

September 21, 2007

News and Features

[A penny saved...](#)[Building costs impede student centre progress](#)[Clickers catching on](#)[Virtual college to be dissolved](#)[Dell exploring substance abuse](#)[The life story of a college](#)[Survey shows satisfaction among grads](#)[Audit Services accredited](#)[Library ready for Phase II of renovation](#)[Willow tested for ethanol biomass potential](#)[Correction](#)[Volunteer students ready to talk science](#)[News Briefs](#)[Homecoming Highlights](#)[Painting Science](#)[Flu clinic dates set for October](#)[Investing is big business at the U of S](#)[On the Move](#)[Building a University](#)

Columns

[Opinion](#)[Coming Events](#)

OCN Information

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Dell exploring substance abuse

September 21, 2007

By Kirk Sibbald

The Department of Sociology has a new face among its faculty, but do not be surprised if she is not in the office all that often.

Colleen Dell has been appointed the new Research Chair in Substance Abuse through a partnership between the provincial government and U of S. The position is part of Project Hope, an initiative announced by the government in 2005 to help treat and prevent substance abuse in Saskatchewan.



Dell


Dell arrived on campus in July, and though her home department is Sociology, she will be spending much of her time out in the community, and meeting with members of other departments on campus, she said. Having worked with the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse (CCSA) for nearly six years, Dell has a strong background in community-based research and plans to carry that experience over into her new position here in Saskatchewan.

"There's a point of connection there, in bringing research into the community and the community into research," said Dell, adding community-based research is very much a collaborative effort that brings various perspectives into play.

Dell is currently researching illicit drug use and the healing process as it relates to aboriginal women. In early September, her research team finished interviews with 75 aboriginal women in treatment centres across Canada, as well as 50 staff members from the facilities. "It's important to know if there's any stigma in terms of the treatment staff, and if they are relaying that when they're doing their counseling," she explained.

Once all the data is compiled from these interviews, the researchers will get together as a group to interpret the results.

"My perspective is only one perspective, and you try to be as objective as


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you can so you bring everyone together.”

As for her future research pursuits in this position, Dell said she will take direction from a soon-to-be-implemented committee consisting of community members, provincial authorities and academics. The group will act as a sounding board for Dell, and will begin strategic planning soon.

On Sept. 24 on campus, the University, the provincial government and the CCSA will sign a memorandum of agreement, and will formally introduce Dell in her new position.

Dell was recently chosen by the Delegation for the European Commission to Canada to take part in the European Union’s Visitor’s Program. Beginning early in 2008, she will travel for a week to France, Belgium and Luxembourg to meet with government officials and learn more about their initiatives related to substance abuse. In turn, she will share with her European counterparts the approaches being implemented in Canada and, more specifically, Saskatchewan.

Born and raised in Manitoba, Dell came to the U of S from Carleton University where she was an associate professor in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology and also held associate status with the CCSA.

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