NSF instrumentation grant allows for strength testing and enhances student curriculum

The department of chemistry received a highly competitive Major Research Instrumentation grant from the National Science Foundation (NSF) for $149,940 to purchase a Dynamic Mechanical Analyzer (DMA). Three chemistry faculty members serve together at the helm of the grant — Dr. Kevin Miller, principal investigator, and Dr. Daniel Johnson and Dr. Rachel Allenbaugh, co-principal investigators. The DMA allows for the mechanical testing of polymeric films, fibers and liquid crystalline materials to determine if the mechanical strength of newly developed materials match or exceed those currently used in commercial products. The DMA provides the department with a full complement of instruments for polymer and materials characterization. The state-of-the-art instrumentation will also enhance curriculum development in the department of chemistry and the Institute of Engineering, and enhance the education of students who enroll in the new polymer and materials science track in chemistry.

Professor paves way for Kentucky's first National Historic Chemical Landmark

Dr. Bonmanna Loganathan, Murray State professor of chemistry, nominated Kentuckian William Kelly’s iron and steel making process to be approved by the National Historic Chemical Landmark program. Approval of the nomination led to the first such landmark in Kentucky. Kelly, who lived near Eddyville, invented a method of producing one of the most important materials of his day, refined iron. He experimented with refining at two sites near Eddyville, starting in 1847. His development was an important step toward the manufacture of malleable iron products such as wrought iron and high strength, wear-resistant steel. Subsequently, various jobs were created for millions all over the world from the steel industry. Competing English inventor, Henry Bessemer, received a U.S. patent for the process in 1856; however, Kelly appealed to the patent office, which recognized Kelly’s earlier work and he was awarded priority of invention in 1857. A dedication ceremony honoring Kelly’s work and Loganathan’s part in bringing it to light will be held at MSU on May 11; a similar ceremony will be scheduled in Eddyville later.

Racers stage strong comeback, nearly topple No. 1 seeded Old Dominion

The MSU men’s basketball program wrapped up its 28th consecutive winning season with a trip to the quarterfinals of the NIT, falling three points short to a strong Old Dominion team. The Racers were a whisker away from having their third 30-win season since 2010 and finished with the third best win total in the 90-year history of the program. MSU had the nation’s second-longest win streak (25) during the season and was the fifth in 67 seasons of OVC hoops to run the table 16-0. Murray State was nationally ranked at No. 24 in the USA Today poll and No. 25 by Associated Press. The Racers had the nation’s top road win total of 12 including a run of 11 straight that ended at ODU. Racer Nation said goodbye to a beloved trio of seniors (Jonathan Fairell, T.J. Sapp and Jarvis Williams), who won a total of 52 games in two seasons.

MSU tobacco policy begins with transition period

To create a healthier environment for the Murray State University community, MSU is joining universities across the country in becoming what is commonly referred to as “tobacco-free.” The university’s board of regents approved a tobacco policy at its quarterly meeting Feb. 27. The tobacco policy officially goes into effect on Aug. 5. To begin the transition toward the implementation of the tobacco policy on campus, some recommendations went into effect on March 15. The university is following LEED certification procedures with the specification that there will be no smoking within 25 feet of building openings and major air intake vents. Additionally, two campus locations have already been deemed tobacco-free zones.
Dr. Ramesh Gupta

Dr. Ramesh Gupta, professor and head of the toxicology department at MSU’s Breathitt Veterinary Center, authored a second edition of his textbook, *Handbook of Toxicology of Chemical Warfare Agents*. The new edition expands on the recent advances in the chemical field, including an overview of chemical weapons of mass destruction, explosives, the human respiratory system, brain injuries, testing methods and a case study of the Iran-Iraq war. Gupta’s first edition of the book was displayed in the rotunda of the United States Department of Defense as the only textbook of its kind.

**Presidential Lecture Series**

Meet the Press moderator Chuck Todd visited campus as the 2015 Presidential Lecture Series keynote speaker. During the lecture, Todd discussed the upcoming 2016 presidential election, generational political trends and his views on President Obama’s time in office, while also taking questions from the large audience that filled Lovett Auditorium.

**Reverse transfer agreements**

Murray State has formalized reverse transfer agreements with Henderson Community College, Hopkinsville Community College, Madisonville Community College, Owensboro Community and Technical College, and West Kentucky Community and Technical College. The agreement benefits students who transfer from one of the community colleges to Murray State before earning an associate’s degree. They will have an opportunity to pursue the associate degree from the community college they attend while working toward a baccalaureate degree from MSU.

**Shoe Tree third most romantic**

While the possibility of romance shouldn’t be a prime consideration in choosing which college to attend, it can be one of the most important outcomes of four years spent on a campus. It’s not unusual for students to find a significant other while pursuing a college degree, then follow on the heels of graduation with a marriage.

Murray State counts among its most cherished traditions the “Shoe Tree,” so named because each half of a married couple nails one of their shoes to it. While no one can say for sure when or how the tradition began, it lives on — even through a lightning strike that burned up the original tree. A replacement was quickly designated because love conquers all. And in a fitting nod to the celebration of Valentine’s Day, Murray State’s Shoe Tree was named in February third in the top 25 Most Romantic College Traditions by *College Ranker*.

**Weber selected as Learning by Giving Foundation inaugural scholar**

A pilot program that will advance the study of philanthropy by mentoring those who plan to teach it is being initiated by the Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy and the Learning by Giving Foundation. The 2015 Future Philanthropic Educator is Dr. Peter C. Weber, a 2014 doctoral graduate of the Lilly Family School of Philanthropy and an assistant professor and director of the nonprofit leadership studies program at Murray State. The pilot program director will mentor an emerging scholar, who will develop and teach a university-level experiential philanthropy course in which students grant $10,000 to local nonprofit organizations. Students from IU and MSU are learning together about local needs, philanthropic patterns and the nonprofit sector in both rural and urban contexts.

**Chris Thile recognized for musical accomplishments**

Musician Chris Thile was named the Outstanding Alumni in Fine Arts. A member of Punch Brothers, Thile is a mandolin virtuoso, composer and vocalist. No stranger to Grammy nominations and wins, Thile picked up the 2014 Grammy Award for Best Contemporary Instrumental Album for Bass and Mandolin (with Edgar Meyer). A child prodigy, Thile first rose to fame as a member of the Grammy Award-winning trio Nickel Creek. He also won a 2012 Grammy for Best Folk Album for *The Goat Rodeo Sessions*, recorded with cellist Yo-Yo Ma, violinist Stuart Duncan and bassist Edgar Meyer. As a soloist, Thile has released five albums. In a taped acceptance speech, Thile credited Murray State with influencing his identity as a musician.

**SROW conference hosted on campus**

Murray State hosted the annual SROW (Southern Regional Orientation Workshop) conference on campus March 27-29. SROW conferences are sponsored by NODA (Association for Orientation, Transition and Retention in Higher Education) and provide education, leadership and professional development in the fields of college student orientation, transition and retention. Murray State is in Region VI, which is one of the larger NODA regions. Approximately 1,800 attendees from more than 80 institutions in the region attended.

Dr. Ramesh Gupta

Patrick Newcomb 2013 MSU alumnus and professional golfer, extended his pro career to the Sunshine Tour in South Africa in January by taking his first-ever trip out of the U.S. The tournament featured some of the world’s best golfers.