

Focus on Faculty

Maria Hernandez-Peck goes to the White House

For the third time in her career, **Maria Hernandez-Peck** will be a delegate to a White House Conference on Aging in Washington, D.C. As one of four delegates selected by Gov. Gregoire, she will work on resolutions and strategies designed to help the nation's president and Congress shape aging policies for the next 10 years.

The conference takes place in December. A native of Cuba, Hernandez-Peck, director of Eastern's Center for Studies in Aging in the School of Social Work and Human Services, also was a delegate in 1981 and 1995.

This is the fifth-ever White House Conference on Aging and the first to focus on the changing face of aging in America, focusing on issues surrounding the 78 million baby boomers who will begin to turn 60 in 2006.



Kelly Casto at Mount Rainier with her father, Dennis Kifer.

Climbing Mountains with Faculty

For the 15th summer in a row, biology and geology faculty members took a field class on the road in August. This year it was to Mount Rainier and Mount St. Helens for the course, *Living with Volcanoes*, to study the geology and plant life of the area.

"There's no better place to study natural phenomena than in the real world," said **John Buchanan**, professor of geology and environmental science program director. "That's the benefit of a summer offering, when we can take a class away for a whole week."

In years past, these field experiences have been to Yellowstone, Crater Lake, Glacier, the Grand Canyon and other Western sites. It's so popular that about 40 percent of participants are second-timers at least, according to Buchanan, who

taught this summer's class along with **Suzanne Schwab**, professor of biology, and **Jennifer Thomson**, associate professor of geology.

Kelly (Kifer) Casto ('94, BAE mathematics and BA geology) was right there in the thick of it again this summer – along with her father, Dennis Kifer of Spokane – the 12th time the pair have participated together in an EWU summer field class.

Kelly, a math teacher at Kiona-Benton City High School in Benton City, first began taking the classes for continuing education credit; her dad participated to keep her company. Now they go just for the fun of it, to learn interesting things and still to spend time together.

Three to Serve at the National Science Foundation

This fall, three members of Eastern's faculty are serving as program directors at the National Science Foundation in Arlington, Va., making decisions about who will get valuable NSF research funding.

They are **Dona Boggs**, associate professor of biology; **Bob Gibbs**, professor of physics emeritus; and **Jeanne Small**, professor of chemistry/biochemistry.

"Having three faculty members on loan for two years each to the National Science Foundation is not only an honor, but a rarity, especially for an institution of Eastern's size," said Ray Soltero, dean of the EWU College of Science, Mathematics and Technology. "It speaks volumes about the caliber of our faculty."

The NSF employs scientists, engineers and educators on a rotational basis to further its mission of supporting research and education in the sciences. With an annual budget of about \$5.5 billion, the agency

funds 10,000 new projects each year and accounts for approximately 20 percent of all federally supported basic research conducted at America's colleges and universities.

Boggs will be a decision maker about research funding for projects relating to animal physiology. She has 20 years of research experience in these areas and has been a five-time recipient of NSF funding.

Gibbs, who received NSF grant monies for K-12 math and science curricular revision work in the early 1990s, will work with elementary-secondary and informal education research proposals. He retired from Eastern in 2003.

This will be Small's second year at NSF, where she is reviewing research proposals for improving the undergraduate education of future science, mathematics and technology K-12 teachers. She received nationwide attention in 2001 when she was heading an Office of Naval Research project to develop equipment that detects airborne microbes such as anthrax that can be used in biological warfare and bioterrorism.