The Academic Resource Center, formerly called the Academic Support Center, is the home for the many services, workshops and courses that support undergraduates in their pursuit of academic excellence. Here in Arts and Sciences, our philosophy is that every student can attain the academic goals they put forth when they garner the right resources to cause their own success. With that in mind, the Academic Resource Center offers an array of tutorial services to fulfill a variety of student needs in writing, math, course preparation, and study skills. The Academic Resource Center works in conjunction with the Advising Center, the Writing Center, the Math Assistance Center, Disability Resources and Services and other student services on campus to offer the best approach to each student’s needs. Academic counseling and study groups offer further support. Dr. Ron Brown, Assistant Dean and Director of the Academic Resource Center, shares: “Our staff of advisors list backgrounds in counseling, curriculum and instruction, career and personal development. This is a great service for students desiring to get more from their academic experience and as is always the case, we are constantly revising and enhancing our programs to meet their diverse needs.”

Starting this January, we welcome students to visit our new, state-of-the-art Academic Resource Center located in the Gardner Steel Center, right in the middle of campus: http://www.umc.pitt.edu/tour/tour-firstmap.html.
My name is Dr. Regina Schulte-Ladbeck and I am the new Associate Dean for Undergraduate Studies, filling the shoes of Associate Dean Patty Beeson, who is now the Vice Provost for Graduate Studies. We wish Patty the very best in her new endeavor, and I am thrilled to take on the challenge of continued excellence in undergraduate education. As both a professor and an administrator, my commitment is to actively engage students in the critical thinking skills, research, and scholarship that will prepare them for success.

This fall marks our inaugural leap into Learning Communities. Learning Communities are clusters of small groups of students enrolled into thematic blocks of classes. We offered three Learning Communities in the Sciences and one each in Contemporary Culture, American Society, and the Arts. We are pleased to report that the Learning Communities have been met with great success. The faculty mentors have received overwhelmingly positive student feedback: students report that the transition from high school to college has been easier
and that the Learning Community instructors are accessible and engaging. (more on page three)

Starting next term, we invite you and your son or daughter to visit the Academic Resource Center (formerly known as the Academic Support Center) in its brand new headquarters, conveniently located in the middle of campus in the Gardner Steel Center. This move represents our serious commitment to offer a centralized place for the tools that every student needs to achieve their greatest potential. Please let your son or daughter know about this important resource and stop by the Academic Resource Center on your next campus visit to witness their new facility and committed staff.

October was a month of celebration here in Arts and Sciences. The Psychology Department had its 100th birthday, celebrating with a well-attended open house of faculty, staff, students, and alumni. The Office of Experiential Learning hosted its annual OEL Fair, while developing their second year of First Experiences in Research. First Experiences in Research are opportunities for freshmen to work one-on-one with faculty on scholarly research in the humanities, social sciences and natural sciences. If you are the parent of a freshman, we invite your son or daughter to sign up for this experience. Lastly, thanks to the many parents and family members who took the time to meet with our Assistant Deans and staff at the Family Open House on October 22 – we hope that you enjoyed the rest of the weekend's activities.

As we approach the end of Fall Term, students may need various forms of assistance – please encourage your son or daughter to take advantage of the student services that make the University of Pittsburgh a place of support and encouragement – send your son or daughter to Thackeray Hall and we will be glad to direct them to appropriate assistance. With questions or concerns about their Midterm Progress Reports, we encourage students to meet with faculty and make the plans to complete the term in good standing.

Lastly, it is with pleasure that we unveil a new design for this parent and family newsletter, redesigned to offer you greater content and a better look. We hope you enjoy it, and please contact Jen Saffron with your comments, ideas, and questions at jsaffron@fcas.pitt.edu.

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FRESHMEN MIDTERM PROGRESS REPORTS

By this time, your son or daughter’s Midterm Progress Report should be sitting on your kitchen table, waiting for them. Approximately 45 courses, each with high freshmen enrollment, are slated to receive Midterm Progress Reports. Midterm Progress Reports give students an opportunity to assess their progress – H for Honors, S for Satisfactory, and U for unsatisfactory. If your son or daughter receives a U, s/he is encouraged to speak with: the instructor for that course, their Advisor, and a staff member from the Academic Resource Center. We encourage students to use the Thanksgiving Break to review their Midterm Progress Report and plan for academic success.

DECEMBER GRADUATION

Congratulations to those graduating this December, and congratulations to the families who supported them all the way! Arts and Sciences Undergraduates Studies will host a December graduation reception for the graduates and their families on the evening of December 18th. In mid-November, invitations will be mailed to those who have applied for December graduation.

Did you know – all full-time undergraduate students who receive a 4.0 at the end of the term will receive a $50 gift certificate to the Book Center, courtesy of the Dean's Office!

CLASSIC CLIPS

The University of Pittsburgh is home to renowned faculty from across the Arts and Sciences disciplines, committed to excellence in undergraduate teaching. Arts and Sciences showcases methodologies in undergraduate teaching through our Classic Clips – a growing series of videos that highlight individual professors and their approaches to fostering rich undergraduate learning. From biology to economics, professors share personal insights into their pedagogy in this engaging series of 3 – 4 minute clips. Visit with these remarkable minds and view our classrooms in action at:

**LEARNING COMMUNITIES**

This fall, approximately 100 freshmen enrolled into Learning Communities, a new endeavor in the Arts and Sciences whereby freshmen self-select into blocks of classes, thus establishing a smaller community of learners within the larger University. These nine or ten-credit blocks include a Freshman Studies course, which is a one-credit course designed to teach students how to navigate academics and college life. Each Learning Community has a faculty member and undergraduate peer mentor that coordinate extracurricular activities to complement curricula. For instance, students in the Arts Learning Community attended the ballet *Dracula*, while students in the Sciences Learning Communities attended PittCon 2004, a cutting-edge conference on the latest research developments in the sciences. These types of experiences assist the students in acclimating to academics, new friends and colleagues, and the city’s rich cultural life.

A major outcome of the Learning Communities has been that students develop connections much more quickly. In recognizing that they are not alone, students have bonded around discussions of critical class topics, formed study groups and established relationships with their faculty.

Dr. Laura Dice, Assistant Dean and Director of Freshmen Programs, states: “We are thrilled with the way that our Arts and Sciences Learning Communities are connecting our freshmen to their education and to one another in dynamic and exciting ways. These students have made the transition from high school to college smoothly and successfully.” About her daughter’s Learning Community experience, mom Judy Wertheimer wrote to us: *Sarah has had a wonderful experience and we are very grateful that such an opportunity has been provided at the University of Pittsburgh. She is enjoying the classes, finding instructors to be stimulating and has found a group of friends among the students in her classes. I wanted not only to thank you, but to urge you to continue to provide an opportunity for integrated learning with a small cohort of students. We are pleased that the Learning Communities have met such success.*

**SUMMER SESSIONS**

Arts and Sciences is developing a comprehensive array of 2005 Summer Sessions course offerings. Now is the perfect time to plan ahead to take advantage of what Summer Sessions have to offer: immersion in a single course, smaller class sizes, getting ahead/catching up, concentration in a difficult course, or exploration of an elective. Pair a summer course with employment/internship plus Western Pennsylvania’s bucolic settings and make a summer experience complete! Starting in mid-January, the Summer Sessions schedule will be at: [http://www.pitt.edu/~summer/](http://www.pitt.edu/~summer/), with Course Descriptions at: [http://www.fcas.pitt.edu/course_descriptions/BrowseCourses.html](http://www.fcas.pitt.edu/course_descriptions/BrowseCourses.html).

Registration for Summer Sessions begins on February 14 – students may register with their Advisors.

**THE OFFICE OF EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING** hosted their annual Fair, October 18 – 22. Over 900 students visited OEL to learn from their peers about undergraduate research opportunities, academic internships, and other ways to integrate and apply their liberal arts education.

**THE PSYCHOLOGY DEPARTMENT**, one of Arts and Sciences largest departments, had its 100th anniversary celebration on October 22 in their beautiful offices in Sennott Square. Students, faculty, and alumni mingled, sharing their research and career interests over great food.

**ARTS AND SCIENCES** welcomed families to the annual family open house on Friday, October 22, as part of Freshmen Family Weekend! Thanks to all who visited with us in Thackeray Hall – it was our pleasure.

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*Chris and Sue Martin, Psychology ’67*