

Wilson has had the travel bug at least since her college days, when she held a U.S. Agency for International Development internship in South Africa. There, she met pregnant women who walked eight miles to reach a health clinic. It opened her eyes to the way other people lived.

"Being in that environment taught me about globalism," she says. "I found that people were people."

Wilson hopes to provide the same sort of eye-opening experience to her students.

"The American students become more inquisitive about who other people are," she says. As part of the course requirements they are expected to interview a number of peers, including people who were born elsewhere.

"Students have to explore who they are as Americans and interview people who come from elsewhere and get to know their story," Wilson says.

A video exchange posted on YouTube provides an example. An American female student asks, "What kind of cell phones do you guys have? Do you text a lot?"

"We do," a Japanese student answers.

"Do you have iPhones?"

"We have iPhones."

At that point, one of the male Japanese students feels emboldened—and maybe a little flirtatious.

"Please give me your telephone number," he says. Much giggling ensues on both sides of the Pacific Ocean.

Wilson and Yoko Baba, former chair of the Sociology department, developed the course with assistance from Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL), a project of the State University of New York Global Center, and a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Through her brother, Wilson had met the dean of academic affairs at the Japanese university. When the dean visited the Bay Area for an alumni association barbecue, Wilson dropped by to pitch the trans-national course and exchange program.

"We closed the deal about a year after that picnic," Wilson says. "The two campuses are linked. We send two or three students there, and they send two or three students back."

Notwithstanding a 17-hour time difference, the video sessions are arranged with the help of the campus International and Extended Studies program, Wilson says. "Our students were thrilled to look at the Skype screen and see that their classrooms are very similar to our classrooms."

Japan, in other words, "is really not like *Shogun*," she says. "When they see that, they're really not so intimidated by the foreignness of it."

In addition to talking about cell phones, the Americans and Japanese ask one another about musical tastes, fashions and where they like to shop.

"They just get excited about each other," she says. "By the end of the class, they know everybody's names. They build a friendship, if they're lucky. It has been delightful to see what happens." ⊙

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"... in true argumentation you come with evidence—otherwise, it's just people hurling opinions at one another."
Genelle Austin-Lett, page 9

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