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Bruss gives inaugural Latterell lecture

Summary: The Joseph J. Latterell Memorial Visiting Alumnus Program was officially launched on October 24, 2005. UMM was honored to have alum Kenneth Bruss as the guest speaker. Bruss spoke on "Flexible Chemistry: From Foods to Pharmaceuticals."

(November 1, 2005)-The Joseph J. Latterell Memorial Visiting Alumnus Program was officially launched on October 24, 2005, with Kenneth Bruss '78 as guest speaker. The campus community, including the chemistry discipline faculty, were pleased and honored by the attendance of Professor Latterell's wife, Geri, at the lecture.

"Joe Latterell had an enormous influence on many facets of life at UMM, on programs and on people, students and faculty alike," shared Jim Togeas, professor of chemistry. "I learned more about teaching from Joe than from anybody else, and I told him so. The fact that he touched so many student lives makes the Visiting Alumnus Program a particularly appropriate memorial."

It was also fitting to inaugurate the program by inviting a chemistry major, Latterell's discipline, to be the first visiting alumnus speaker. "When Jim Olson, professor emeritus of chemistry, and I agreed that we should invite someone from the chemical industry for the inaugural lecture, it took a microsecond to agree on the choice—Ken Bruss," stated Togeas. "Ken is smart, full of insights, energetic, personable and has a wide range of professional experience. That a large student audience would receive his talk well was a foregone conclusion."

Bruss, director of technical operations at Sanofi-Aventis Group in Kansas City, Missouri, spoke on "Flexible Chemistry: From Foods to Pharmaceuticals." Whether still deciding on a major or already committed to a chemistry major, the lecture was a wonderful learning opportunity for students. First year student, Jacob Hansmeier '09, Foley, noted that the lecture was a great way to understand how classroom learning applies in the workplace. "I also learned that it is just as important to be flexible in the workplace as it is to be good at what you do," shared Hansmeier.

Larissa Davisson '06, Cold Spring, found the event to be both informative and inspirational. "Chemistry majors at UMM are very well-prepared for work after college, but any educational setting has its limitations when trying to explain to students what working in industry will really be like," reflects Davisson. "For this reason, it is extremely valuable to have people who work in industry and who have gone through the hiring process to speak to students. To have an alumnus visit was very helpful. Ken Bruss gave a personal, interesting and extremely informative presentation that makes the prospect of graduating and looking for work in the sciences seem much less threatening. He instilled a sense of self-confidence in the students regarding their education here and their employability after leaving UMM—proof that our education will stand us in good stead. Ken emphasized the value of a liberal arts education."

Bruss has more than 25 years of varied experiences in the food and pharmaceutical industry with his last 18 years at Sanofi-Aventis and its predecessor companies in Kansas City. Sanofi-Aventis is a major, worldwide pharmaceutical company with research and markets in seven major therapeutic areas: cardiovascular, thrombosis, central nervous system, oncology, metabolic disorders, internal medicine and vaccines. Over the years, his job experiences include more

than 10 years in the regulatory areas of quality assurance/quality control and environmental health and safety. He has managed production areas, worked in process engineering and supply chain, and has recently transitioned from a role of director of manufacturing to technical operations where he leads a team of engineers involved in process transfers, facilities and process design, maintenance engineering and technical trouble shooting.

Bruss serves on the advisory council of the International Society for Pharmaceutical Engineering, a worldwide organization of 23,000 pharmaceutical manufacturing professionals from 80 different countries. His hobbies include hunting, carpentry and auto restoration. He resides in Lenexa, Kansas, with his wife and three children.

Latterell's legacy

Professor Joseph J. Latterell joined the chemistry faculty at UMM in September 1967, as the first class of chemistry majors became seniors. He was the key developer of UMM's analytical and general chemistry courses.

Among the first UMM faculty to involve undergraduates in research projects, Latterell was the principal investigator on the Eagle Lake Project, an interdisciplinary research project involving numerous faculty and students as well as scientists from the U.S. Department of Agriculture Soils Laboratory in Morris. He was among the earliest UMM recipients of the all-University Horace T. Morse Outstanding Faculty Award. His commitment to the success of his students was honored when he received the all-University Tate Award for Outstanding Advising, and he was recognized by UMM's Multi-Ethnic Student Association (then Minority Student Association) for his support for minority students.

The lecture series is privately funded and provides grants to various disciplines within the Science and Math Division to invite alumni to campus to serve as a resource person for students and faculty. According to Togeas, student organizations will participate in planning the visits. The UMM Student Affiliate of the American Chemical Society assisted with hosting responsibilities during the Bruss visit.

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