The gift of technology

English Language Centre donates computers to Rwanda school

BY CHRIS REID

The Bulletin

The University of Manitoba’s English Language Centre has donated computers to a needy region of Africa.

Faith Preparatory Academy (FPA) in Butare, Rwanda received the computers from the U of M in July with the assistance of the African Mission Alliance. The African Mission Alliance runs two schools, one of which is FPA.

Today, one out of every four African children does not go to school. The African Mission Alliance’s goal is to ensure that every child has access to quality education. Children have the right to access an education that provides them with the tools needed to sustain an adequate standard of living when they grow up. The best way to ensure sustainable development of a community is to educate its children in a way that releases them to become responsible and able citizens.

Richard Iwabuchi, an instructor at the University of Manitoba’s English Language Centre, says the timing was perfect for this. “The timing was perfect for this,” Iwabuchi said. “The computers were donated to Faith Preparatory Academy. They would have otherwise been recycled here at the university. When we chose to donate the computers, we were in touch with the university’s Information Services and Technology (IST). IST wiped the computers and hard drives clean, and the next thing you know, they were headed to Rwanda.”

Iwabuchi said the computers had been a great success to the Faith Preparatory Academy. “The computer lab is in an area that didn’t have any computers before,” Iwabuchi said. “The timing was perfect for this.”

The English Language Centre is open to the opportunity of sending more computers to further expand technology at Faith Preparatory Academy. But next time, it won’t be generators inside the school, students are getting to use technology that had never before been introduced to them. “The computer lab is in an area of Africa that doesn’t have many resources. However, electricity is in the process of being installed, which will further benefit the students’ experience,” said Iwabuchi.

The English Learning Centre is responsible and able citizens.

The sounds of nature

Archives & Special Collections home to a wide collection of bird songs

Everyone has heard of the smash musical hits from the Canadian Music Hall of Fame. And of course, the Rock ‘n’ Roll Hall of Fame Museum. But the University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections is home to a spectacular display of unique sounds... of nature.

Manitoba’s Southern Interlake region – specifically the Balmoral District – is home to the farm of George and Catherine Theaxton. From 1975 to 1994, Catherine dedicated her life to finding true beauty in Manitoba’s nature through the everyday sounds of birds, insects, amphibians, and mammals. She has donated her audio collection to the university. Now the relaxing sounds of nature are available to the world.

Catherine has recorded approximately 125 species of birds, several species of squirrels, chipmunks, and red foxes. Hundreds of sounds of bees, wasps, grasshoppers and crickets also grace her audio collection.

Catherine developed a curiosity for the wildlife that inhabited their farm and wanted to record their sounds. On her own, she spent countless hours, days and years, even, learning the songs of birds by going on group nature tours and by purchasing over 150 albums, cassettes and CDs to learn from. Within the last 30 years, prior to retiring, Catherine purchased the recording equipment necessary and spent several years learning and practicing before attempting her first album recording in 1981. Since then, Catherine has recorded 8 albums.

Catherine, who spent three years at the University of Manitoba studying botany, geology and zoology, has come to know many of the birds’ habits over time. For example, the blue jay will mimic sounds of other birds.
In The News

University of Manitoba members are always making news – demonstrating the university’s impact on the community. Here’s a look at the stories and headlines that show how U of M faculty and staff impact the world around them.

An online solution for insomnia

New York Times, Maclean’s
August 10, 2009

Research into the effectiveness of treating insomnia with web-based programs has drawn the attention of the media, including the New York Times which recently produced a feature story examining U of M research on the subject. The U of M study, led by psychologist Norah Vincent, showed that 35 percent of those who completed the study’s online program described their insomnia as “much improved” or “very much improved.”

Adios, union!

CBC
August 10, 2009

A recent vote by Mexican migrant farm workers in Manitoba to leave their union had the media looking for some insight on labour issues. David Camfield, who teaches labour studies at the U of M, said the decision to decertify may be a setback for migrant workers whose rights do not equal those of other workers in Canada.

H1N1 in Aboriginal communities

Scientific American
August 12, 2009

The effect of the H1N1 virus on Aboriginal communities in Canada and around the world was the focus of a recent piece in esteemed science journal, Scientific American. The article quoted Dr. Ethan Rubinstein, an infectious disease expert at the University of Manitoba.

The air is electric

CBC, QOL Canada
August 13, 2009

The recent electrical storms that have been lighting up the skies of Manitoba have been the subject of some media attention, including the CBC, who looked to Kumar Sharma, professor of physics at the U of M, to explain how the storms work.

Headline News

• Manitoba studies plug-in hybrid impact on hydro grid

CBC, August 10, 2009 cites a joint research project between scientists at the U of M and Manitoba Hydro who are trying to determine how the increased use of electric powered hybrid vehicles will affect the province’s power supply.

• “Ethicist worried about rushed swine flu vaccine,” CITV, August 16, 2009, focuses on the concerns of University of Manitoba medical ethicist Dr. Arthur Schafer, who says the rush to produce a vaccine for H1N1 may be more dangerous than the virus itself.

Opening Dialogue About Globalization

Globalization is changing what people need to know, how they understand knowledge and how it is conveyed and produced. But the world is becoming more global, yet nations and cultural formations remain important. A month-long course at the University of Sao Paulo in Brazil is exploring the overlap between global, national, and transnational modes of thinking and organizing knowledge in the world today. The course is being taught through collaboration by Diana Brydon, director of the Centre for Globalization and Cultural Studies at the University of Manitoba, and Walkyría Monte Mór and Lynn Mário Menezes T. de Souza of the University of Sao Paulo.

Starting with theories of globalization, autonomy and community, the course considers some of the ways in which globalization is compelling a rethinking of knowledge and its relations to “the true and the good.”

Brydon notes: “The goal is to encourage students to think more critically and creatively about their place in the world and how they might meet the challenges that lie before us.”

By the end of the course, students should have a better understanding of how globalization studies and cultural studies are changing disciplinary and interdisciplinary modes of conducting research, how we learn and assess our knowledge, and how we employ it to understand and improve our world.

“Two recent UNESCO documents support my view that academic analysis must push policy beyond the guiding assumptions of the status quo—assumptions that literacy promotion can be a neutral project that does not necessitate more far-reaching institutional and philosophical changes,” Brydon explains.

She adds: “I call on those working within new and multimodal literacies to think about how best to place this work in closer dialogue with postcolonial development and globalization studies across the disciplines, the better to address the theoretical, pedagogical and social implications of these developments.”

Brydon will be returning to the University of Manitoba to teach another course on globalization beginning in September.

The course in Brazil was made possible through funding from Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada (DFAT).

The sounds of nature

She once witnessed a blue jay imitating the sound of a merlin to scare off a neighbouring robin. Here is a list of Catherine’s albums:

1981 “In Praise Of Spring...A Selection of Nature Sounds from the Southern Interlake Region of Manitoba”

1983 – “Meadowlark Music and Other Nature Sounds” (Thexton’s most popular album)

continued from page 1

The Bulletin can be viewed online at umanitoba.ca/bulletin

A Formal Good-bye

by Dale Barbour

One of the perks of being an editor is that you often have the opportunity to say good-bye when you leave the position. It’s normally a tradition that recognizes that in some small way you have provided the voice for the newspaper during your tenure and in that fashion formed a relationship with your readers, even if they’ve never met you and might not even know your name.

For my part, I’ve been with the Bulletin for just over eight years. In that position I’ve had the opportunity to meet a wide range of people, from faculty, to support staff, to administration, to students. The most interesting part of the job has been seeing how all these diverse groups of people work together to create the complete university experience. If I’ve provided a voice for the Bulletin, then I have to thank all the people who have given me something to say.

I’m leaving my position now to pursue graduate studies in history at the University of Toronto. Again, I have the people at the University of Manitoba to thank for that opportunity. Certainly, I owe the history faculty members at the university my thanks for inspiring me while I earned my undergraduate and master’s degrees. I owe the public affairs unit my thanks for helping me to juggle the task of being an editor and a student over the past eight years. And I owe the university as a whole my thanks, because I never could have made the decision to pursue graduate studies if I hadn’t so thoroughly fallen in love with the university experience while watching it play out before me every year that I have been here.

Thank you University of Manitoba, for being what you are.

Dale Barbour

The Bulletin

University of Manitoba

The Bulletin is the newspaper of record for the University of Manitoba. It is published by the Public Affairs department every second Thursday from September to June and monthly in December, July and August.

The Bulletin welcomes submissions from members of the university community. Submissions can include letters to the editor, columns, news briefs and story and photo suggestions.

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Issue Date: Sept. 24
Copy/advertising deadline: Sept. 17

Events
The Bulletin publishes notications on events taking place at the University of Manitoba or events that are of particular interest to the university community. There is no charge for running notices in the events column. Send event notices to: bulletin@umanitoba.ca

Advertising Policy

With the exception of advertisement from the University of Manitoba, ads carried in The Bulletin do not imply recommendation by the University for the product or service. The Bulletin will not knowingly publish any advertisement which is illegal, misleading or offensive to its readers. The Bulletin will also reject any advertisement which violates the university’s internal policies, equity/human rights or code of conduct.

The Bulletin can be viewed online at umanitoba.ca/bulletin
Events Listing
University of Manitoba

Bannatyne Campus
St. Boniface General Hospital and Research Centre

Fort Garry Campus

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 3
New Faculty Orientation Animal Care and Use Workshop
12:00-1:00 p.m., Room S210, Medical Services Bldg, Bannatyne Campus

For more information, contact: Denise Borowsks, Lab Animal Training Coordinator, Office of Research Services, 789-1966, Thursday, September 3.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 4
New Faculty Orientation Animal Care and Use Workshop
12:00-1:00 p.m., Room 210, Helen Glass Centre, Fort Garry Campus
For more information, contact, Denise Borowsks, Lab Animal Training Coordinator, Office of Research Services, 789-1960, Friday, September 4.

Viewpoint Policy
The University of Manitoba Bulletin welcomes submissions for Viewpoint from members of the university community. Unless otherwise discussed in advance with the editor, articles should range between 600 and 700 words and should address issues related to the university or higher education. Speeches related to issues of concern that do not comply with policy. Opinions expressed are those of the writer.

Letters Policy
The University of Manitoba Bulletin welcomes letters to the editor from readers about matters related to content in the Bulletin, the university or higher education. Letters must be original and addressed to the editor. Opinions expressed are those of the writer. The Bulletin does not publish anonymous letters. Please include your name, affiliation and phone number. Letters should be submitted to barboard@umanitoba.ca. The editor reserves the right to edit or reject any submission that does not comply with policy. Opinions expressed are those of the writer.

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Marcel A. Desautels Faculty of Music
The Faculty of Music hosts recitals and performances at Eva Clare Hall, located within the Faculty of Music building on Dafoe Road. Recitals and events are free unless otherwise noted.

SOMMA NIGHT JAZZ FEST
8 p.m., Thursday, August 20
Max Bell Centre

A world class jazz event. This year’s line up includes Marcus Printup, Jimmy Greene, Terreon Gully and Steve Kirby. Tickets cost $17 and are available on line at www.jazzwinnipeg.com, by phone at the Jazz Winnipeg office at 989-4694, and at McNally Robinson. Tickets will also be available at the door for $22. Bring your own lawnchair.

Music events
• Jazz on Wheels: Rossbrook House Summer Games, Wednesday, August 26, 5:00 PM, Rossbrook House, Ross Avenue at Sherbrook Street.
• Featuring the “Street Corner Symphony” led by our own Steve Kirby. Join in the fun for an evening of jazz entertainment performed by some of the students in the Bachelor of Jazz Studies Degree, as well as others!
• Jazz on Wheels: Sherbrook Street Festival, Saturday, September 12, Sherbrook Street at Westminster Avenue, Featuring the “Street Corner Symphony” led by our own Steve Kirby.

Join in the fun for some free jazz entertainment performed by some of the students in the Bachelor of Jazz Studies Degree, as well as others! This is the last Jazz on Wheels performance of the summer season.
• Jazz on Wheels is produced by Jazz Winnipeg and is generously supported by Canadian Heritage, Maxim Transportation Services, TD Canada Trust and the Music Performance Fund.

APPPOINTMENTS

Dr. Jason Peeler, PhD
Assistant Professor, Department of Human Anatomy & Cell Science, Faculty of Medicine
Dr. Peeler’s (PhD-Manitoba) primary research interests and expertise lie in the areas of clinical orthopaedics and applied gross anatomy. "The goal of my research program is to conduct evidence based clinical research that will significantly influence the daily treatments that are used to enhance musculoskeletal function".

In support of this research program, he holds appointments as a Research Associate with the David & Ruth Asper Research Centre located at the Pan Am Clinic, and the Manitoba Institute of Child Health. Prior to joining the Department of Human Anatomy and Cell Science at U of M, Dr. Peeler was on faculty in the Department of Kinesiology & Applied Health at the University of Winnipeg.

Dr. Francis Lin, PhD
Assistant Professor, Department of Physics and Astronomy
Faculty of Science
Dr. Lin joined the University of Manitoba in December 2008 after his postdoctoral research with Professor Eugene Butcher in the Department of Pathology at Stanford University School of Medicine. Dr. Lin completed his Ph.D. in Physics from the University of California-Irvine (2004), M.S. in Physics from the California State University-Fullerton (2001), and B.S. in Applied Physics from Beijing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics (1998).

Dr. Lin’s research group at the UM aims to achieve a quantitative and systematic understanding of immune cell trafficking in complex cellular microenvironments with relevance to immune responses and health problems. His team applies a highly interdisciplinary research approach that integrates microfluidic devices, mathematical modeling, and modern biological and immunological methods in their studies. Dr. Lin is also actively seeking collaborations with biomedical scientists to explore new applications of microfluidic systems in health science research.

The Bulletin publishes events involving the university community.
E-mail events to bulletin@umanitoba.ca or fax, 474-7631.
The deadline for the Aug. 20 Bulletin is Aug. 12 at 4:30 p.m.
Allergies subject of new book

Books by University Staff

BY DALE BARBOUR

A textbook used to be a pretty straightforward project. Line up the top professionals in the field, have them draw together the latest research into a concise book format, wait a set number of years and repeat. Times are changing.

Pediaetrics and immunoology professor Estelle Simons is in the thick of two projects which show how much the business of getting information to professionals is changing. She is serving as one of the principle editors on the seventh edition of Middleton’s Allergy: Principles and Practice and is a section editor for UpToDate, an online information resources for medical practitioners.

On the surface, Middleton’s Allergy sounds like a standard textbook. It’s been around for 30 years and the current version stretches out to 1,900 pages. While it started as an American book, the book has increasingly taken on an international flavour, drawing editors from Europe and Canada, thanks to Simons, for the 2009 version.

“In addition to my work as an editor the text has been revised. It’s a fairly comprehensive revision. We’ve added colour to the diagrams and pictures. The structure has also changed with chapters with colour adding to the readability of diagrams and pictures,” Simons said. “What it aims to do is be the authoritative textbook in the area of allergy immunology.”

“It really provides a perspective for people in our field: why we do what we do,” Simons said. “What’s important is that people can more easily navigate to the sections that interest them. And, of course, it’s online.”

While it started as an American book, the book has increasingly taking on an international flavour, drawing editors from Europe and Canada, thanks to Simons, for the 2009 version.

“The resource is primarily intended to be used in the field, with medical professionals tapping it to help with a diagnosis or to answer questions while making rounds in a hospital. And given that it is online, information can even be accessed through smart phones or Blackberries.”

UpToDate even video monitors how people use it at two sample sites, to provide suggestions on how they can make it faster,” Simons said. But having said that, it can’t provide the depth of information that something like Middleton’s Allergy can. It’s not intended to.

“Forums like Middleton’s Allergy have a dual purpose: to provide the depth of information that something like Middleton’s Allergy can. It’s not intended to.

“Middleton’s Allergy is something like a 21st century textbook,” Simons said. “I think it’s going to be in the future that books that don’t go in this direction will probably not be surviving. I don’t think that’s too strong a statement.”

Simons was drawn into UpToDate as the editor of the anaphylaxis section.

“I was able to choose the authors that I wanted and basically drew up a list, contacted people and we all set to work. I didn’t have a single person turn me down. People are aware of the resource, and the importance of the resource and are happy to contribute,” Simons said. There’s no print version of UpToDate. The chapters are short and concise and the information is updated almost instantly.

“Allergy: Principles and Practice was designed to be up to date as well. The chapters are short and concise and the information is updated almost instantly.

Estelle Simons is in the thick of two projects which show how much the business of getting information to professionals is changing.

increasingly providing linking points so that readers can more easily navigate to the sections that interest them.

And, of course, it’s online.”
Alumnus moves into Government House

Between 1979 and 1986, he served as a member of the City of Winnipeg’s Refugee Assistance Committee. “I just began volunteering my time to the community and soon enough I was involved more in politics than my professional work,” he said.

Lee is a member of the Manitoba Human Rights Commission and as of 1999 a member in the Order of Canada.

He helped develop Winnipeg’s Chianatown, was a board member for the University of Manitoba Alumni Association and in 2002 he received the Queen’s Golden Jubilee Medal.

In 2005 he retired as the Branch Head Chemist in charge of Winnipeg’s Industrial Waste Control Program for the City but is still co-owner of the Computer Avenue store in St. Vital, which he runs with his family.

Lee is Manitoba’s first Chinese-Canadian lieutenant-governor and he replaces John Harvard as the Queen’s representative in Manitoba. He will serve for about five years and moves into Government House in mid-September.

Although he will use his post to advocate for the blind, an issue dear to him, he also believes education should take a high priority.

“When people are better educated I find that they can deal with issues in life much better.”

OPAL goes live August 19, 2009

The Bulletin welcomes Classified Ads. The rate for ads is $5 for the first 45 words.

Classified Ads

Jane Barratt, PhD
Secretary General
International Federation on Ageing
Churchill Fellow

Active Ageing - The Global Opportunities

Dr. Barratt brings over 30 years experience in the health, community and aged care, and disability sectors, to the position of Secretary General of the International Federation on Ageing. She has a strong commitment to strengthening the roles and relationships between government, NGOs, academia and the private sector toward improving the quality of life of older people. This commitment has always been driven by her interest and passion in understanding the evolution of ageing issues and the corresponding public and private sector responses in different regions of the world. More recently Dr. Barratt has been a strong contributor to the international dialogue on how the social, cultural and physical environment can impact on the lives of older people. Adjunct research positions at Australian Universities serve to strengthen her interest in these areas, which include rural employment, the nexus between inclusion and marginalisation, the impact of the environment on older people and the rights of older people.

Tuesday, September 8, 2009

12:00 noon to 1:30 p.m.
Fréderic Gaspard Theatre (Theatre A)
Basic Medical Sciences Building
730 William Ave.

Following Dr. Barratt’s presentation all are invited to reconvene in S211 Medical Services Building 1:30 – 3:00 p.m.

www.umanitoba.ca/medicine/opal

Can we manufacture fuel from diatoms?

BY CHRIS RUTKOWSKI

The Bulletin

If Richard Gordon has his way, oil companies will stop drilling and turn to the sea for new sources of fuel.

Gordon and an international team of researchers have been theorizing about the possibility of bioengineering ocean-based microscopic plant life into sources of oil and gasoline.

He notes: “It may be possible to alter diatoms so they secrete oil droplets much the way a cow secretes milk. We envisage a diatom solar panel that secretes oil. We are excited by the possibility of bioengineering plant life into sources of oil and gasoline.”

The number of diatoms in the oceans is so huge, their decomposition is extremely significant in the development of oceanic sediments and the creation of carbon compounds on Earth.

Diatom shells are tiny, one-celled algae that float in huge numbers throughout the oceans and are thought to be a significant source of ancient oil deposits scattered around the globe. They each have a silica (glass) shell but also contain fat globules that can make up to 70 per cent of their volume. More than 200,000 species of diatoms have been identified in both freshwater lakes and the oceans, and even in damp areas within soil.

Dr. Bob McIlwraith, Chair of the Search Committee, Department of Human Anatomy and Cell Science, Faculty of Medicine, University of Manitoba, 730 William Avenue, 150 Basic Medical Sciences, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada R3E 3J7

Welcome Centre Open House
Tuesday September 1 @ 10:30am

FACULTY OF MEDICINE
Position: Assistant Professor
Position number: 08206
Start date: March 1, 2010 or as soon thereafter
Application deadline: October 1, 2009 and will continue until the position is filled.

FACULTIES OF MEDICINE & GRADUATE STUDIES
Position: Physician Assistant Education Program (PAEP)
Position number: 09778
Start date: October 5, 2009 or as soon thereafter as possible
Application deadline: Sept. 21, 2009
For information: Ms S Clarke, PAEP Program Director, and Dr. W Fleisher, Associate Dean, Medical Education, Office of Physician Assistant Studies, Faculty of Medicine, University of Manitoba, 912-770 Bannatyne Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3E 0Y5 Fax: 204 272 3080

FACULTY OF MEDICINE
Clinic in Brandon, MB
Position: Associate Professor
Position number: 09852
Start date: October 5, 2009
For more information on the OSI Clinic, visit: www.deerlodge.mb.ca/care/index.asp, For more information about the Department of Clinical Health Psychology, visit our website: umanitoba.ca/medicine/clinical_health_psych

UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA LIBRARIES
Position: Outreach Services Librarian/Section Head, Neil John Maclean Health Sciences Libraries
Position number: 09855-10062
Start date: January 1, 2010
Application deadline: September 21, 2009
For information: Ms Karen Adams, Director of Libraries, The University of Manitoba Libraries, Winnipeg, MB, RST 2N2

Robert Boasnish Leadership Award
Ken Bowman Research Award
John Forster Distinguished Lecturer Award
Vincenzo Panagia Distinguished Lecture Award
Arnold Naismark Young Investigator Award (For Post-Doctoral Fellows)
Henry Friesen Young Scientist Award (For Post-Doctoral Fellows)

Can we manufacture fuel from diatoms?
Bringing Research to LIFE

In Brief

Deadline Soon

Under new Canadian law, anyone responsible for activities involving human pathogens or toxins must register their facility or laboratory – and the deadline to do so is approaching fast. The Human Pathogens and Toxins Act received royal assent in June 2009. It is designed to protect the health and safety of the public against the risks posed by human pathogens and toxins, while allowing for science and research progress.

The University of Manitoba must provide basic information to the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) no later than Sept. 21, 2009. The registration process involves two forms (Form 1 and Form 2) submitted to the PHAC with the required data collected from the university’s academic departments and researchers.

The Environmental Health and Safety Office will be completing Form 1 on behalf of the research community. If you use human pathogens or toxins your cooperation is urgently needed. Form 2 must be completed by each academic department or researcher, with entries from the principal investigators and/or supervisors.

The submission deadline is Aug. 31, 2009. Please submit forms to the Environmental Health and Safety Office at 191 Frank Kennedy Centre, on the Fort Garry campus.

The registration forms for providing the required information, in addition to instructions on their completion, are available at http://phac-aspc.gc.ca/ols-bsl/pathogen/guide-eng.php.


An all-natural fertilizer that’s dirt sheep

Researchers explore using sheep to provide fertilizer on organic farms

BY KATIE CHALMERS-BROOKS

Ask Heather Wilton about her flock of sheep and she’ll have something to say about each of their personalities. Kit Kat is the laid back one; Oobleck is never satisfied and Hummer is flighty. Silver has a quiet intelligence while Molly is more self-effacing. “She never gets into trouble,” Wilton gushes, like a proud mom.

The agricultural and food sciences student – and her baa’ing brood – are involved in new research that has sheep replacing faceless machinery on organic farms.

Besides being a lot more fun (as Wilton points out), using sheep to blend nutrients into the soil instead of gas-powered machinery could save organic farmers money and cause less damage to the environment.

To grow crops, farmers need nitrogen-rich soil. Conventional farmers simply buy nitrogen fertilizer and apply it to their land. But organic farmers must be fertilizer-free so they prepare their soil – about every three years – by growing legume crops like alfalfa and lentils that are good at fixing nitrogen from the air. Organic farmers then use tillage machinery to incorporate the legumes into the ground to provide nutrients for the next crop.

This method, dubbed the green manure concept, means they lose out on a harvesting season for the portion of their land where they’re prepping the soil.

An alternative now being studied at the University of Manitoba’s research station in Carman, Man., has sheep eating up a legume crop and leaving behind their nitrogen-rich manure, which nourishes the soil and doesn’t involve any unnatural emissions.

Not only would sheep be helping out with the harvesting process but they themselves would be harvested, and in turn provide farmers with additional income, says research technician Joanne Thiessen Martens. Farmers could sell sheep or lambs for meat or wool.

This option might be all the more appealing given current economic tough times. In November 2008, American market researcher The Hartman Group noted 45 per cent of consumers surveyed had stopped buying organic products or at least scaled back to save money.

"There is some interest among farmers in gaining some value from these legume green manure crops without sacrificing the nitrogen benefit,” Thiessen Martens says.

Research technician Joanne Thiessen Martens and her colleagues began grazing sheep last month at the Ian N. Morrison Research Farm in Carman, Man.

This system also has some added perks: there’s less soil erosion since no tillage is used and sheep like eating those pesky weeds that threaten crops. Some cities in North America – including Fort Saskatchewan, Alta., and Missoula, Mont. – are even using dandelion-craving sheep within city limits to keep their green spaces pretty.

Little if any research has been done on using grazing as a green manure management alternative, says Thiessen Martens. For this three-year research project, they’ll compare the yield of wheat grown on a sheep-grazed plot versus a tilled plot, and look closely at the nutrient content. They plan on doing an economic analysis as well.

"She says this system, which at this point is "very rare," might even persuade conventional farmers to go green. Manitoba is home to about 300 organic farmers.

"One of the criticisms of the green manure concept for conventional farmers is that it’s more expensive than just buying fertilizer and putting it on because you don’t have that harvestable crop. But if we can offer a system where there is some animal product to be harvested, then it is a practice that may become economically viable for conventional farmers as well."
Up close with UMSU president
Best election turnout in years means Rashid has students’ attention

The Bulletin sat down with University of Manitoba Students’ Union president Sid Rashid to find out what UMSU has planned for the next year.

To begin, tell me about yourself. Where are you from and what brought you to the University of Manitoba.

I was born in Winnipeg, but moved to Morden, Manitoba, when I was very young. So yeah, I’m a rural boy, I grew up in Morden. I moved to Winnipeg and started attending the University of Manitoba when I was 17. At the time I saw my best career options being in science. That changed after a couple of years and I decided that science wasn’t really the career path that I wanted and that I was really interested in foreign affairs and international relations, which kind of ties into politics. So, I finished my bachelor of science degree and started a second degree in political science.

And how about the interest in student politics? How did that get rolling?

I got involved as a resident advisor with Housing and Student Life when I was 18. I saw it as an opportunity to develop and help out students that I felt were in a similar position as I was in my first year, having someone there to give them some support and guidance. It was challenging, though, because a lot of students on my floor were older than me and I found myself trying to take charge. I was a residence advisor for a couple of years and I moved up to being senior resident advisor in Arthur Mauro, which is the largest student residence on campus with 326 students at the time. It was a challenge because there are a lot of international students in Arthur Mauro and with that come a lot of challenges, everything from not having the money to go back home to dealing with depression. You start dipping into a lot of the big issues that face students.

From senior resident advisor I started to learn more about the student union. I met a few folks and decided to run last year as vice president (student services).

What made you decide to run as UMSU president this year?

I think as a vice president you work a lot on your portfolio and believe me there’s plenty of work. But there is not too much time to delve into the organization as a whole. A lot of people have no idea that the student union is an $11 million non-governmental agency. I saw running as president as an opportunity to really lead and help set the direction and tone and make an impact on a large scale.

How did the election go?

It was the best election in ten years; since (former UMSU president and now member of parliament) Stephen Fletcher’s run. And that year there were huge dividing issues and a number of slates that ran as well. We had 19 per cent turn out, which was more than double last year, and that spoke volumes about the amount of work and dedication that our volunteers and friends put in.

Tell me about your goals for this year.

A number of our goals are focused on creating a vibrant campus. Part of that is just getting a number of people involved, and we certainly got a lot of people involved in our campaign. We’re interested in seeing upgrades to the tunnels to make them more welcoming and adding music to different spots around campus. We also wanted to build on something I worked on last year, the alternative spring break to El Salvador. We’re trying to provide some alternative experiences for students. We’re also looking to link with students through our close circuit television network, UMSU vision, which we really want to get going because we think that could be a huge means to really engage students, give them opportunities and info that they need to hear about.

And we’re really pushing for exam viewing policies so students can review their exams and find out where they went wrong or where things went right. We’d also like to see an advanced exam schedule which some universities in Canada have.

I think the biggest thing is trying to reach out to all the different sects of our university, because there are different cliques and groups.

What has been accomplished over the first three months?

For the new VP’s it’s really about getting grounded and learning their positions. We have made some big strides, the off campus work permit is a big one for international students. In the past if international students were to get one D they could no longer work off campus. They would lose their permit. Now we’ve changed that to a 2.0 GPA. We currently have renovations going on in GPs. They’re renovating the dining area and seating area. It’s going to look light, the theme for Degrees will be environmentally sustainable, the counter is going to be made out of crunched sunflower. It’s going to be very open, a little brighter. Phase 2 will hopefully go ahead this fall and will expand the seating on the patio and ideally add a solairium. We probably won’t get to phase 3 during my term, but we’re hoping to expand the kitchen area.

One of the perpetual challenges for UMSU is trying to engage students when many of them commute to the Fort Garry campus. How do you do that?

Good question and I think a lot of executives have asked that at the start of their terms and at the end of their terms. If I knew the right answer, I’d be a genius. I think the biggest thing is, to take it one step at a time, one student at a time, one group at a time. The more people you engage, the more people that will then engage others. That’s how we campaigned, that’s what we see with others. I’m also about working with people, as an executive you can’t do everything on your own, as a student you can’t do everything on your own, so it’s about using other areas on campus as well so finding areas where you can mutually agree on things and push for things together, with admin, faculty. We met with president David Barnard’s executive and really narrowed a few areas of focus. We’re never going to get everything but there’s a lot of areas that we can agree on and for those we need to work together.

What else is happening this year?

We’re working on content for UMSU Vision, our closed circuit television network. We’d like to roll that out in the fall as well. Working for Aboriginal Access is huge. This year the international student differential fee reached 250 per cent. We think that’s really unfortunate. The reasoning behind that was to balance the budget and to me that’s a short term reaction to deal with a long term problem. If you’re charging lab fees they should be going to labs and if you’re charging international fees they should be going towards international student not to balance the budget. If we’re short of money, maybe sending extra money on new initiatives or Smartpark isn’t the right way to go. Maybe that money should be going towards students.

One of the consistent goals for UMSU over the past ten years has been to maintain the tuition freeze. This year the NDP government allowed tuition fees to rise. What happens now that the freeze is over?

The biggest challenge for some students is just becoming a student in the first place and just being able to access secondary education. I think it’s critical that the student union ensure that if someone wants to better themselves through education they have that opportunity. Yes, there are scholarships and bursaries, and there are student loans that students can barely afford, but I think students have to look at government and say is education a priority and if it is it should remain accessible.

Trends are very clear, every time tuition goes up government funding support goes down. When students pay more, some feel that they’re getting a better quality education. They’re not. They’re just filling in the gaps for government.

How tough is it to do long-term planning in a group like UMSU when the executive can change every year?

It’s tough. You can try to long-term plan as much as you want but if an executive comes in that sees things differently and wants to go in a different direction as long as contracts aren’t held binding there’s nothing stopping them. You have to look past that, you can’t let it stop you from trying to do long term projects. Working with administration it’s important that they do know that we do have some long term memory and continuity here year to year. The student union will always be here to represent students and really try to create a good student experience.

What are your own goals for the future?

I want to make a difference in whatever it is I’m doing, I see myself either in the international arena or in elected government because I think those avenues can most directly effect change. I think a law degree would really help that, so academically that’s my next goal.

For now though, my focus is with UMSU. I’ve put aside my course work this year. This is a commitment, if you take on a job with such huge responsibility I think it’s important that you follow through. Students put trust in us and they showed us at the polls, now it’s up to us to show them that we’re willing to put in the time and commitment to make those things happen. Our whole executive will agree to that. They’ve been in the office every week. I don’t think there’s been a week gone by this summer where two or three of us haven’t been in the office until one in the morning, that’s just the type of crew I’m fortunate enough to have around me.