



# News Release

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## **WESTERN STUDENTS, ALUMNI AND FACULTY PRESENT AT NATIONAL CONFERENCE**

**St. Joseph, Mo.** —April 28, 2006— Four current students and two former students, as well as four faculty members from Missouri Western State University, presented their papers at the 2006 Popular Culture Association/American Culture Association (PCAACA) Joint Conference in Atlanta, April 12-15.

The PCAACA Conference is an international, refereed conference for scholars in the fields of popular culture and American culture. There were more than 2,000 conference presenters this year.

“No other undergraduate institution was as well represented at the conference, and very few undergraduates are accepted to present in the first place,” said Dr. Patricia Donaher, assistant professor of English and the coordinator for the students’ travel and presentations. “Over and over again, conference goers noted the number of Missouri Western participants, both student and faculty, and more importantly, the high quality of their presentations.”

Student participation at the conference began last year, when Dr. Donaher encouraged students from her Popular Literature class to submit proposals. Five of this year’s students also presented last year. “While I did not teach a class this year related to

the conference theme, I was happy that so many students were willing to present without the impetus of a class assignment,” she said.

A Western graduate now pursuing a master of arts degree at the University of Missouri-St. Louis, Kelli Gardner Bell described her first year presenting as a “real eye-opening experience” that helped her prepare for the expectations of graduate school this year. Her paper this year examined the use of evolutionary psychology in the novel “Vanity Fair.”

The student presentations varied widely in topic. Kim Schutte of St. Joseph, gave a paper on the fusion band, “The Eleventh House.” Dawn Baker, a history major from Agency, Mo., presented on Josephine Baker and her life in Paris. Peg Pella of St. Joseph presented on the use of black dialect by the 19th century white writer Joel Chandler Harris, and Brandie Ponting, an English education graduate, gave a paper on Margaret Atwood’s “The Handmaid’s Tale.”

Dr. Ian Roberts, associate professor of English; Dr. Steven Morris, assistant professor of philosophy; and Dr. Robert Bergland, associate professor of English, each presented a paper in the area of literature and science. Dr. Roberts also chaired six panels on literature and science.

Dr. Donaher made four paper presentations at the conference and chaired four panels in the areas of Language Attitudes and Popular Linguistics, and Professional Placement.

Dr. Donaher and Dr. Roberts have presented at the conference annually since 2002. Dr. Donaher is the area chair for Language Attitudes and Popular Linguistics for

the Popular Culture Association and Dr. Roberts is the area chair for Literature and Science for the American Culture Association.

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*Missouri Western State University is a four-year public institution providing a blend of traditional liberal arts and professional degree programs. The university offers student-centered, high quality instruction that focuses on experience-based learning, community service, and state-of-the-art technology. Western is located in St. Joseph, Mo. and is committed to the educational, economic, cultural and social development of the region it serves.*