

A-State aims to improve science communication

BY ALDEMARO ROMERO,
AMY R. PEARCE
AND JOHN B. ZIBLUK
SPECIAL TO THE SUN

For some time, a great number of universities have been pondering how to best prepare students to become better communicators of science.

In a world dominated by more and more complex science and technology, stagnant if not lowering science literacy levels and more pressure to obtain financing for research, scientists are being placed in the position of communicating what they do and why it is important to audiences ranging from children to legislators.

With the goal to prepare science graduates from Arkansas State University to be more effective professionals in a world where communication to diverse audiences is more important than ever, ASU launched a new course last fall: "Science Communication for Scientists."

Several A-State students participated in this hands-on course. Among the products were popular articles published in *The Sun*, radio scripts and TV shows, all of which can be read, heard or seen at: <http://biology.astate.edu/Outreach/outreach.htm>.

Interdisciplinary approach

Given the unique nature of this interdisciplinary course, the results of this experience were presented at the meeting titled "New Agendas in Science Communication" in Austin, Texas, Feb. 22-23. The presentation was made by the three instructors of the course who also author this article.

One of the most gratifying results to report was how an interdisciplinary approach based on the different backgrounds of the faculty involved can help to provide students with the kind of diverse perspectives that are needed to succeed as a science communicator.

QuickINFO |

Arkansas State University last fall launched a new course named "Science Communication for Scientists."

Several students participated in the course and some of its products include popular articles published in *The Sun*, radio scripts and TV shows, all of which can be read, heard or seen at: <http://biology.astate.edu/Outreach/outreach.htm>.

Romero has written more than 500 articles and books to both learned and popular audiences. He has also written, produced, and directed more than 1,500 radio shows and 50 television shows in the United States, Europe and Latin America. He was awarded the Feijoo Prize for science journalism by the Spanish Association for the Advancement of Science, and his TV documentaries have received a number of awards. For two years Romero has been editing and/or writing a weekly column on science for *The Sun*.

Pearce earned a certificate in science communication through the Centre for the Public Awareness of Science while completing her Ph.D. in neuroscience from the Australian National University. She has written for scientific journals and newspapers and produced "Fuzzy Logic," a science education radio show. She has communicated science at national and international forums through science fairs and workshops.

Zibluk teaches photography, photojournalism, news design, desktop publishing and news writing. He was the 2002 National Geographic magazine faculty fellow. He continues to work with the magazine on educational programs. He worked as a reporter and editor for newspapers in Connecticut and for the

SUNDAY, MARCH 16, 2008



Kimberly Marshall | Special to The Sun

Jane Anfinson is shown shooting a take of Dr. Al Christian, member of the biology faculty, for one of the documentaries produced by ASU students.

SCIENCE: ASU expanding research

FROM PAGE A8

Memphis Commercial-Appeal. In 2005 he won the National Press Photographers Association Educator Award, the Robin T. Garland Award. He is a published scholar and ethics columnist for News Photographer magazine.

ASU is expanding its scientific research endeavors and the need is great to establish awareness and understanding of related science issues in Northeast Arkansas. Therefore, science communication efforts at ASU aim to increase science awareness in the community and to improve communication skills of ASU students, particularly those in journalism and science fields.

There is great potential at

ASU to work with the Arkansas Biosciences Institute, graduate programs in communication, sciences and nursing, among others.

Look for upcoming community education opportunities related to improving science awareness, these include Brain Bee to be held at the Craighead County Jonesboro Public Library, March 27 and Girls of Promise on the ASU campus April 12.

For more information contact the ASU Department of Biological Sciences at biology@astate.edu.

Dr. Romero is chairman and professor at the Department of Biological Sciences; Dr. Pearce is an assistant professor of psychology; and Dr. Zibluk is associate professor of journalism at ASU.