IN THE GAME

Brittany Melnyk is gearing up for Game Jam, a high-energy weekend where teams work to create a video game in 48 hours. Presented as part of STEMfest, Game Jam kicks off Sept. 25 in the Department of Computer Science. Read the full story on Page 5.

Creating cancer-killing compounds

Dentistry student researches non-invasive oral cancer treatments

Kris Foster

Killing oral cancer cells was the goal.

“Figuring out how to do it was Dania Alkhani’s problem to solve.”

“We’re getting there,” said Alkhani, a fourth-year student in the College of Dentistry. “We’ve synthesized a compound that looks promising.”

Combining her background in medicinal chemistry with her ongoing education in dentistry, Alkhani set out to find less invasive, more effective treatment for oral cancer for her table clinic project, a two-year research experience that is mandatory for all dentistry students at the U of S.

“Invasive surgery is the main method of treating oral cancer, or radiation therapy,” Alkhani explained. “There really isn’t a non-invasive and effective treatment. Our job was to find one.”

With the help of her supervisor Jonathan Dimmock, professor emeritus in the College of Pharmacy and Nutrition, Alkhani began formulating the project based on existing compounds and research.

“One compound we synthesized was very potent,” she explained, adding that due to patent proceedings they simply call it Compound Four. “It is 10 times more effective at killing some cancer cells than an anticancer drug currently used.”

With such promising results, Alkhani began presenting her research at competitions. As one of the top research groups selected by the College of Dentistry at its annual competition, Alkhani then presented in front of the Saskatchewan Dental Society where she placed first. Then, beating out the top student research projects from the nine other dental schools in Canada, she won the national competition held by the Canadian Dental Association at the end of August—the second year in a row the U of S grabbed top spot. With a first-place finish, Alkhani won a trip to Washington, D.C., to attend the American Dental Association’s 2015 conference where she will present her research.

As for Compound Four, Alkhani said in order for it to become a candidate anticancer agent, as determined by Dimmock, it should be able to kill cancer cells at low concentrations and have a good selectivity index (at least 10), meaning the concentration of compound required to kill cancer cells needs to be much lower than the amount required to kill non-malignant cells.

“Compound Four has already met the first criteria, but its selectivity index is 6.4, so we are working to raise that,” she said, adding that professors in the Colleges of Dentistry and Pharmacy and Nutrition have supported and guided this work every step of the way.

If the selectivity index is increased, she continued, then the efficacy of one or more compounds in treating tumors passaged in laboratory animals will be investigated. If this investigation is successful there are still many steps to be undertaken before a new drug is marketed.

With less than a year left until graduation, Alkhani has to start thinking about her own plans too.
U of S and Harvard team up on cutting-edge stem cell research

Scientists from the University of Saskatchewan and Harvard are teaming up on promising stem cell research designed to treat brain diseases like Parkinson’s.

Researchers from the Saskatchewan Brain Repair Program at the U of S and the Center for Neuroregeneration Research at McLean Hospital in Boston, an affiliate of Harvard Medical School, signed an agreement on Sept. 14 to collaborate on world-class stem cell brain research to set the stage for clinical trials.

“This provides the platform for the development of novel therapies for incurable neurological diseases that have the potential to benefit millions of patients around the world,” said Dr. Ivar Mendez, who heads the Saskatchewan Brain Repair Program at the U of S and is collaborating with Dr. Oleg Isacson, a Harvard neurology professor and director of the Center for Neuroregeneration Research at McLean Hospital.

The two leading researchers have already been working for a decade together on a cell-based therapy for Parkinson’s that is designed to restore cells lost in the disease process. This research will involve using stem cells from the patient as raw material to provide dopamine neurons that can be used to repair the brain circuitry damaged by Parkinson’s.

“We have the experience and expertise in the surgical technology of safely being able to implant these cells into the human brain,” said Mendez, who began transplanting cells that produce dopamine into patients in the 1990s while he was at Dalhousie University. All 10 patients implanted with these cells in the study improved significantly.

Harvard scientists are also excited about expanding their research alliance with the U of S.

“I am thrilled to continue this work with Dr. Mendez and his talented colleagues at University of Saskatchewan,” said Isacson. “This alliance will provide knowledge in stem cell biology and transplantation, and will contribute to development and application of advanced clinical programs and technologies that will advance cell therapy as a promising treatment for Parkinson’s disease.”

Draft sexual assault policy released

The University of Saskatchewan’s commitment to develop a campus-wide sexual assault prevention policy took another step forward on Sept. 22 when a draft policy was announced.

The announcement, coinciding with Sexual Assault Awareness Week, launched the feedback-gathering stage of the university’s new draft sexual assault prevention policy.

“This policy is critical to the entire campus,” said Patti McDougall, vice-provost of teaching and learning. “That is why we are encouraging every member of the campus community to contribute to the development of this policy by letting us know their thoughts and suggestions.”

The feedback phase will be open until October 5, explained McDougall, adding that the development stage has been very consultative thus far, with the policy being shaped by conversations with those most closely involved, including Protective Services, Human Resources, student affairs and supports, and students and faculty.

“We held workshops and brainstorming sessions over the last number of months with a wide range of groups representing students, faculty and staff,” explained McDougall.

The policy was an important part of University of Saskatchewan Students’ Union President Jack Saddleback’s campaign platform last spring and he is pleased with the progress the university has made.

“When I ran for president, I made it clear that I would do all I could to ensure that the voices of students would be heard,” said Saddleback. “Today I am pleased that the university administration has listened and I look forward to working with our campus community for the safety of all.”

Cheryl Carver, associate vice-president of human resources said it was clear that the policy needed to include all members of the campus community and supports the draft extending to faculty and staff in addition to students.

“It is one of our top priorities to ensure the entire university community is safe on our campus,” said Carver. “This is something, of course, we will need to continue addressing and working towards, but having this policy is such a critical step.”

Once all feedback is gathered and integrated into the new draft sexual assault prevention policy, the document will be submitted to the Board of Governors for approval in December.

“Having a policy is one thing, enforcing it is another, and that will be everyone’s responsibility on campus. The goal of all of this is to ensure someone who has been affected by sexual assault or sexual misconduct feels supported and those who commit incidents of sexual assault are held accountable,” said McDougall.
There was a pelican in the garage and a duck in the basement, but mostly the house and backyard are home to raccoons.

“I’m the raccoon lady, which might be one step below being a crazy cat lady,” said Hayley Hesseln, associate professor in the U of S College of Agriculture and Bioresources. “They are so smart, I just really love those little guys.”

Hesseln has been helping rehab animals for more than a decade, but it was only this past year that she began operating Bandit Ranch Rehab in the north end of Saskatoon, turning her house into a rescue facility for orphaned raccoons.

“I have a permit and keep everything up to code,” said Hesseln, who recently applied for charitable status. “My neighbours are cool with it; there is no smell and not a lot of noise.”

Which is surprising considering that 33 raccoons spent time at Bandit Ranch Rehab during this past spring and summer.

Their population is really growing in the city and they are becoming more common. They are coming up along the river, and can adapt to any niche if they have water,” she said.

As a result of the growing population, there are more orphaned babies who lost their moms through human-wildlife interactions, like being shot or hit by a vehicle, Hesseln explained.

“It’s so sad to see little orphans. We aren’t changing the natural order, just trying to mitigate human expansion of paving, drilling and building.”

But no matter the reason that a raccoon arrives at Hesseln’s house, the goal is to get them back into the wild. She starts by rehydrating the babies and bottle-feeding them a special formula for raccoons. She weans them off of the bottle and introduces fruit, dog food, chicken and fish. The next step is into the backyard pen and eventually to another rehab facility outside the city limits where raccoons will spend winter before being released back into the wild.

“Raccoons wild-up really well,” said Hesseln, pointing to a few bruises on her arm to highlight that no matter how cute, raccoons are not pets. “Even bottle-fed raccoons will go wild quickly. They develop a natural fear of humans. From October to April they are nocturnal so they don’t see humans often even when in rehab, so that helps when they get back into the wild.”

Hesseln said she sometimes gets criticized for helping what others see as pests or vermin, but that hasn’t stopped her from spending $3,500 of her own money on food, vaccinations and other raccoon necessities over the past year.

“What makes me like them is what makes others hate them,” she said with a laugh. “They are curious and smart. They have thumbs and can open locks and go through pockets. They play and fool around and you can tell when they’re having a good time.”

With most of her summer guests already moved into the larger, more wild-like winter rehab facility, Hesseln is planning for next year.

“I started a campaign to raise $6,000 for a new pen. We’ve already raised $4,000. Still looking for food donations and extra help. Raccoons are a lot of work. What would really help is for people to stop shooting the mothers.”

There was a pelican in the garage and a duck in the basement, but mostly the house and backyard are home to raccoons.
Brittany Melnyk is doing her part to change how people think about working in the field of computer science and programming.

“It can seem very intimidating,” said Melnyk, the academic programs and internship co-ordinator in the Department of Computer Science. “There are a lot of misconceptions about it. Everyone thinks about the guy alone in the basement with the lights off, just coding away.”

The reality, she said, is that it is extremely social and collaborative.

“You’re always working with people and solving problems as a group for this greater thing that you’re making.”

That social spirit will be explored at Game Jam starting Sept. 25, as part of STEMfest—the conference celebrating science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).

Game jams are high-energy gatherings of game developers and designers to create a video game based on a secret theme, typically in a set amount of time—in this case, over the course of a weekend. “Essentially, you make a video game in 48 hours,” said Melnyk, who is also serving as the event co-ordinator. “It’s a fun twist on promoting programming and computer science.”

Computer science students have organized two successful game jams in recent years, letting their creativity run wild. Last year’s event resulted in many notable gems, including Get Down Mr. President (where you must protect the president from assassins), Killer Bunny (featuring a side-scrolling rabbit facing various obstacles), and The Good the Bad and the Burritos (a modern take on a wild west style shoot-em-up).

Thanks to extra financial resources from STEMfest, Melnyk has been able to put together workshops throughout the month of September to familiarize participants with Unity (the software used to create games) and Processing (a programming language used in game development). She has also lined up industry speakers and mentors to attend and provide guidance throughout the jam.

“The developer community here is very close and supportive,” she said, adding that a lot of computer science alumni (herself included) stayed in Saskatoon and remain connected to students in mentorship roles. “Everybody in Saskatoon kind of goes above and beyond to share knowledge and to support people.”

Aside from her work in the college, Melnyk is also an advocate for getting women more involved in the computing, which has a sizeable gender gap. She and her friend (and fellow computer science alumna) Marli Bells are the Saskatoon chapter leaders of Ladies Learning Code, a national non-profit that provides digital literacy workshops for women and children who want to learn coding.

Melnyk acknowledges that it’s a relatively new field compared to, for example, biology and chemistry, but a background in computer science can open a lot of doors.

“It’s like learning core French—you’re just learning the language! If you like Sudoku, you can probably learn to program.”

Next steps

From Page 1

“Being able to do this interdisciplinary research and collaborate with people in pharmacy was a great experience,” said the Ottawa native. “Combining knowledge from drug synthesis and dentistry, my two passions, made me realize I want to continue to do both once I graduate. Having a practice and pursuing academia will allow me to do that.”

Structural + Stylistic = Substantive Editing

November 2, 2015, 9:00 am – 4:00 pm
Western Development Museum, Saskatoon

About the Workshop

Substantive editing brings order to chaos and breathes life into moribund manuscripts. By reorganizing and revising, you can help authors reach their readers more effectively. This workshop will include strategies and techniques for:

- assessing material
- identifying problem areas
- creating solutions
- working with the author
- estimating time and cost

Whether you edit reports, trade non-fiction manuscripts, newsletters, journal articles, manuals, or websites, this workshop can enhance your substantive editing skills.

More Information

Email workshopSK@editors.ca
Visit us online at www.editors.ca/saskatchewan
Class and creativity
An interview with artist in residence David Braid

Canadian composer and Juno-winning pianist David Braid has been named an artist in residence at the U of S College of Arts and Science. He will be on campus Sept. 30 through Oct. 14 to teach a one-credit course about creativity, deliver a public lecture and perform several shows. We spoke with him by phone in early September.

How do you teach creativity?
My goal is to get students to understand there are two different intelligences—the theoretician, who is left-brain, analyzing, breaking things apart, and the artist child, who is spontaneous, who gets excited to play music, who chose to go to music school. These intelligences have different roles in the learning and performing processes. Great musicians seem to be strong in both. Stravinsky is the perfect example. His structure and craft as an orchestral composer is unparalleled. He could talk about every detail and why it was there: craft and analysis, plus an intuitive process. His “Rite of Spring” seems to have come out of nowhere, this incredible new type of creativity, the feeling that music feels entirely spontaneous.

What draws you to jazz?
At 17, I heard a symphony by Mozart and became interested in the architecture of music: how does one build that? I listened and imitated at the piano. I bought some big score paper, trying to write a symphony. It’s ridiculous to think about—I had no theoretical education, was trying based solely on intuition. My high school music teacher was a jazz guitarist; he said, “Check out jazz. You improvise—that’s like composing spontaneously.”

What advice can you offer emerging musicians about mastering their craft?
Do not feel that only special people become really great musicians. Doing something great is available to everyone, as long as you become really great at mastering your craft. It’s ridiculous to write a symphony. I wouldn’t say I want to collaborate with a group by the merits of their name, but with musicians by merit of their creative spirit, who are absolutely dedicated to creating uncompromising music. However, they all recognize that the audience is a fundamental part of the musical experience and should not be ignored. Music can be highly interesting on a theoretical level but the audience can be totally disenfranchised from what’s going on. It’s highly rewarding.

What attracts you to Saskatoon?
I’ve come to Saskatoon about once a year for the past eleven years for the Jazz Festival and Jazz Society. I come in as an artist to a small community, small enough that it feels like the interpersonal relationships between people are important and connected, but large enough to have a vibrant arts scene. The audience listens, is attentive, intelligent. That is highly rewarding.

What musicians would you like to collaborate with?
I wouldn’t say I want to collaborate with a group by the merits of their name, but with musicians by merit of their creative spirit, who are absolutely dedicated to creating uncompromising music. I choose musicians who don’t compromise their art form and don’t ignore the audience.

What are you currently working on?
I’m working on a new set of compositions. I have a 1-credit course about creativity, deliver a public lecture and perform several shows. We spoke with him by phone in early September.

Welcome to the society
Jeffrey McDonnell, left, and Ken Coates, right, U of S researchers.

U of S researchers Ken Coates and Jeffrey McDonnell have been elected fellows of the Royal Society of Canada—one of this country’s highest honours.

Coates, professor and Canada Research Chair in Regional Innovation, Johnson-Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy, and director, International Centre for Northern Governance and Development, is one of Canada’s leading researchers on Indigenous affairs and a leading expert on northern innovation. Coates has authored and co-authored numerous books, including Arctic Front: Defending Canada in the Far North, which won the Donner Prize for the best book on public policy in Canada.

McDonnell, professor in the School of Environment and Sustainability and associate director of the Global Institute for Water Security, is internationally recognized in the field of watershed science, making contributions to the measurement, modelling and understanding of streamflow generation. His research has contributed to understanding the role of plants in the hydrological cycle and the application of stable isotopes to water tracing in the hydrosphere.

Looking to upgrade your lunch?
Find new options everyday in the heart of campus at Marquis Culinary Centre, serving full meals seven days a week, and open to the entire campus.

Meal plans available to save you time and money. See the menu online at usask.ca/culinaryservices.
Social media sites are growing faster than ever, and the U of S is leading the way for Canadian universities. This past July the U of S won best Facebook page at the Canadian University and College Social Media Awards, chosen from more than 150 other university pages.

“Social networking tools and media sites are great channels for two-way communications, to share information, express creativity and connect with others,” said Andy Sargent, social media specialist in Marketing and Communications. “Through these tools we have the opportunity to create awareness of our programs and services, engage with our audience, actively listen and build communities.”

The U of S, explained Sargent, uses social media to connect with current students, prospective students, faculty, staff, alumni and the broader community.

“If used correctly, social media can provide a rich experience for collaboration and sharing of knowledge, ideas and experiences,” Sargent said.

SOME SOCIAL TIPS
Whether just getting started or a seasoned veteran, Sargent said it is important to always have the university’s social media principles in mind when tweeting, posting or responding. Let the conversation happen, be open, correct inaccuracies and protect our reputation.

**U OF S SOCIAL MEDIA PRINCIPLES**

1. **LET THE CONVERSATION HAPPEN**
   “Outline your goals in order to properly track the return of your investment,” Sargent explained. “Ensure you are properly seizureg the available opportunity to elevate the perception of our programs, and success of the university as a whole.”

2. **BE OPEN**
   “Concentrate your efforts on one platform before expanding your presence,” she said. “Take the time to engage, educate and inform. Social media is about transparency and customer service.”

3. **CORRECT INACCURACIES**
   “Content drives social media and it is instant,” explained Sargent. “The main usask accounts, for example, update Facebook a couple times a day and Twitter five to 10 times a day. Programs that are unable to meet content requirements always have access to central accounts for leverage.

4. **PROTECT OUR REPUTATION**

Sargent also suggested asking yourself three simple questions that will help guide your social media strategy:

1. **WHAT DO I WANT TO ACCOMPLISH?**
   “Outline your goals in order to properly track the return of your investment,” Sargent explained. “Ensure you are properly seizing the available opportunity to elevate the perception of our programs, and success of the university as a whole.”

2. **WHO AM I TRYING TO REACH AND WHAT SOCIAL MEDIA DO THEY USE?**
   “Concentrate your efforts on one platform before expanding your presence,” she said. “Take the time to engage, educate and inform. Social media is about transparency and customer service.”

3. **CAN I KEEP THE CONTENT FRESH?**
   “Content drives social media and it is instant,” explained Sargent. “The main usask accounts, for example, update Facebook a couple times a day and Twitter five to 10 times a day. Programs that are unable to meet content requirements always have access to central accounts for leverage.

SOCIAL SITES ON CAMPUS
There are more than 100 social media accounts—including Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and YouTube—being managed by faculty, staff and students in every college, school, centre, unit and student group at the U of S. If you are looking for a bit of help or information on social media at the U of S, contact Andy Sargent at andy.sargent@usask.ca. The university’s social media guidelines are online at: communications.usask.ca/documents/usask_social_media_guide.pdf

THE MAIN U OF S ACCOUNTS INCLUDE:

- [facebook.com/usask](https://www.facebook.com/usask) (20,403 followers)
- [@usask](https://twitter.com/usask) (15,000 followers)
- [@usask](https://twitter.com/usask) (3,268 followers)
- [youtube.com/usask](https://www.youtube.com/usask)

WHEN USING TWITTER, THE U OF S HAS THREE MAIN HASHTAGS:

- #usask
- #huskiepride
- #usaskgive

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You are invited to a reception celebrating Interim President Gordon Barnhart.

The Board of Governors of the University of Saskatchewan invite you to join them for a reception celebrating the work of Gordon Barnhart during his tenure as interim president and vice-chancellor of the U of S.

**Wednesday, October 7**

4:30 – 6 PM

Marquis Hall

Program begins at 5 PM

Refreshments and hors d’oeuvres will be served

RSVP to alumni.usask.ca/events/register

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Here are some social media highlights from the past couple weeks:

- [Overjoyed disbelief - congratulations to @usask team, European Mars Rover Design winner](https://twitter.com/usask/status/698085157790496512)

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The Main U of S Accounts Include:

- [facebook.com/usask](https://www.facebook.com/usask) (20,403 followers)
- [@usask](https://twitter.com/usask) (15,000 followers)
- [@usask](https://twitter.com/usask) (3,268 followers)
- [youtube.com/usask](https://www.youtube.com/usask)
Seminars/Lectures

Archaeological anniversary lecture
The Saskatchewan Archaeological Society is celebrating its 80th anniversary with a special guest lecture by Lee Bement on Friday, Sept. 22 at 7:30 pm in the St. Thomas More auditorium, with a reception to follow. Bement, senior archaeologist with the Oklahoma Archaeological Survey and adjunct associate professor at Oklahoma University, is a noted expert on early bison hunting and hunter-gatherer adaptations in the Southern Plains. The title of his talk is “Large-Scale Bison Hunting at the Beaver River Complex, Southern Plains of North America.” Everyone welcome to attend.

Public lecture by David Robinson
Sept. 19, 8:30 – 9:30 pm, 306-966-6639
David Robinson, executive director of the Canadian Association of University Teachers, will present “Vandals at the Gates: Rebuilding the University in an Age of Austerity.” How transparent and plausible are appeals to austerity? What dangers are posed to universities by their principal funders? Join our speaker and explore these questions. Everyone is welcome to this free lecture.

Know GMO
Sept. 21, 7 – 9:30 pm, 306-966-6639
For information call 306-966-8686, Executive Education behind the myths and the mystery of our crops. The presentation by Robert Saik, professional agrologist and CEO of Agri-Trend Group of Companies, goes behind the scenes to explore the research and development efforts at the Canadian Canola Genome Centre. Everyone welcome to attend.

Italian Wine Makers Evening
Oct. 2, 7 pm, 306-966-6639
Join us for an evening of sampling and learning about upcoming events, visit usask.ca/club. To make a reservation call 306-966-7775 or visit usask.ca/club.

Community Arts
Explore the literary and develop skills in drawing, painting, sculpture, photography, print, jewelry making, fiber art, graphic design, art history and more. Three courses help you grow confidence in how you develop your portfolio. Classes are taught by professional artists. Take classes for general interest or work toward a certificate. For more information, contact PTESL usask.ca. Register online or call 306-966-5539.

Miscellany
Smart Start
Join us for a 4-week series (Sept. 28 to Oct. 2) of academic workshops in the following categories: study skills, writing help, technology help, study help, undergraduate research and library skills. Student Learning Services is also partnering with the USG, Peer Health Mentors and the International Student Centre and Study Abroad Centre on sessions. Visit usask.ca/mca/SmartStart for a complete listing. Students can enter their name for a daily draw and a grand prize draw at the end of the week.

Vetavision 2015
The Western College of Veterinary Medicine’s public open house takes place from 9 am to 6 pm, Oct. 3 – 5. Student volunteers from the University of Saskatchewan organized by our veterinary students, the Western College of Veterinary Medicine’s Vetavision 2015. For more information about Vetavision admission, parking and the show’s schedule, visit vetavision.ca or contact wcvmvetavision@gmail.com.

Open House 2015
Prospective students, parents and high school counselors are invited to enjoy the fun-filled day on campus on Oct. 11, 7 – 9 pm, Neatby Timlin Theatre. Everyone welcome to attend.

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For many people, coffee is a necessary part of the morning routine. For photographer Barbara Reimer, however, it has become part of her art. Inspired by the leave-no-trace ethos of Burning Man, a yearly festival celebrating art and community in the Nevada desert, Reimer began developing film in coffee eight years ago. “I was thinking how I could bring photography to this festival,” said Reimer, photo technician in the Department of Art and Art History. “How do you leave no trace with photography?”

She further researched the chemicals used in developing, knowing from her years as a commercial photographer that alterations in chemicals can bring out certain colours, tones or highlights.

“I like seeing the images and working with the chemistry,” she said. “Any organic substance with a certain molecular structure that reacts to an alkali will develop the film.”

In this case, the coffee is mixed with vitamin C and the resulting solution (called caffenol) works as a staining developer, leaving a brown hue on the photo. She uses both instant coffee (which can be made at any temperature) as well as brewed coffee.

With extensive experience in both film and digital photography, Reimer assists students and faculty with projects and keeps lab equipment in order. She spent much of the summer in an artist residency in Iceland, where she furthered her work with on-site coffee developing and sustainable methods of developing.

“My whole idea is to have an available practice so I can pick up and go somewhere and buy it all there, so I’m not lugging things with me,” she said. “I’m trying to make it more portable.”