Dr. Hyuna Park in the Department of Finance is one of more than fifty new faculty members who joined the Minnesota State Mankato community in fall 2007. They include award-winning scholars and artists, researchers on the leading edges of their fields, and seasoned professionals with a wealth of practical experience to share with their students.
More than 50 new faculty members joined Minnesota State Mankato this fall, bringing with them diverse perspectives, solid research backgrounds, strong practical experiences, and a desire to involve their students in the research process.

Leveraging their Scholarship

Three new faculty members draw on their own research to teach topics such as hedge funds, financial leverage, adverse selection costs, and seasoned equity offerings in ways that resonate with students.

Taking the Nation by Storm

Graduate student Joshua Jans’ research on weather-related disasters led to national recognition for the training curriculum he developed—and a national award for his conference presentation.

Planting a Seed

With support from a Faculty Research Grant, biology professor Chris Ruhland earned both a publication and the satisfaction of knowing he helped prepare his student co-author for graduate school.

Combining Passion and Possibility

Over the past 27 years, Dr. Steve Bohnenblust has demonstrated a deep commitment to scholarship and learning at Minnesota State Mankato. In 2008, he will bring his passion for scholarship to his new role as director of the Center for Excellence in Scholarship and Research (CESR).

Got Photos?

Faculty who have high-quality digital photographs of recent research or creative projects are encouraged to submit them to the College of Graduate Studies and Research for inclusion in upcoming issues of FRONTIERS. Photographs should be at least 200 dpi and should be accompanied by a brief caption describing the project and the photo. E-mail photographs (in jpg or tif format) to anne.blackhurst@mnsu.edu.

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FOCUSING ON THE FUTURE

Dr. Danae Quirk Dorr and undergraduate student Mark Thompson illustrate the mutual benefits of the faculty-student mentoring relationships that undergird the McNair Achievement Program.
Monday, August 27, 2007 marked the first day of fall classes at Minnesota State Mankato. And while the freshmen probably felt nervous beginning their post-high school careers, some of their professors may have had a few first-day jitters themselves. More than 50 new faculty joined Minnesota State Mankato this fall, bringing with them diverse perspectives, solid research backgrounds, strong practical experiences, and a desire to involve their students in the research process.

Dr. Cindra Kamphoff, the new coordinator of the psychological aspects of sport master’s program, is excited to share her expertise with her students. She is researching the role of female coaches who are coaching male teams at the Division 1 level and is working with a team of sport psychology master’s students who are interested in the same topic. “I think it gives the students a great opportunity to learn about the research process, do the research, and potentially get a publication out of it,” she explains. “I’m really excited because there have only been two studies on this subject in the past. I think our study will be pretty groundbreaking.”

While Dr. Kamphoff and her students are busy interviewing Division 1 coaches, Dr. Rachel Droogsma, a new addition to the speech communication department, will focus on involving her students in activist research. “It’s a term that I use to describe my own research,” says Dr. Droogsma. “It has the political purpose of social change and reaches a broader audience because it is presented in a form that is accessible to everyone.”

For example, Dr. Droogsma’s upper-level gender communications class is currently putting together a Clothesline Project for the Mankato community. The first Clothesline Project, organized in 1990, was inspired by the AIDS quilt. It consists of different colored t-shirts displayed in public places that are decorated by survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault. Dr. Droogsma’s students are in charge of organizing the project and recruiting women from the Mankato community to participate.

“I think this project can help students learn in a different way—it can offer them a different...”

continued on page 6
understanding of violence against women,” Dr. Droogsma says. “As a result of the project’s visual aspect, students can see the impact this form of research has on their fellow students and community members.”

Dr. Droogsma received both her master’s and doctoral degrees from Howard University—a campus that predominately consists of African-American students. “My experience at Howard was unique,” says Dr. Droogsma, who is White. “It taught me about the relationship between culture and power and how to look at the world from a non-dominant-group perspective.” This knowledge affects the way Dr. Droogsma speaks about culture with her students. “I don’t change the culture,” says Dr. Regan. “I enrich it by adding another element, another voice.”

Dr. Regan also brings an established research agenda to the nursing department and the new doctor of nursing practice (DNP) program. She began researching how nurses’ conceptions of birth-related risks increase their use of technologies known to increase caesarean sections as a part of her dissertation in 2004. She is currently working in conjunction with researchers at the University of Minnesota and the University of Michigan to procure grants in order to continue this project. As Dr. Regan explains, “When you have doctoral-level students, you need faculty and the University of North Carolina Greensboro. Her doctoral dissertation received top honors from the National Association for Sport and Physical Activity.

An award-winning teacher and researcher, Dr. Cindra Kamphoff coordinates the psychological aspects of sport master’s program. Dr. Kamphoff—picted, center, with her research team—received an award for teaching excellence at the University of Michigan. Her research team—received an award for teaching excellence at the University of Michigan.

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and is able to offer her students an international perspective on nursing. “I don’t change the culture,” says Dr. Regan. “I enrich it by adding another element, another voice.”

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"When you have doctoral-level students, you need faculty..."
Dr. Stephen Larson’s research interests include night trading, futures prices, and the process of choosing a financial planner.

Dr. Darshana Palkar’s strategic financial management courses are enriched by her research on capital structure theories, trading volume, and seasoned equity offerings.

Dr. Stephen Larson, Dr. Hyuna Park (center), and Dr. Darshana Palkar are the newest members of the Department of Finance. According to College of Business Dean Scott Johnson, all three combine strong research skills with enthusiasm for their discipline.

Given its fundamental role in the key decisions facing business leaders, finance is an essential topic in the modern business curriculum. Because it is also inherently quantitative, many students approach the topic with the expectation it will be difficult. For the faculty who teach finance courses, making the subject matter seem accessible to anxious students may be the most challenging part of the job.

Three recent additions to the faculty in the Department of Finance were hired precisely because of their ability to present topics such as hedge funds, financial leverage, adverse selection costs, and seasoned equity offerings in ways that resonate with students. According to College of Business Dean Scott Johnson, all three strengthened the department by combining strong research skills with enthusiasm for their discipline.

“They are all intellectually curious,” says Dean Johnson, “and that carries over into their teaching.”

Dr. Hyuna Park’s enthusiasm for her research on the factors that affect the risk associated with hedge funds is apparent from the moment she begins to speak about the topic. Despite their recent prominence in the investment world, hedge funds are largely a mystery to the general public. In fact, New York magazine recently devoted an entire issue to helping the average American understand these investments. One gets the sense that a few class sessions with Dr. Park would clear up any confusion.

While her own research uses sophisticated methods of assessing how factors such as expected shortfall explain the relationship between risk and return on investment, Dr. Park stresses the importance of learning the basics in her classes. She begins each course by showing her students an image of a tree, emphasizing the importance of the roots. When students start with the leaves—or details—says Dr. Park, they may get lost. “A new discipline requires a base knowledge. You add the details as you proceed.”

Her own understanding of financial principles is supported by her background in mathematics and engineering. Initially, she found it surprising that the tools she learned in engineering could be used to analyze the finance industry. But, she says, “The fundamental tools are very similar.” Her mastery of these tools was evident when she presented her research at the annual meeting of the Financial Management Association in Orlando, Florida last year. There, she received positive feedback that she hopes will lead to a published article.

Publication is also on the mind of Dr. Darshana Palkar, who joined the Department of Finance in 2006. She is already building a research program around her dissertation—which is an empirical investigation of the relative importance of trade off and pecking order theories in capital structure determination—and is preparing the manuscripts for journal submission. Both Dr. Park and Dr. Palkar chose Minnesota State Mankato, in part, because of the support for faculty research. “I saw that there is a lot of potential for research-related activities here,” says Dr. Palkar. “There is an opportunity to pursue our own interests in ways that contribute to the goals of the finance department.”

One of the department’s goals is meeting the growing need for Certified Financial Planners—something Dr. Stephen Larson was hired to do last year. After working in industry and teaching at Eastern Illinois University, he joined Minnesota State Mankato as the Director of the Financial Planning Certificate (CFP) program in the Twin Cities, where he has continued the program’s successful record of preparing students for the CFP exam. While the national pass rate for the CFP exam was 51% in July 2007, the pass rate for graduates of the Minnesota State Mankato CFP program was 80%. “We’re usually at least 15% above average,” says Dr. Larson.

According to Dr. Larson, the need for qualified finance professionals has intensified because baby boomers are approaching retirement. While most Americans could benefit from a crash course in money management, older adults are especially in need of sound financial advice given their limited incomes, concerns about health and life insurance, and the need to protect family assets from long-term healthcare costs. Analyzing the characteristics people look for when choosing a financial planner is one of Dr. Larson’s research interests and it informs his pedagogical approach to the CFP program. His research on night trading recently earned him a publication in Financial Review.

All three of the finance department’s newest members look for ways to infuse their research into their courses. In addition to making the material more interesting and accessible to students, Dr. Larson has found that involving students in research often gives him a fresh perspective on the topic. “When students are new to the material,” says Dr. Larson, “they see things in a different light.”

The College of Graduate Studies and Research congratulates Vegard Aaland, graduate student in political science, whose master’s thesis, Exceptionalism in United States Foreign Policy Behavior, was selected by the Graduate Sub Meet and Confer as the Minnesota State Mankato nominee for the Midwestern Association of Graduate Schools (MAGS) Distinguished Thesis Competition. Dr. Jackie Vieceli was the thesis advisor. Dr. Abdalla Battah served as second committee member and international relations theory consultant. Dr. Wayne Allen was third committee member. Results of the MAGS competition will be announced in spring 2008.

The College of Graduate Studies and Research provides financial assistance to partially reimburse students for expenses related to completing a thesis. Stipends of up to $250 to support research-related expense are available each semester, however, funding is available on a limited basis. This financial support is currently available only to students completing a thesis as the program capstone project.

The spring deadline to request funding is February 1, 2008. For more information and the application form, visit grad.mnsu.edu/student/thesisfunding.html.
Dr. Christopher Ruhland loves getting students excited about research. Developing a mentoring relationship with his students is one of his responsibilities as a faculty member in the Department of Biological Sciences, but it also yields great rewards. “Fostering a relationship with these students is gratifying,” says Dr. Ruhland. “Preparing them to move on in the world provides me with a sense of accomplishment.”

And that gratification is heightened when research that his students contributed to gets published—something that’s fairly unusual for undergraduates. “It takes a certain kind of student to put the time in outside of class,” says Dr. Ruhland. “Research like this requires a lot of commitment.”

During the 2001–2002 academic year, Dr. Ruhland received a Faculty Research Grant and an NSF grant to examine the effects of varying levels of ultraviolet-B radiation on field-grown crops. He employed the help of two undergraduate students—Mitch Fogal and Chris Buyarski—throughout the experiment, which allowed Dr. Ruhland to complete parts of the project he wouldn’t have had time to do by himself.

But the students didn’t just complete routine daily tasks such as plant care and data collection. They also provided significant insight throughout the experiment. “There was no hand holding with this project,” says Dr. Ruhland. “All of the authors had meaningful input; they all had their own ideas, and a lot of times we went with those ideas.”

For example, part of the experiment involved examining the antioxidant capabilities of certain chemicals extracted from the plants. Because the extraction process was not specific, Buyarski wanted to verify that the other compounds in the extract were not interfering with the analysis. “It actually strengthened our paper because it helped eliminate an alternative explanation for the data,” says Dr. Ruhland.

Being published is never a guarantee, but because this particular experiment employed a novel hypothesis, Dr. Ruhland believed it was likely the results would be scientifically significant. And they were. In the summer of 2007, the results were published in the international chemistry journal *Molecules*.

Consequently, not only were his students exposed to what life in the sciences is like, they were also offered an experience that may have separated them from their peers. “A project like this, especially the publication, gives students a leg up,” explains Ruhland. “It puts their name out into the field, gives them an opportunity to be different from their peers.” A project like this, especially the publication, gives them experience presenting their ideas and research, and helps them receive admission into graduate programs more easily.

Case in point—after graduating, Chris Buyarski pursued a master’s degree at West Virginia University (WVU), where he worked on an NSF-funded experiment that will likely lead to more publications. “Because of Dr. Ruhland’s networking and guidance, I was accepted into WVU and was able to continue my work on similar projects,” explains Buyarski. “Ultimately, scientists are deemed successful by the quantity and quality of publications they produce. Being able to publish so early has advanced my career as a scientist.”

Buyarski recently accepted a job at the University of Minnesota, where much of his interview focused on his research at Minnesota State Mankato and the resulting publication. It seems his dedication and commitment as an undergraduate student have truly paid off, which makes Dr. Ruhland a very satisfied mentor.
Dr. Gretchen Haas
Understanding the Function of the Web in the Context of Minnesota’s 2006 Election for the U.S. Senate

Dr. Gretchen Haas, assistant professor of technical communication in the English Department, is interested in how online political campaign structure their sites to influence their users. As a result of the web’s emerging presence, academics and the popular press have made calls that the internet should be used for citizen engagement and that government officials should interact with their constituents online.

To determine how politicians are responding to this request, Dr. Haas examined Senator Amy Klobuchar’s and Mark Kennedy’s webpages throughout their campaign in 2006. She discovered that the politicians used their sites primarily to solicit personal information from site visitors. Presumably, that data could then be used to seek donations or to encourage people’s personal involvement in the campaign. “The functionality of the pages for Senator Klobuchar’s site was so low and the options so few that it forced people to accommodate to the one option,” says Dr. Haas. “If being politically active online is constituted only as a donation, there seems to be a missed opportunity.”

“This research led to an article, which Dr. Haas has previously published articles, and a fourth article being written,” explains Dr. Haas. “That’s what’s important to me at this stage of the project. It’s about finding continuity in my thinking,” she says. “It’s a function of trying to find the common threads among those four pieces,” she explains. “They all deal with animal ethics; specifically in the context of race, class and gender, but each does it in a different way.”

The book argues that humans frequently express their superiority to animals through speech. For example, someone who complains about a spouse being “treated like a dog” reinforces the belief that it is acceptable to treat dogs poorly. The book highlights the implicit relationship between women and animals and how society demeans both groups. “We devalue animals in a way that communicates our devaluation of women,” says Dr. Bailey. “I explore the language we use to speak about animals, especially its associations with racism, sexism, and heterosexism.”

Building upon her summer research, Dr. Bailey is continuing to refine the world’s unifying frame. “It’s about finding continuity in my thinking,” she says. “That’s what’s important to me at this stage of the project.”

Dr. Cathryn Bailey
Speaking of Animals: Race, Sex, and the Discourse of Animal Ethics

For several years, Dr. Cathryn Bailey, professor and chair of philosophy, has been exploring the language we use when we describe animals. Her latest endeavor involves combining three of her previously published articles, and a fourth article still under review, into a book. The main goal has been one of crafting an organizing theoretical framework to tie the articles together. “It’s a function of trying to find the common threads among those four pieces,” she explains. “They all deal with animal ethics; specifically in the context of race, class and gender, but each does it in a different way.”

Summer Research Dissemination Grants (SRDGs) provide recipients the opportunity to spend five weeks during the summer preparing a manuscript or creative project for publication, exhibition, or performance. Sixteen faculty members received grants in 2007, including Dr. Cathryn Bailey and Dr. Gretchen Haas.


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The Center for Excellence in Scholarship and Research has completed its first year of service to the faculty and staff at Minnesota State Mankato. Over the past year, CESR has worked with numerous faculty members on their scholarly manuscripts and research designs, but much work is still needed to increase awareness of its services throughout the university. In 2008, CESR will continue to create strong connections across campus under the leadership of its new director, Dr. Stephen Bohnenblust.

Over the past 27 years, Dr. Bohnenblust has demonstrated a deep commitment to scholarship and learning at Minnesota State Mankato. Most recently, he has co-led a three-year, $800,000 research project to help reduce the incidence of heavy drinking on campus. The “MSU Gets It” and “Kato Party 411” campaigns, which can be seen on buses and billboards around town, are some of the tangible results of this project. “Essentially, my role has been to develop a scientifically sound research design that will allow us to determine whether the campaigns result in a significant reduction of alcohol abuse on campus,” says Dr. Bohnenblust.

In addition to his own research, Dr. Bohnenblust served the university as the president of the Faculty Association for the past four years, a role that allowed him to form cross-disciplinary bonds and understand the diverse needs of our faculty. And he has demonstrated his commitment to undergraduates through his own teaching and by co-authoring a widely used statistics textbook, Basic Statistics for the Health Sciences, now in its fifth edition.

Bohnenblust was drawn to the director position at CESR because of his passion for scientific research and his desire to serve his fellow faculty members. “I’ll be fun to concentrate my entire professional activity on scholarship and research,” says Dr. Bohnenblust. “To work with faculty from so many different disciplines is an incredibly exciting opportunity.”

Dr. Bohnenblust’s excitement stems from the many years of service which he sees as providing tangible benefits to faculty. “There is a service that can directly help faculty with their research,” he says. “And it’s a commitment on the part of the university to provide substantive assistance.”

Though Dr. Bohnenblust is eager to chart CESR’s future course and to develop programs that further assist faculty, he stresses CESR’s current strengths. “We have excellent support from our two graduate students, Amire Pierce and David Chapman, who can assist with data analysis and manuscript editing. If faculty would like help with their research projects, we are ready to go now.”
At the annual Undergraduate Research Conference (URC) scheduled for April 21 and 22, students will present their research through poster sessions, oral presentations, exhibits, and other forums. After the conference, the projects will be published in the 2008 Journal of Undergraduate Research.

Three Minnesota State Mankato students may also present their research at the nation’s top undergraduate research conference. Laura Grubbs, Nicole Jorissen, and Chad Gunderson were selected to submit proposals to the National Conference on Undergraduate Research, which will be held April 10-12, 2008 at Salisbury University in Salisbury, Maryland. The students, their projects, and their faculty mentors are listed below:

Laura Grubbs:
Individual Experiences and Subjective Effects of Salvia Divinorum among Recreational Users
(Faculty Mentor: Dr. Dawn Albertson)

Nicole Jorissen:
The Effect of Reduced Maternal Aldosterone and Corticosterone levels on the Expression of 11B-HSD Enzymes in Normal and Hypertensive Rat Placentae
(Faculty Mentor: Dr. Theresa Salerno)

Chad Gunderson:
Pushing the Limits of Clay: Sculpting with Ceramic Glaze
(Faculty Mentor: Todd Shanafelt)

For more information about the URC, visit grad.mnsu.edu/research/urc.

Information about the National Conference on Undergraduate Research is available at www.ncur.org.

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**FOCUSing On the FUtUre**

The McNair Achievement Program (MAP) faculty mentors dedicate their time and energy to ensure that their partnered student-scholars succeed in doctoral programs after graduating from Minnesota State Mankato. But every once in a while, a pair comes along that not only meets the overall goals of the program, but also uses the program in a way that truly benefits both the student and the professor.

According to MAP Director Laura Bartolo, undergraduate student Mark Thompson and his mentor, Dr. Danae Quirk Dorr, assistant professor of chemistry, are the perfect example. “They are the classic example of a mentor/mentee relationship that is just working from all angles,” explains Director Bartolo.

Thompson’s potential and drive to succeed were evident to Dr. Quirk Dorr from the start. “Mark has a strong initiative and the drive to do what needs to be done in the research process,” she says. “The duo is currently exploring an anti-cancer agent and how it interacts with DNA. Because of Thompson’s dedication and time commitment to the research, Dr. Quirk Dorr trusts his reactions and the results he obtains while working alone. “This is the first time that I’ve been able to work with a student with this many hours dedicated to research,” says Dr. Quirk Dorr. “It’s nice to work at such a good pace and make so much progress so quickly.”

But the success of their partnership may also be attributed to her ability to teach Thompson the steps to find a solution, rather than simply handing him the answers. “This is good preparation for graduate school because they won’t be holding your hand through it,” says Thompson. Director Bartolo agrees, “Dr. Quirk Dorr really has a future orientation. She’s looking toward what lies ahead and giving Mark the building blocks he needs now to reach those goals.”

Thompson’s future goals include pursuing his doctorate in an area related to biochemistry. Eventually he would either like to teach or direct a research lab, and he feels that MAP has given him the opportunity to pursue his ambitions. “I like how open they are,” says Thompson. “They allow you to do what you want and are there to help you when you need it. They provide you with all the tools you need to get into graduate school. You just need to apply yourself and use those tools in order to be successful.”

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**URC**

**UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH CONFERENCE**

**MINNESOTA STATE UNIVERSITY, MANKATO**

**URC Continues Steady Growth**

The URC is organized by a faculty steering committee under the leadership of Gina Wenger, associate professor of art, and Trent Vorlicek, associate professor of chemistry. Since its inception in 1999, the URC has enjoyed steady growth in both visibility and participation rates. The number of students participating in the conference has nearly doubled over the past five years, while the number of projects has tripled:

**Important Dates:**

March 4, 2008:
Deadline for abstracts and applications to present at the 2008 URC. For information, see grad.mnsu.edu/research/urc.

April 21 and 22, 2008:
Undergraduate Research Conference
Dr. Julie Kerr-Berry, professor and director of dance, performs “Golden Mean,” choreographed by assistant professor Brad Garner, as part of the 2007 Spring Collection by the University Repertory Dance Theatre.