

**Welcome back, S&T faculty,** to the fall 2011 semester. Can being a history professor at a technological university really be a dream job? Find out by reading about World War II expert [John McManus](#). Also in this issue: web resources for faculty on the topic of [classroom management](#), what the [Curators' Teaching Professors](#) will be talking about, and how to answer the [question](#), "Did I miss anything in class?"



**CERTI  
NEWSLETTER**  
Center for Educational  
Research and Teaching  
Innovation at Missouri S&T

John McManus

# Living the Dream

In a perfect world, [John McManus](#)' dream job would consist of teaching history courses to university students, writing books about modern American military history, and finding time to broadcast professional sports.

Two out of three isn't bad.

McManus is the only faculty member in the Missouri University of Science and Technology History Department to teach three distinct courses each semester, not because it is a requirement, but simply because he enjoys students and thrives in a classroom. He also is a prolific researcher and author. To date, he has penned nine books about the modern American military experience, specifically World War II.



Excelling in one area has not diminished his effectiveness in the other. In 2010, the associate professor garnered both the campus Teaching Award and its Research Award. He was a recipient of the Faculty Excellence Award in 2009.

"He is the quintessential example of a great teaching scholar," says Larry Gragg, his department chair.

Although McManus had an early love for history, the route to becoming an academician had a few bumps.

An avid sports fan and high school athlete, McManus attended the University of Missouri-Columbia's Journalism School to learn sports broadcast journalism. If he couldn't be a professional athlete, then a play-by-play baseball broadcaster was the next best thing.

He soon found that the "sports" part of the program appealed to him far more than the "journalism" part. At the same time, though, he rediscovered a latent interest in World War II that had begun when he was a youth reading books by



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**FALL 2011  
FACULTY  
EVENTS CALENDAR**

Go here for the [Fall 2011 Faculty Calendar of Events](#) to see what's available for instructors on a variety of topics this semester.

machine gunner Robert Leckie. Not surprisingly, when McManus found his undergraduate transcript loaded with history electives, it was easy to obtain a minor in the subject and then go on for his master's in history at UMC.

The World War II archival collection at the University of Tennessee beckoned him southward, so he began his doctoral work there, quickly making use of his still fresh journalism training. He turned his Ph.D. dissertation into his first book, "Deadly Brotherhood," and soon afterward wrote the companion volume "Deadly Sky."

So it was when he came to the S&T History Department in 2000, he had two published books under his belt – volumes that he wrote for the "regular guy" as well as for the historian, he says. "That's what history is for."

McManus calls World War II *the* event in human history. "Nothing has been the same since then." His research on it largely centers on the perspective from the soldier on the ground rather than the well-known military leaders. His studies have taken him on a number of travels, and connected him to retired and active soldiers as well as artifacts from the past.

### Rough teaching start

There is a strong interplay between what McManus discovers in his research one week and what he shares in the classroom the next. He doesn't feel that one is complete without the other.

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**"I want the students to feel free to think whatever they think, but they'd better be better be informed. The last thing you want is limited discourse."**

**-John McManus**

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He admits to a rough start in his teaching career at a community college, though. "I was not a natural." After watching another faculty member assign nine books to read for a survey course, he knew there must be better ways for students to learn. "I realized I really should be getting down and dirty and teaching them the information anyway," he said. "A little reading goes a long way."

His course syllabus may not include nine books, but his classes are not a breeze by any means. McManus uses a mixture of lecture, film and Internet sites to keep his upper level courses engaged during the two-and-a-half hour block of time they attend his evening classes. He assesses students through film reviews, special research projects and essay tests.

His courses are writing intensive, something not always popular with engineering and science students, although he has been surprised by the level of written communication skills some of his students possess. His goal is to help his students construct arguments and convey ideas in writing, while thinking critically and analyzing issues.

One of McManus' pet peeves is an instructor presenting material with a known bias, and potentially limiting the openness of discussion in the classroom. He makes it a priority to present the information as impartially as possible, trying to keep in mind his

own subjectivity.

"I want the students to feel free to think whatever they think, but they'd better be informed," he said. "The last thing you want is limited discourse."

### Life-changing idea

At times student's questions and comments have guided not only the content of his next lecture but his research as well. His best idea, however, came from his wife, Nancy. Several years ago she asked him if there was an infantry unit that had existed throughout U.S. military history. He found out that the answer was no, but that the 7th Infantry Regiment was the longest in existence. He turned that topic into two books that changed his life.

Tracing the movements of the 7th Infantry Regiment through history took him up through the Iraq War, where the 7th was in the thick of the battle from the outset. McManus was able to serve as the regimental historian of that time period, conducting after-action group interviews with soldiers and officers and compiling accounts over a three-year period.

"I sat down with the survivors and got the viewpoint of those who went through it," he says. Hearing a number of perspectives of the same event and weaving it together to form a narrative helps "lower the misperception factor," as he calls it, which inevitably arises when using only one person's memory of a traumatic or highly intense event.



The experience of writing the 7th Infantry chronicles had a personal effect on McManus. "It changed my perspective as a historian, as a person," he says. "This was more personal and more real. A historian has to be detached. It's easier to do that when the events happened decades before you were born versus events that are ongoing."

Soldiers of all ages have told McManus of combat experiences that they haven't shared with anyone else, even those closest to them. He has heard from many family members who, after having read one of his books, often feel as though they know their relatives better. One daughter decided to posthumously write a biography of her father after reading McManus' account of him. She recently sent him a copy of her work.

That is extremely gratifying for McManus; it may outshine reporting to millions of television viewers whether the last hit was a foul ball or a double.

"I'd much rather be doing this," McManus says, smiling. "This is a dream job for me."

McManus currently is working on his 10th book, "September Hope: Operation Market Garden," the story of the failed Allied attempt to break through German lines in occupied Netherlands at the end of World War II.

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## Classroom Management Resources

Take a look at these online resources for ideas about handling classroom issues:



--[Five tips for dealing with gadgets in the classroom](#)

--[What not to do in class](#)

--[Tricks for learning students' names](#)

--[Getting the Most From Your Students \(blog\)](#)

## Curators' Teaching Professors to Share at Annual Summit

Missouri S&T Curators' Teaching Professors will again share with the campus on topics related to teaching and learning during the fall semester.

In 2011, the topic is *Tac(k)tical Teaching: Strategies for Success in the Millennial Classroom*.

The meetings will be held at noon on the following Wednesdays:

- Sept. 14, St. Pat's Ballroom A
- Oct. 19, St. Pat's Ballroom A
- Nov. 9, St. Pat's Ballroom C

Lunch will be provided. Make your reservation by contacting [CERTI](#) today!

# Three S&T Faculty Honored

The University of Missouri system bestowed its highest award for excellence, the President's Award, to three Missouri S&T instructors. They were honored at an awards dinner in June with the University Board of Curators.



The award-winners are:

- [Klaus Woelk](#), associate professor and assistant chair of chemistry, winner of the Innovative Teaching Award for redesigning introductory chemistry courses to include discussion boards, student response devices, online testing and homework, and the ability to communicate with the instructor through text messaging during class.

The Innovative Teaching Award recognizes an outstanding teacher who uses innovative

teaching methods, including electronic resources, social media or experiential activities.

- [Mohamed Rahaman](#), professor of materials science and engineering, winner of the Inter-Campus Collaboration Award for his work with Dr. B. Sonny Bal, associate professor of orthopedic surgery at the University of Missouri-Columbia.

Rahaman is also director of the Center for Bone and Tissue Repair and Regeneration. The Inter-Campus Collaboration Award is presented to faculty members who promote successful collaboration across two or more campuses.



- [Rick Stephenson](#), professor of civil,



architectural and environmental engineering and assistant department chair for graduate affairs, winner of the Cross-Cultural Engagement Award for his work with Engineers Without Borders.

This award is presented to a faculty member with demonstrated success in promoting cross-cultural activities or understanding through classroom or

student services activities.

*Information provided by Missouri S&T Communications.*

## Five S&T projects receive VPAA mini-grant funds

Five educational research projects developed by Missouri S&T faculty will be funded in 2011-2012 as part of a mini-grant program co-sponsored by the Office of the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs and the Center for Educational Research and Teaching Innovation (CERTI).

The Academic Affairs office is providing \$20,512.50 in funding for the projects. In total, eight grant proposals were submitted, with requests of more than \$39,000 in funding.

The purpose of the program is to recognize excellence in teaching research, and highlight pedagogical practices that improve the quality of instruction in undergraduate and graduate programs.

The funded projects are:

- **Evaluation of a Hybrid Problem-Based and Just-in-Time Inductive Teaching Method Examples for Risk Analysis Instruction**, Katie Grantham, Kellie Grasman, Ryan Hutcheson and Jeff Thomas, \$7,500 in funding with a matching grant from the engineering management and systems engineering department.

- **Development of Student-Produced Short Educational Videos for Use in a Chemical Engineering Thermodynamics Course**, Douglas Ludlow, \$5,950 in funding with \$1,000 travel funding provided through the chemical and biological engineering department.



# “Did I Miss Anything Important in Class Last Week?”



How many times have you heard this question from your students, or, the related corollary: “Will this be on the test?”

If comments like these make you want to pull your hair out, how about considering a short survey on the first day of class to help students buy in to deeper learning rather than simply working to “get a grade.”

Here are the questions for your students:

**Thinking of what you want to get out of your college education and this course, which of the following is most important to you?**

1. Acquiring information
2. Learning how to use information and knowledge in new situations
3. Developing skills to continue learning after college

**Which of these three learning goals do you feel that you could most confidently make progress on by yourself, outside of class?**

1. Acquiring information
2. Learning how to use information and knowledge in new situations
3. Developing skills to continue learning after college

**Which of these learning goals do you feel that you could most confidently make progress on by working in class with peers and the instructor?**

1. Acquiring information
2. Learning how to use information and knowledge in new situations
3. Developing skills to continue learning after college

Typical responses from students show that most 1) want to develop skills they can continue learning after college, 2) can acquire information (facts, principles and concepts) on their own outside of class, and 3) need instructors and peers in class to help them learn how to use information and knowledge in new situations.

Helping students understand that their class time will give them opportunities to learn how to use information and knowledge in new situations, rather than simply be a time for information dissemination, will help create buy-in to class attendance as well as deeper learning.

For more ideas on classroom strategies that promote active learning, go to: <http://certi.mst.edu/teachsupport/activelearning.html>

Questions taken from the article, “First-Day Questions for the Learner-Centered Classroom,” Sept. 2008, *National Teaching and Learning Forum*

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•Development, Assessment and Implementation of Metrics to Improve Innovative Thinking Through Project-Based Design Courses, Shun Takai and Ashok Midha, \$5,400 in funding with \$1,200 travel funding provided through the mechanical and aerospace engineering department.

•Pedagogical Improvements for Introductory Geology Lab for Engineers, Leslie Gertsch and David Rogers, \$1,100 in funding.

•Using Radio Controlled Toys to Incorporate Experience into Teaching Construction Operations, Eric Showalter, \$562.50 in funding with a matching grant from the civil, architectural and environmental engineering department.

“The panel was pleased with the quality of the proposals submitted to the RFP for educational research,” said Bob Schwartz, vice provost for Academic Affairs. “Scholarship in this area is important to facilitate student success and the achievement of institutional goals regarding enriching the student experience.

“We hope to fund a similar initiative next year,” he added.

In addition to Schwartz, members of the review panel included Harvest Collier, vice provost for Undergraduate Studies, and CERTI team members.

Results of the research will be shared with the campus at the Missouri S&T Teaching and Learning Technology Conference well as at various CERTI events.

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