YOUNGMEYER ESTATE GIVES RESEARCHERS ACCESS TO FLINT HILLS PROPERTY

BY CHERYL MILLER

Earl and Terri Youngmeyer so loved their Flint Hills tallgrass prairie property that they wanted to preserve it forever. Their estate plan giving WSU faculty access to the property to study its ecology, biology and geology allows the advancement of their desires.

“The land, about 4,600 acres in Elk County, had been in the Youngmeyer family for many years,” said Mike Lamb, WSU Foundation vice president for planned giving. “In addition to maintaining a ranching operation, the Youngmeiers wanted to conserve the property as native prairie in perpetuity.”

The Youngmeyer Trust retains ownership of the land. Wichita State faculty eagerly anticipate activities that will fulfill the Youngmeiers’ vision of protecting this portion of the tallgrass prairie.

A SEA OF ENDLESS POSSIBILITIES

In mid-September, Greg Houseman and Mary Liz Jameson, biological sciences; Will Parcell, geology; and Matt Kraushar, WSU field station manager, took a tour of the Youngmeyer Ranch. The group spent approximately four hours on the property, exploring, discussing and brainstorming ideas.

It was especially important for the biologists to see the land during the growing season so they could assess the grassland quality as well as begin a visual inventory of plant species. And the prairie did not disappoint.

“I was really excited when we drove in through the gate and saw the grassland on the top. That was in really good shape,” said Houseman. “I was encouraged that they (the managers) are trying to shift some of their practices to reduce their stocking, not burn the whole ranch every year and annually leave some areas ungrazed. It’s being managed for cattle and a variety of wildlife.”

In areas recently burned, big bluestem — the emblem of the tallgrass prairie — towered above flowering blazing star and lead plant. Ecologists consider these three plants indicator species because they grow only in good quality prairie. Pitcher’s sage, cardinal flower and Leavenworth eryngo brightened the fog-enveloped prairie, interspersed with Indian grass, switch grass and side-oats grama grass.

The WSU group saw limited amounts of invasive species such as sercic...
lespedeza, eastern red cedar and hedge trees. Left unattended, these plants can take over large amounts of native prairie.

As they toured the property, the scientists talked about potential class and research activities based upon what they were seeing.

As he visually surveyed the landscape, Parcell, a geologist, identified the property’s west side ridgeline as formed during the Permian age. He determined the east side of the property was formed during the Pennsylvanian age.

“You can see the soil horizon along the top,” said Parcell. “We could do a soil profile and then look at the bedrock. Students in sedimentology, stratigraphy and field methods classes could measure and describe the rocks along the slopes and in the stream beds.

“There might also be possible class projects for students in soils, drainage patterns, streams and springs,” Parcell said. “They could do a lot of soil sampling and field mapping, as well as hydrology and sedimentology activities.”

In addition to the miles of limestone outcroppings and tallgrass prairie on the property, there are also streams, marshes and cavelike areas. One site with an underground stream and a large exposed pool intrigued Parcell and Jameson, an entomologist.

Parcell said the site was likely created when the limestone, a soft rock, allowed the formation of underground channels that transported groundwater to the pool as its end source. The limestone itself dissolved and reprecipitated at the pool, creating a material known as travertine, often found in caves.

“Travertine beetles were discovered in Kansas last year, in Elk County,” Jameson, a scarab beetle expert, said. “This is the right kind of habitat for them.”

Together, Parcell and Jameson started brainstorming a project that would combine biology and geologic mapping.

“By examining the geology and plants and animals associated with former caves,” said Jameson, “we can examine population structures using organismal and molecular methods, in addition to geological mapping.”

“There might be some bedrock control on the distribution of travertine beetles,” Parcell said. “Possibly mapping the rock types and hunting for travertines on this and surrounding land could narrow down the search for additional locations of the beetle.”

“It could also result in publications,” said Jameson.

Because the travertine beetle is a newly discovered species in Kansas, students researching it and its natural history would be contributing to the knowledge and publication base in a significant way.

In considering the entire property’s features, Jameson was excited about the possibilities for students.

“We could do some seasonality studies like those we do at Gerber,” she said.

The research projects Jameson leads at WSU’s Gerber Reserve focus on the spatio-temporal dynamics of fish species in prairie streams.

“These kinds of studies assist in our understanding of response to drought and climate change,” Jameson said. “Prairie streams are perfect models for this change because of their tendency to be intermittent in the summer.”

The possibility of using the Youngmeyer Ranch in his prairie restoration course interested Houseman. His students gain practical, career-preparing experience by selecting a site, gathering historical information, developing species lists and making a site assessment. At
At one time, 140 million acres of tallgrass prairie covered North America. Pioneers wrote to their families back east and described the region as an endless sea of grass. Yet, once plows broke the sod, settlement diminished this unique ecosystem to less than 4 percent of its former size. The largest amount of the remaining original prairie, approximately 4 million acres, is now found in the Flint Hills.

Tallgrass prairies are approximately 80 percent grasses and 20 percent forbs (native broadleaf plants that recycle minerals back to the soil surface for use by grasses). However, nearly 80 percent of all native tallgrass plant material is found below the soil, as plant roots may grow to 15 feet underground. In a large, healthy prairie, 40-60 species of grasses and 300 or more species of forbs may exist. This vast plant diversity is possible because of the varying soil types, gradients in moisture and land slopes that create plant community niches, and disturbances such as fire and animal activities.

Sources: Kansas Biological Survey; National Park Service; The Nature Conservancy-Kansas.
BY TRAVIS GILLESPIE

As Wichita State University’s Elliott School of Communication (ESC) celebrates its 25th anniversary, Matthew Cecil is celebrating the start of his second year as director. His tenure began just as Wichita State embarked on a new era of its own, and he’s positioned the ESC to be the national model for experience-based learning in communication education.

Good communication skills are an asset in any career, and writing, thinking, speaking and technology are taught in all ESC courses. The program offers undergraduate and graduate degrees in communication with emphasis areas in electronic media, integrated marketing communications, journalism and strategic communication.

The Elliott School has been an innovation leader in experiential learning for 25 years, and other schools are beginning to realize that a model like Wichita State’s is the best way to teach and learn communication.

“It’s something that the industry is beginning to catch on to,” Cecil said. “There’s a lot of money out there trying to change the inertia of big institutions to do what the ESC has already done. It’s something our students take for granted.”

REASONS TO CELEBRATE

Most universities treat communication as two separate disciplines: communication studies (rhetorical, interpersonal, etc.) and mass communication (journalism, marketing, etc.). Having integrated both elements into one program makes the Elliott School ahead of the times. Other institutions tried to combine programs in the past and failed — now that the world is multimedia focused, many see the need to try again. They’re taking a close look at the Elliott School’s success.

One big advantage the ESC has over other programs is its urban location and relationship with the community.

“I can tell you from my own experience how much other schools wish they were in a media market like Wichita,” Cecil said. “Our connection here provides students with opportunities for experiential learning and sets us apart from other programs.”

Traditional communication education is an exercise in simulating reality. Students learn lessons by book and lecture, then they practice...
in imaginary work scenarios. The lucky ones tackle the job market after graduation armed with a few bylines from their student newspaper.

ESC’s experiential approach is the core of a communication student’s education at Wichita State — an approach supported by faculty that are remarkable for their significant professional careers, nationally recognized research and deep ties to the industry. Cecil cited two examples of outstanding faculty from the school’s premier experience-based course, Kevin Hager and Amy DeVault, co-instructors of the Flint Hills Media Project (FHMP).

Before he was recruited to the Elliott School, Hager was an executive producer at KWCH-TV with more than 25 years of experience in television broadcasting, photojournalism, editing, writing and producing. He’s won numerous honors, including a national Edward R. Murrow award. DeVault came to WSU from The Wichita Eagle, where she worked as a visual journalist and front-page designer. She has taught journalism at a high school level and, as a certified master journalism educator, is active in scholastic journalism, presenting papers to the Broadcast Educators Association and the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, where she serves as teaching chair of the Visual Communication division.

“Amy and Kevin have taken on this project where our students cover a live event and do what Amy calls ‘mob reporting.’ To me, they are a perfect example of professional faculty who bring not only the skills, but the experience and know-how to pull it off,” Cecil said. “Our students tell us that the class is a life-changing experience — we’d like to replicate that in all of our project courses.”

**Opportunities**

Under Cecil’s leadership, the school is focused on expanding its hands-on approach.

As in the Flint Hills Media Project, instructors work closely with students, often on real projects for real clients — in FHMP, students create media for the nonprofit Symphony in the Flint Hills. Project-based courses are an important part of the curriculum, which was recently changed to give students more flexibility to participate in at least two projects before graduation.

Students also have opportunities to intern with local communication companies and put their skills to work for real employers with high expectations, and a position has been created to facilitate opportunities for students. Instructor Eric Wilson is the new director of outreach, with responsibility for event planning, student recruitment and internship development activities.

“Nothing is more rewarding for me as a teacher than to see a student land a great internship or a really good job,” Wilson said. “Communication is a broad and dynamic field, and employers seek out Elliott School students and graduates.”

One of those recent graduates is Trace Hughes, who works as a copywriter for Tulsa-based ad agency Brothers & Co. and describes himself as a product of the Elliott School.

“I had no idea what copywriting was until I talked to Eric Wilson,” he said. “He said I had a raw talent, and that I needed to develop it. With his help and through the connections he’s helped me make, that’s what I’ve been doing for the past two years.”

**Growth and change**

With growth at Wichita State, the Elliott School is preparing to meet the needs of students from all disciplines. Notable is COMM 111, Public Speaking, a course that most students take early in their college careers. Cecil has already hired five new instructors and graduate teaching assistants this semester to cover increased freshman enrollment.

Three of the new lecturers are recent Elliott School graduates: Ken Ward and Taylor Dietterich both finished the master’s program this May; Michelle Dreiling finished hers a year ago. Madeline McCullough was hired to teach full time in the integrated marketing program, and Sam Maurer has been recruited from Emporia State to work as an instructor and assistant director of debate.

Another change is the Elliott School’s new laptop requirement: Starting this semester, all communication students enrolled in core classes will be required to own a laptop and bring it to class daily. Faculty have been issued laptops as well.

The change is expected to set a new professional standard for the Elliott School, and having individual laptops will allow students to focus on mastering the art of storytelling while also catering to the mobile nature of modern communication.

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IN MEMORIAM

Randy Brown, 73, died July 23. A senior fellow of communication, Brown was a Pulitzer Prize winning journalist and served more than 20 years at The Wichita Eagle as the editor of the executive sports and editorial pages. He also worked as senior editor, managing editor and “Live at Five” anchor at KAKE-TV, the Wichita ABC affiliate. He served as the executive director of the Kansas Sunshine Coalition for Open Government, pushing for transparent government and improved open record laws. Memorials may be made to The Kansas Sunshine Coalition for Open Government, c/o Elliott School of Communication, Wichita State University, 1845 Fairmount, Wichita, KS 67260, or The American Cancer Society, 330 S. Main St. #100, Wichita, KS 67202.

Orren Dale, died April 28. He joined the School of Social Work in 2007 and retired at the end of the Fall 2013 semester.

Wayne Dunning, 83, died April 26. He was a retired professor of administration of justice and reserve officer of the Wichita Police Department. Memorials have been established with Cornerstone Bible Church, 2535 N. Amidon, Wichita, KS 67204 and the Kansas Humane Society, 3313 S. Hillside Wichita, KS 67220.

Kathryn Griffith, 91, died July 31. Retiring in 1993, she taught political science courses and served five years as department chair. She also served as the university’s budget director under President Harry Corbin and played a key role in lobbying for admission to the state university system.

Tony Gythiel, 83, died May 15. At WSU, he taught medieval literature and history. In 2008, St. Vladimir’s Orthodox Theological Seminary granted him an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree during an academic convocation held at St. George Orthodox Christian Cathedral. Familiar with 13 languages, he was uniquely suited for the difficult work of translating theological-historical works about Eastern Christianity. Contributions may be made to the WSU Foundation, 1845 Fairmount, Wichita, KS 67260-0002, to St. Vladimir’s Orthodox Theological Seminary, 575 Scarsdale Rd., Yonkers, NY 10707, or to Harry Hynes Memorial Hospice, 313 S. Market, Wichita, KS 67202.

Peter Sutterlin, 84, died Aug. 7. A retired professor of geology, he taught 16 years at Wichita State. He was also a bass singer with many vocal groups, performing everywhere from local nursing homes to Carnegie Hall. Memorials may be made to the Canadian Cancer Society, 55 St. Clair Ave. W., Suite 500, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M4V 2Y7.

“We’ve got all the advantages here,” Cecil said. “A faculty that believes in experiential learning, a community that understands it and an administration that rewards it. We’ve got all the pieces to make this the premier experiential communication program in the country.

“We’ve already bucked the trend, and I think we’re going to continue to grow.”

Another one of Cecil’s goals is to make Elliott Hall more of a home away from home for his students, so a new student lounge and flexible learning spaces are a priority. Over the summer, the ESC used a $50,000 gift from Wichita ad agency Sullivan Higdon & Sink to create a new flexible learning space; a laptop-ready classroom with movable furniture and modern technology. It’s a professionally designed, student-friendly classroom of the future.
Josh Barkan, English, was named runner-up for the Grace Paley Short Fiction Prize for his collection of stories, “Mexico.” It was also named runner-up for the Juniper Fiction Prize, awarded by the University of Massachusetts Press-Amherst. His story, “The Kidnapping” was named winner of the United Kingdom’s Lightship International Short Story Prize.

Michael Birzer, community affairs, was a guest on NPR’s “All Sides with Ann Fisher” for discussion of the militarization of the American police stemming from the unrest in Ferguson, Missouri. The program was broadcast from Columbus, Ohio, and a recording can be found at wosu.org. Birzer was also interviewed by local NPR affiliate KMUW about his new book, “Racial Profiling: They Stopped me Because I’m ----,” a report on two years of field research talking with minority citizens about their experiences with racial profiling. That story can be found at kmuw.org.

The Center for Community Support and Research has expanded its services to include public health initiatives. The other service areas include leadership development, organizational capacity building, community-based consulting, research and evaluation and behavioral health initiatives.

Janelle Darr and Bob Rozzelle, LAS Advising Center, gave a talk “PASS: The Class,” which was selected as the best presentation at the annual Kansas Academic Advising Network conference. All new NCAA athletes at WSU are required to take the course designed to promote optimum academic performance.

Amy DeVault, communication, and Cheryl Miller, LAS Dean’s Office, were winners in the 2014 National Federation of Press Women Communications Contest. DeVault won third place for page design, magazine, and honorable mention for posters, billboards and banners.

Miller received an honorable mention for audiovisuals. All three entries won first place in their respective categories in the 2014 Kansas Professional Communications Contest.

Natalie Grant, social work, and Rhonda Lewis, psychology, have been selected to serve as 2014-15 Service-Learning Faculty Fellows. In conjunction with the student involvement and campus life departments, Grant and Lewis will be responsible for helping to create a vision for service learning at WSU, developing partnerships with community-based agencies, engaging students and faculty in applied service learning opportunities with community-based agencies and evaluating the impact of the service-learning projects.

Kerry Jones, English, was a finalist for the 2014 Autumn House Press Fiction Award for her story collection “The Ghosts in the Glen.”

Rhonda Lewis, psychology, is recipient of the 2014 HT Sims Excellence in Education Award presented by the Wichita chapter of the NAACP.

Mel Kahn, political science, and student Jonathan Piat presented their paper “The Discharge Petition as an Effective Legislation Tool” at the Northeast Political Science Association’s annual meeting in Boston. It is based on the Glickman Papers housed in the Wichita State University Libraries Special Collections and University Archives. Kahn continues to serve on the Kansas Democratic Party’s State Committee.

Gayle Martin, Hugo Wall School of Public Affairs, was named Institute Director of the Year by the International Institute of Municipal Clerks.

Lisa Overholtzer, anthropology, received a Hunt Postdoctoral Fellowship from the Wenner Gren Foundation. The one-year award is designed to support young scholars in publishing significant works that will impact the development of anthropology. Each year, Wenner Gren awards a maximum of eight scholars. This year, the acceptance rate of
applications was 7 percent. During the 2015-16 academic year, Overholtzer will complete a monograph, “Empires at Home: The Materiality of Household Production and Consumption at Xaltocan, Mexico.”

The first cohort of Online Faculty Fellows include Kyoung Lee, social work; David McDonald, biological sciences; Lisa Overholtzer, anthropology; and Dan Close and Eric Wilson, both from communication. Jennifer Tiernan, communication, is co-chair of the group. The role of the fellows is to establish a culture of online education and help other faculty increase the quality and quantity of online courses offered at WSU.

Karen Countryman-Roswurm, social work, received the inaugural Pat Ayars Mentoring Award, given by the Wichita Business Journal’s 40 Under 40 program. She was chosen for her work as the executive director of the Center for Combating Human Trafficking and as an assistant professor of social work. In these capacities, she helps hundreds of youth who have been victims of human trafficking, and teaches and mentors social work professionals through the degree process, respectively.

Carolyn Shaw, political science, was elected to serve as vice president of the 6,500-member International Studies Association.

Nickolas Solomey, physics, was invited to give a public lecture, “Quarks Matter!” at the University of Birmingham School of Physics and Astronomy in Birmingham, England.

Sam Taylor, English, was featured on the PBS NewsHour Poetry Series.

**NEW FACULTY & STAFF HIRES**

TJ Boynton, English
Kaytie Brozek, LAS Advising Center
Casey Craig, mathematics
Jill Fisher, Fairmount Center for Science and Mathematics Education
Keith Gray, geology
David Groot, social work
Jeff Hayton, history
Brian Hepburn, philosophy
Steven Huprich, psychology
Eveline Kalomo, social work
Danielle Koupf, English
Matt Krauscher, biological sciences
Foudil Latiouli, physics
Samuel Mauer, communication
Madeline McCullough, communication
Elizabeth Mlotkiewicz, LAS Advising Center
Mathew Muether, physics
Rachel Safarik, mathematics
James Schwartz, philosophy
Catherine Searle, mathematics
Summer Steenberg, mathematics
Yumi Suzuki, community affairs
Alex Shvartsburg, chemistry
Andrew Swindle, geology

**EMERITI FACULTY**

H. Edward Flentje, emeritus professor, Hugo Wall School for Public Affairs

John J. Hutchinson, emeritus vice president for academic affairs and professor of mathematics
Dear alumni, faculty, staff and friends -

Wichita State University continues its rapid metamorphosis. As Tony Vizzini, senior vice president and provost, has said, the Innovation Campus is truly transformational. The Innovation Campus will create collision areas, where ideas are developed, and maker spaces, where patents and creative endeavors come to life, involving the greater Wichita community.

In this electric atmosphere, the faculty, staff and students of Fairmount College offer leadership and direction to the Innovation Campus, through human disease research, creation of the Applied Psychology Research Institute, the Center for Combating Human Trafficking and a proposed Center for Professional Ethics. Many more activities and projects are in design and will debut shortly.

Additionally, alumni are taking an active role in advancing the university’s and college’s mission and vision. The Fairmount College Advisory Committee is composed of LAS alumni, faculty and students. Alumni leadership provided by Mike James (political science, 1971) and John Morse (psychology, 1972) has been invaluable to the college and to the university as they both serve simultaneously on the WSU Foundation’s National Advisory Council. Under their leadership, we can report success in many areas of recruiting, fundraising, marketing, technology and internships. These activities were largely carried out by students who were rewarded with scholarships for completing projects to promote and improve Fairmount College. Indeed, the impact of this work has greatly enhanced the college’s future. New projects, along with those that carried over from last year, will be in motion this academic school year.

I remain grateful to all who make Fairmount College what we are today and what we will become. It is my pleasure to serve as your leader.

Sincerely,

Ron Matson, Dean

MATSON NAMED DEAN OF FAIRMOUNT COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS AND SCIENCES

Ron Matson, who has served as interim dean for the Fairmount College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at Wichita State University since July 2012, has been named dean of the college by Tony Vizzini, WSU provost and senior vice president.

“After careful consideration of the critical role that the Fairmount College of Liberal Arts and Sciences has in the successful attainment of Wichita State’s strategic goals, and in consultation with key constituencies, I have appointed Dr. Ron Matson as the dean of the college,” said Vizzini.

“I am enthused by Ron’s leadership as the interim dean and am looking forward to working with him and all of LAS to strengthen the role of the humanities, social sciences and the physical sciences and mathematics within our community and throughout the world we influence.

“His leadership over the past 2 1/2 years has allowed LAS to be well-positioned for its role as we advance the Innovation Campus. I look forward to his many contributions,” said Vizzini.