INSIDE:
Benefits Forum, page 4

Cultural Corner guide to fine wine page 6

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Explaining Thinking Behind New FCEs

In November FOCUS sat down with a few faculty who participated in the FCE instrument redesign pilot program and asked a series of questions to get their take on the new version, which was ready for student input on Nov. 22. The answers are not attributed to any one individual but are a composite of their expressions. Faculty interviewed include: Tony Rollett, MSE, Lester Lavine, Tepper, and Richard Schemer, Philosophy. From the design perspective we talked with Anne Fay, director of assessment, for the Eberly Center for Teaching Excellence. FOCUS invites your responses to these questions. Check out the new form at: www.cmu.edu/fce/ and write to us.

1. What is the purpose of FCEs?

In general the FCE instrument provides a formal mechanism for students to communicate with each other regarding which courses to take and information on overall course experiences. FCEs should stimulate faculty to reflect on how their courses are going. And for the administration, FCEs provide a formal measurement tool that can enter into deliberations for faculty promotion and tenure. It has been clear for many years that we needed a better instrument to evaluate data outcomes on the fly. The new form will be faster, able to measure many more data points and according to Fay, administratively was a nightmare. The new form will be more timely and easy to tabulate results. No one is interested in the old form. Many people did not complete it, and it was time consuming.

2. How is the new form better? (not just faster)

The old form took forever to tabulate results and administratively was a nightmare. The new form will be faster, able to measure many more data points and according to Fay, faculty will be able to build sets and generate data outcomes on the fly. The new form contains 40 questions in 5 separate sections where the previous form contained only 13 questions. Written comments are encouraged.

No-Budget Filmmaking

Last spring a group of Carnegie Mellon faculty, staff and students took aim at creating a feature-length film from scratch. The result of months of devotion by an unpaid and largely non-professional cadre was When Tyrants Kiss, the Pittsburgh film noir that played to a packed house at last month’s Three Rivers Film Festival. And now the English and Drama departments have come together in efforts to create an innovative program that will focus on this collaborative art of by-the-seat-of-your-pants, no-budget filmmaking.

When Tyrants Kiss was written by assistant professor of dramatic literature Michael Chemers and directed by Michael Scotto, then president of the CMU Filmmaking Club. The cast and crew were almost entirely made up of CMU students, faculty and staff and much of the film was shot on campus. Aside from a small grant from the English department to the CMU Filmmaking Club, the cost of the film was borne by those personally involved in making the picture.

Chomers and Sharon Dilworth from English will begin the new program this spring semester with hopes of repeating the magic of When Tyrants Kiss. The program was originally titled “The Danny Josephs Project,” named for the now retired English office business manager who was the driving force behind the making of When Tyrants Kiss.

“The film was Danny’s brainchild,” said Chemers, who encountered Josephs’ corporate conspiracy tale that became the story for Chemers’ script last fall and wrote the script over winter break. “He was the guiding vision for this army of fellow dreamers, he kept attracting more and more people to the project, like Kermit the Frog going to Hollywood in The Muppet Movie, soon enough he had a legion.” Josephs modestly takes a different view.

Help Paint the Faculty Fence

To encourage the widest possible range of debate, FOCUS introduces a new regular feature: an opinion column to be called “The Faculty Fence” (for Staff too, but we couldn’t resist the name). We shall continue to focus on publishing signed pieces, but recognize that occasionally issues might be responsibly addressed while maintaining the anonymity of the author. Some of Ben Franklin’s most interesting pieces appeared under a pseudonym. So, to encourage debate, we print the first contribution to The Faculty Fence below. Feel free to paint the fence! Do anything but sit on it! Make up a pseudonym, sign your contribution with your real name and we’ll use your pseudonym if we print your piece in The Faculty Fence column. Send your contribution to: focus-editors@andrew.cmu.edu

Why should I pay attention to cheating in my class?

When I was hired by my department, there was great interest in my technical qualifications. I was not hired for my insights into adolescent psychology. According to the Faculty Handbook, if cheating comes to my attention in my class, I am supposed to confront the student, decide what punishment I think is appropriate in the context of my course, write a letter to the Dean of Students, and prepare for a possible University Discipline Committee Hearing. This sounds like a lot of work. Why should I bother? I was hired to teach my technical subject. If a student chooses to cheat, I figure such a student will not learn the material and will fail out somewhere down the road. So I ignore the Faculty Handbook. Do you agree with me that this is the best policy?
Surveying Faculty Happiness, Part Two

Professor Richard’s Bad Day

This scenario is a fictionalized account based on the reports of faculty members across department and campus lines that demonstrates the complex interacting conditions, experiences and factors that impacted their lives at Carnegie Mellon.

Scenario Number One: Richard Pierce, Professor, Department of Aerospace Engineering. Written by Lynn Conner, assistant professor of theatre arts at the University of Pittsburgh.

Richard lifts his head slightly off the pillow and later it looks at the clock on the nightstand. 3:14. Now he wishes he hadn’t had that second scotch with Gordon — it felt good at 9 p.m., but sure isn’t helping him get to sleep. He knows the inebriated book warns not to just lie awake in the darkness. He thinks about going downstairs and working at the kitchen table. He imagines himself turning on the laptop. He sees himself e-mailing an enthusiastic acceptance, or note, then barfing on it.

But he can’t move from the bed. And he can’t turn off his brain, either — can’t stop the endless replaying of this morning’s faculty meeting or of this evening’s conversation with Gordon.

What a thing for Gordon to say to him — telling him he was making his family miserable. As if Gordon has any idea about the emotional toll the tenure process took on him. As if Gordon — blessed with the support of one good-guy Chair for the duration of his own tenure process — has a clue what it’s like to work in the war zone his department has become under Hardesty.

He and Gordon met at the new faculty orientation eight years ago. They hit it off right away, even though they’re not in the same field. It occurs to Richard now, though, that maybe their friendship is possible only because they’re not in the same college or department. Certainly nobody in his department seems to be on friendly terms.

The thought is the last one before he falls asleep. He is just content to pretend to be collegial — hell, some of them won’t even talk to each other anymore.

This morning’s meeting is a perfect illustration.

Hardesty called a mid-year meeting to address some concerns before the summer break. Richard knew what to expect — another turf battle playing out in the conference room while Hardesty sat by, saying and doing nothing to help resolve it. And sure enough, that’s how it began...

For complete scenario, see: www.cmurel.com/focus/current/FacultyScenario.doc

Explaining New FCEs

continued from page one at multiple stages in each section rather than just one—this is a change in the design of the evaluation. The new structure naturally lends itself to more realism. Currently there are limitations in any FCE survey; it is simply not possible to comprehend solutions around problematic environments, behaviors, practices or policies—when for understandable reasons one cannot be expected to publicly acknowledge many of their own pivotal experiences in the academic profession.

The Eberly Center has devised one strategy for encouraging constructive discussion among faculty. Our approach grows out of a two-year research project on faculty satisfaction and retention, reported in the October issue of FOCUS. In this project, we interviewed faculty who had left Carnegie Mellon (for any number of reasons) as well as faculty who are currently here. In addition to analyzing this data to discern systemic-wide patterns, we used the interviews to explore the interaction of events and experiences that shape the professional lives of full-time faculty members. We wanted to share the richness and complexity of these individual career stories with the anonymous individuals interviewed. To do this we asked a professional playwright to create a set of scenarios composed of real experiences, providing us with an opportunity to explore faculty concerns more personally in the context of particular situations; as well as to imagine alternatives. Thus, narrative approaches can help to foster greater consciousness of issues within a particular departmental culture; foster empathy for colleagues in circumstances one may not have encountered personally, and encourage faculty to actively address and solve problems that impact them.

As a number of researchers in higher education have observed, senior faculty often entered their field and their institution under very different circumstances than their younger colleagues (Finkelstein, 1984; Bowen & Schuster, 1986; Graubard, 2001). Significant changes in the academic professions and in the academic body, new financial realities, rapidly changing educational technologies, greater numbers of part-time faculty—one has created a radically different experience of academic life for young faculty than for their senior colleagues.

Thus, while scenario-based discussions foster empathy among all faculty members, they are particularly useful in helping senior faculty understand the experiences of junior colleagues. By the same token, scenario-based narratives can also encourage younger faculty to take other perspectives. The new FCE survey will be administered to all full-time faculty who are currently here. In addition to faculty who have left Carnegie Mellon for other institutions, to acute for non-tenured faculty members who are fearful for their jobs—par

I left for two weeks in China right after the close of the Mini 1 course calendar on Oct. 15 and I have come to make high response rate

Letters to the Editor

Dear FOCUS,

Who’s away’ is front page but a Nobel prize is what we need.

Professor Larry Wasserman

Department of Statistics

FOCUS: How does the news about two CMU economists receiving the Nobel Prize in Economics end up on the seventh page of FOCUS?

That’s one in a long list of fearsome scenarios that certainly bigger newsman than Who’s away. Tough Question, and Measuring faculty happiness that filled the front page. Where’s your sense of proportion?

Tom McConney

Editor’s Note: Good point. It was not intentional. Prof. Knudlund’s award was announced at the close of its final stage, so we added pages to celebrate and spread the word — no real need to think that we are treating FOCUS as an on/off switch for non-applicable standard questions and mid-term course changes.

Dear Editor,

I left for two weeks in China right after the Robot Hall of Fame event, and just saw your wonderful FOCUS article and photo. Thank you so much for such great public

faculty and staff to know about the Robot Hall of Fame.

Best,

JAYNE ADAMS

Director, Robot Hall of Fame Correction

The article “Tepper School’s Finn Kylandaal, alumna Edward Prescott Win Nobel Prize in economics” in the October FOCUS was written by Bruce Gerson. An incorrect byline appears on the article.

FOCUS — in seven issues a year — is a publication of the faculty and staff of Carnegie Mellon University. Many of the articles in FOCUS express the opinions of individual members of the Carnegie Mellon community, unless so indicated, they should not be construed as reflecting university endorsement or policy. In the spirit of the famous doctrine, FOCUS seeks a variety of opinions.

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No budget filmmaking

continued from page one

“You lock the two Mikes [Chemers and Scotto] in a room and in six months you’ll have a movie.”

As for the institutionalization of such an organic process—the making of When Tyrants Kiss was, the three major players in that film’s making have their concerns.

“CMU has a bias for building things and building across schools especially, this program is great for that.” Says Josephs, “But the problem with this is money. With When Tyrants Kiss, if we had a problem we had to be creative to solve it. People were coming from every direction with ideas and the movie changed for the better because of it. By fitting this into a course framework, it may prohibit that amount of improvisation.” Scotto echoed the importance of this nebulous method of filmmaking as well, “That lack of money forced us to be creative, improvisation was an asset to the film. Everyone was involved in everything, so it was totally collaborative and because people worked for nothing, they were more devoted to the project.”

Chemers clearly intends to try to preserve the shoot-from-the-hip energy of that first project. “People need to pull together like we pulled together on When Tyrants Kiss. If we had had one instance of ego or selfishness, it would have fallen apart.”

The no-budget filmmaking program hopes to produce a student movie each year and expand from a Drama-English program to eventually involve the College of Fine Arts and the Entertainment Technology Center. As this program expands, its unofficial founder Josephs hopes it will maintain that same collaborative spirit that dominated and created When Tyrants Kiss.

“You know success has a thousand parents and failure is an orphan,” says Joseph, “and CMU is a rich environment for that kind of creativity and talent.”

Ryan Coon

Top: Evil tycoon Pierce DeWitt, played by Christopher Dippel, holds court at the God & Capital Club.

Bottom: Hero Harris, played by Alex Cendese is consoled by good-hearted bartender Celly, played by Kelly Delaney.

English business manager opens restaurant

Just as When Tyrants Kiss was coming out in November, Danny Josephs was on his way out of the university. After 14 years as the business manager in the English department office, Josephs is opening a restaurant in Lawrenceville with his wife, Nadine Walz.

The new place, called Zooty’s, is set to open in mid-December. The restaurant sits at the corner of Penn Avenue and Main Street, just down the block from the new Children’s Hospital building.

“We want it to be a neighborhood place first,” Josephs says. “We want to have crowd-pleasing food at a good value. Soups, salads, sandwiches.” The bar is also open until midnight.

Stop by and try the signature sandwich, the Zooty: grilled bologna.

Brian Connelly
The programs are designed as open discu

should i contact about getting into a carnegie mellon academic program public affairs?

A: You would in touch with christine pobuly in human resources once you have talked with the academic department about taking classes as a non-degree student or are accepted into a program. tuition remission forms are available on the human resources web site.

long-term care insurance

Q: Is there any news/opinion on long-term care insurance that could be provided by carnegie mellon?

A: We have been in discussion with several

due to the timing of when we get in formation back from our carriers, our rates and plan details are usually not finalized until mid to late september.

the reason we get data so late is that we need to have rates that are based on our exp enence rate. there is a set date in place for what we are going to offer for the upcoming fiscal year so that we can maximize the cred

ibility of the current year’s experience.

unfortunately, this schedule doesn’t leave much time to prepare and distribute commu

nication pieces before open enrollment. we do consider it an issue and in the upcoming calendar year our plan is to get information on benefits out to employees on an on-going basis throughout the year using such vehicles as the faculty emporium and the monthly benefits bulletin, along with our hr web site.

reimbursement accounts

Q: Will the university start using a credit card for the health-care reimbursement accounts to eliminate most of the claims filing? i have heard they have such a service. when will it be implemented here?

a: we had explored the debit card in the past in our vendor, shps. at that time, it was too new and there were issues that had to be worked through with the vendor. for example, even though the participant was using a debit card, they would still have to submit receipts.

we understand that some of those con cerns have been worked out and shps is currently piloting a debit card with some of their other clients. we have begun talking to shps again about participating for possible implementation in january 2006.

Q: Why can’t part-time employees who are eligible for benefits use either of the reimbursement accounts? our expenses are often either directly higher (health insurance) or proportionately higher (daily care) than full-time staff. it’s not as though the university is giving us money — we would be depositing our own money into the accounts. why can we not use them?

a: This is a very good point. in the past, perhaps due to the nature of part-time work (where hours and wages frequently varied from payday to payday), there may have been the possibility that the participant was unable to make a set annual pre-tax contribution. in the nature of the irs rules governing reimbursement accounts (where an employee is obligated to make a set annual pre-tax contribution), there may have been the possibility that the employee would not be able to meet that pre-tax obligation.

however, we don’t believe that this applies today. many of our part-time employees work a consistent number of hours per week or vary, therefore, it may be possible to set up reimbursement accounts for part-timers. the benefits office will look into offering this benefit option for implementation in january 2006.

Q: Could one spouse use the reimbursement account to pay for something for the other spouse? a: You may use these accounts for dependent care.

Q: Who determines what is reimbursable through the reimbursement accounts?

a: The internal revenue service. they have made some changes, opening up the possibility of some over-the-counter medications.

identification numbers

Q: Why do we need to use social security numbers? is there another way to identify individuals?

a: When you are getting away from using social security numbers, you may request a new card with this information eliminated.

costs for modifying coverage

Q: I would like to know the costs associ-

ated with modifying my health insurance options, such as changing individual to spousal joint coverage.

A: Employee contribution costs are all listed in the 2006 benefits workbook available on the human resources web site at: web.cm.u.edu. click on the link to open enrollment. the workbook can be found under the open enrollment information center.

tuition benefits

Q: Numerous staff people at the seI would qualify under any circumstances to work at faculty but choose to pursue professional careers at the seI due to its unique mission. these staff have pHDs, strong standing in their fieldS. were these people faculty, what qualifications would the employee need to have for tuition benefits at other institutions. could they be given a special

facultY status and therefore qualify for the improved tuition benefits? this change would probably affect 20+ fewer people, and would assist recruitment to the seI.

A: As you may know, tuition benefits for children are no longer reimbursed by the government, which means that the university cannot get reimbursed by the seI for the costs associated with the current children’s tuition benefit program. these costs are borne by programs receiving general university funding.

there would be no basis to improve a benefit for seI staff when the benefit already available is not currently reimbursed.

in addition, we have no reason to believe that we have lost seI members or are unable to recruit them due to a faculty benefit not being available for this group.

there are many areas, schools, centers and departments at carnegie mellon where the staff have pHDs, are outstanding in their feelings, etc. so it would be difficult to only apply these “special” tuition benefits to the seI.

Q: Do children have to maintain a “B” average to retain their tuition benefits?

A: No.

Q: Should I contact about getting into a carnegie mellon academic program public affairs?

A: You would in touch with christine pobuly in human resources once you have talked with the academic department about taking classes as a non-degree student or are accepted into a program. tuition remission forms are available on the human resources web site.

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Q: Is there any news/opinion on long-term care insurance that could be provided by carnegie mellon?

A: We have been in discussion with several

life insurance

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**Overseas Health Coverage**
Q: Do you know what I would have to do if I get sick overseas? What are the steps I would have to take with the different providers? Is there some sort of information sheet available about this for each provider?

A: Yes, there would be a network of providers that you should follow the specifics for your plan related to out-of-network service. The Highmark plans (Comprehensive and PPO Blue) fall under the BlueCard World-wide program, which assists travelers both in this country as well as abroad. UPMC participates in the “Assist America” program. It can help you if you require medical treatment and are more than 100 miles from your usual home. The subscriber must coordinate the payment effort. Assist America does not help with the prescription process. You would have to pay and be reimbursed.

HealthAmerica and KeystoneBlue offer overseas medical insurance plans. These plans require the participant to contact their primary care physician in order for services to be paid and will require the subscriber to pay up front and file for reimbursement afterward.

I would strongly urge you, or anyone, to contact your provider’s customer service department before you leave on your trip to get the latest information.

**Dental Coverage**
Q: Has there been a recent investigation into what dental coverage is actually being provided? Have the enhanced family option, which costs a great deal and pays for almost nothing. Dentists are leaving the network because they are not being reimbursed by the insurance company. My dentist left about 2 years ago and now the children’s pediatric dentist is leaving.

Additionally, the insurance doesn’t always cover necessary work. I had a partial crown that was the only way my dentist could save the tooth. He correctly predicted at the time that the insurance company wouldn’t pay. I’d be surprised if they pay out more than 10% of my insurance premiums. This is partly because I choose a dentist I trust rather than one who is in network. But a contributory factor is their non-payment of necessary treatment.

A: As you noted, the Cyert Center provides child care for children 0-4 years old. I understand that with years of experience at Carnegie Mellon for 17 years and am 67 years old. I am grateful for this program.

**Employee Exercise Program**
A: Pet insurance is also considered a voluntary benefit, which we discussed earlier with the question about long-term care insurance. Some of the same companies that we’ve been in discussion with concerning long-term care insurance also offer Pet Insurance, so as we continue our discussions with these companies, this may be something that’s included, but we can’t make any promises.

**Retirement**
Q: I will be retiring in January. I’ve been at Carnegie Mellon for 17 years and am 67 years old. I understand that with years of service and age, my benefits will be supplemented. What does that mean exactly? How far ahead do I have to meet with benefits, and TIAA-CREF to get everything in order? If I retreat from my current job, but work part-time for Carnegie Mellon, do I still get my pension, or will it be frozen till I quit completely?

A: The retiree health care supplement will depend on the type of retirement health care plan you choose. You should contact Roy Mitchell in the Benefits Office (412-266-4747) now to set up an appointment to review those options. You should also contact TIAA-CREF at 1-800-842-2756 (or Vanguard at 1-800-523-1188) now. Also, don’t forget that you’ll want to call Social Security 1-800-772-1213 about three months before your retirement date.

Finally, your annuity income from TIAA-CREF would not be frozen if you worked part-time.

Lori Bell, Jason Bugg, Erin Czervinski, Gemma Green
What we miss in wine stores is the kind of personal attention that is common in other states where private shop owners will often give you a lot of good advice and even get to know your name. Ron pointed out that there are some advantages to the State buying system, which will often bring in bulk purchases of excellent wines at extraordinarily good prices. And the availability of experts like Ron does go some distance to filling the gap for customers who need advice, as we do. So don’t hesitate to ask for help when you go in the store, but don’t expect it will all be easy going. While we were talking to him, Ron was interrupted several times to deal with small issues at one cash register or another, and had to attend to small managerial details of the business that could easily be handled by somebody else, if the State system would really trust the wine guy to focus on the job he really should be meant to focus on.

Regular readers will know that the cultural collective strives for the highest degree of seriousness in its reporting, and there will be no exception here. If you want humor, read Chastened but not subdued, the cultural collective recognizes even more than ever before the need to fight the fight of cultural values. We don’t really expect to have a profound influence on the next election, but since the voting public in this country is apparently focused on values, we see an enhanced role: political role, for our words of wisdom about what to drink (if not how much of wisdom about what to drink) and where and how to get it (the wine and food that is).

The story begins a long time ago when we first thought to get a little more assertive about wines and their availability in Pennsylvania. We decided to pose a ritual question each time we bought a bottle, and began asking the clerks in the liquor stores what was the best bottle of wine at $10 or less. (This is a practice apparently popular with the late Jack Heinz, or Heinz Hall fame, who would compete with friends to find the best cheapest bottle available—a practice we have to admire). Very quickly we discovered that here and there one could find actual specialists, wine specialists. Perhaps this is now known to everybody but it was a surprise to us and may still be news to those new to campus (we don’t hesitate to throw this idea into the new campus of old traditions, like that of rubbing what’sname’s brass nose in the Baker Hall foyer. A shiny nose is apparently a good thing, and we too are prepared to shine when we hear from you about your purchases and your plans to share them with us).

Anyway as we were saying, we began regularly to seek out the ‘wine guys’ and get to know some of them by name. The first we got to know, and one we stick with to this day, is Ron Dreshman, currently manager of the Centre Avenue shop near the Giant Eagle between Negley and Aiken. For years Ron was the guy in charge at the Shadyside store near the other Giant Eagle, a place that tended to be known as the Shakespeare store. We have decided that one part of the quest of the cultural collective is now complete. Our quest is to find a place near here where you can get a bite to eat and something to drink. Regular readers will recall our trip to Cranberry and the disappointing results (check out www.cmu.edu and look in the archives for our previous column). This time we made an appointment with Ron and not only did he keep the appointment (unlike what’sname’s brass nose) he gave us lots of friendly, enthusiastic and good advice. So we hereby conclude that the best place nearby to get a drink is Ron’s specialty wine section of the Centre Avenue store. The store itself is a bit on the small side, and doesn’t have one of those pretend and probably unnecessary walk-in coolers where they tend to keep the $100-a-bottle wines. We aren’t looking for them in any case. We want it cheap, plentiful and good. The store excels, however, in its selections of specialty wines, some of which are in short supply. So, as they say at election time, to guarantee success vote early and vote often. And hope that the State will soon see fit to expand the cramped quarters of this spot—it could easily become the absolutely best, most centrally located wine shop around.

We asked Ron if it was still possible to get a really good wine for around or under 10 bucks. He said that it is more possible now than ever before. He explained that wine technology and science have improved so much that makers are able to tweak their brews to get better results more regularly. Everything still depends on soil and weather of course, but the cultural work on nature is producing better and better results. Chardonnay for example, (which we think of as being much a muchness but nevertheless drinkable) are all more or less clones of the 2000 Chardonnay Which explains scientifically why they are much of a muchness and why it’s possible to get a drinkable bargain wherever you look. We then asked if it made any sense to pay a lot for a bottle of wine, if good quality was available cheaper. There should be a better word around, cheap?—we’re not cheap, just good husbandman of our resources, so to speak. People who know how many people make five; people who can tell a hawk from a handsaw. We won’t turn down invitations to sample expensive wines for sure, but we are not wine snobs and we’re not wine slobs either! Ron sympathized with our economical view of wine buying, and said that one would have to go a long way up the price chain to get something worth the effort. If we wanted something special he recommended the Chairman’s Selections as worthy of our attention. In particular he pointed out the Hanna Bismark Ranch, Sonoma Valley Cabernet Sauvignon, normally selling for $60, available now at $19.99. So, if we buy expensive wines, we have to agree with Ron that it’s much better if you can get them cheap, sorry: at a good husbandman’s rate.

As it turned out, every single one of the wines that Ron drew to our attention (and they are all listed below) were excellent. Not a stinker in the lot. We liked the cheap expensive Hanna; it is soft and smooth and very tasty. Perhaps a bit too smooth, too nice. We actually preferred the Vega Sindoa, which has a taste of the earth from which it sprang lingering in it. But that is probably a matter of personal taste. Not everybody is hungering for a bold beakerful of the warm south, something with a mild aggressiveness to it. Why not we wonder?

So, here’s what we found, and liked, all of them except for the Hanna coming in around the $10 to $15 range:

- The best bargain, year after year: Cuvée de Première Qualité, 2000 Chardonnay (from the French, it’s the Pepeyrenees Orientales, which just sounds fine.
- A 2003 Castle Rock Napa Valley Sauvignon Blanc, so much nicer than any Chardonnay.
- The 2002 South Australian Buckley’s Cabernet/Shiraz blend is great.
- Labour-Roi, M. con Blanc Villages 2002 Chardonnay, unlike most Chardonnays we are used to, this French one is more like a dry white Burgundy, which is good, but perhaps a bit too tart and not full enough in flavor.
- Even though the label told us it would ‘jump out of the glass,’ we still liked the bouncy energy of the Central Coast (Sonoma) Rock Rabbit Sauvignon Blanc.
- The Waimea Estates Nelson 2002 Sauvignon Blanc from New Zealand, very tasty, crisp fresh, full-bodied.
- The Barnard & Griffin Columbia Valley Merlot, was excellent, full-bodied and rich and deep. An excellent Washington State choice.
- Our favorite, as noted above was the Vega Sindoa 2000 mix of Cabernet Sauvignon/ Tempranillo from Spain.

Hanna Bismark Ranch, Sonoma Valley Cabernet Sauvignon, normally selling for $60, available now at $19.99. (For the culturally collective wine group were: Cleatus Anderson, Otto Foghus, Alan Kennedy, Janet Rex.)
Enthusiastic crowds begin to assemble for the first drama presentation on the new rooftop, octopus-shaped solar-calculator theater site. The new theater will also double as a budget-guessing device when other oracles are down. The shape of the calculator signals a very positive thumbs up for the Arts, and for gardens as well. A taste of the first performance follows:

In Act II, Scene iii of Golbunkwen’s 19th-century opera, Figuro, Signor Brabantio stands aside and nurses his grievance over the Duke’s response to his proposal that his son marry the Principessa of Upper Soldovia in order to cement relationships between their countries. The Duke reasons with the courtiers, deepening Brabantio’s humiliation. The unidentified actor playing Brabantio is clearly gathering his strength for the taxing, mournful aria, ‘noli mi tanqueray’* that brings Scene iii to its unforgettable conclusion.

(* English translation: ‘I don’t see my gin and tonic anywhere.’)

Signor Brabantio applauds the jogging form of the Duchess as she rushes on with the good news that tariff disputes with Soldovia having been resolved and coffee exports about to resume, there is no further objection to the wedding going forward. The Duke silently signals his approval by raising his hands to the neutral position. The well-known sequel to this popular opera, Go Figuro, is planned for the near future.
Someone here at Carnegie Mellon wasn’t just going to sit there and take it when the election results came in Nov. 2 to re-elect George W. Bush. Instead, this person or persons unnamable headed to the roof of Wean Hall with a bucket of white paint and a brush. The good folks at Facilities Management had it scrubbed off by lunch time on Nov. 3.

“Sorry, world” seemed like a common sentiment. A lot of people at Carnegie Mellon and university communities around the country were perplexed and embarrassed at what happened out there in what used to be known jokingly as “God’s country” (no longer a joke, because now it really is).

Canada announced that any refugees from the United States would have to get in line with everyone else. Savvy students heading for semesters abroad are packing “Kerry for President” T-shirts.

Together, these two girls make up what may quite possibly be the loneliest pair of performers in this university’s history. While most other schools, both at the high school and collegiate level, have dance lines of 10, 25, sometimes 50 girls, Cheberenchick and Fillo find only each other when they look to their right and left. That may come as no surprise, given this university’s relatively low-key attitude to inter-collegiate sports.

The question, then, is why do these girls keep doing what they do, and why doesn’t anyone else join them?

Well, one answer may be that at a school where students just have to put a lot of effort into the academic side of things, the amount of personal time both Cheberenchick and Fillo put into their routines may seem astonishing.

“The first couple games of the season, we’d only get the music the Thursday before the game, so I’d pretty much spend my entire Friday night working on my routine,” Fillo says. “Then I’d have to get up early in the morning and practice. Most people don’t want to have to put that much time into it.”

Another highly discouraging factor is the public nature of the activities. Both Cheberenchick and Fillo have been approached many times by girls who are interested in learning their respective skills, but most back out of the field performances.

“A lot of girls are interested in twirling, but they get nervous about performing at the games,” Cheberenchick says. “So actually, I sell them they don’t have to. I’m perfectly willing to teach them how to twirl because I think it’s a really worthwhile activity, and I don’t mind going out there by myself at a game.”

Cheberenchick may not be bothered by her solitude on the field, but both she and Fillo will admit that without more people, maintaining their organizations becomes problematic.

“It’s totally up to us, the students, to keep these things going,” Fillo says. “When you have an instructor or you have uniforms and equipment already, it’s easier to stay from year to year. But when you don’t have that, and it’s just whatever students would be willing to work on it, it’s harder to keep going.”

Both she and Cheberenchick have poured so much of themselves—mentally, physically, and financially—into their activities, without any seeming returns. Yet neither has plans to stop anytime soon, and in fact Fillo has already begun efforts to make the color guard a Student Senate-recognized organization.

“I think if I get more people and we get more organized, it’ll be better,” Fillo says. “I just need to work on the bylaws and all that stuff. Then I think I’m going to recruit in the spring, because I really want to make this happen.” Indeed, when these two girls seem so passionate about what they do, it’s nearly impossible not to admire them, or at least root for them.

“I love it,” Cheberenchick says. “It’s a great way to relieve stress, to express yourself, to just have fun, and I just really love it!”

“Plus the Kiltie Band is just funny,” Fillo adds. “Normally it’s the other team that’s heckling your cheerleaders and football players, but for us it’s the Kiltie Band. It’s great! And it’s so unique. I mean, at what other school would you have calculus-related football cheers?”

Kristan L. Hoffman

Blue State Special

At any given CMU football game, there are 22 players on the field, about 100 musicians in kits, and, on a good day, maybe 75 fans in the stands.

Oh, and exactly 2 girls dancing at halftime.

If you are one of the few who have actually attended a football game at Gesling Stadium, then you have probably seen these lovely ladies performing all by their lonesomes, front and center, sticking out like two sore thumbs from the plaid ranks of the Kiltie Band. Nicole Cheberenchick, a sophomore studying civil engineering and French, is the – yes, the – majorette, and Jennifer Fillo, a freshman psychology major, is the member of CMU’s color guard. (For clarification, majorettes generally twirl batons or dance, while color guard performs with flags.)

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