

# NEWS

## National and world news in brief

By Patrick Webster

### Earth-like planet discovered nearly next door

Scientists in the European Space Agency have discovered a planet similar to Earth orbiting a star a mere 20 light-years away.

The planet 581c, usually just called "c" by scientists in discussion, orbits the star Gliese 581, a small red dwarf that is among the 100 closest stars to the Sun. The planet's orbit is so close to the star that its year only lasts 13 days, but the combination of Gliese 581's low solar output and its characteristics as a red dwarf mean that 581c likely has an average temperature of 32 to 104 degrees Fahrenheit. In other words, it is very likely that the planet has liquid water and a mild atmosphere, two requirements for life.

The discovery has in part solved the "Goldilocks" problem that has plagued astronomers for the few short years that the search of extra-solar planets has taken place. Most planets discovered have, in terms of temperature, been either too hot or too cold. 581c, on the other hand, is "just right."

"Liquid water is critical to life as we know it," Grenoble University of France faculty member and report co-author Xavier Delfosse said in a statement. "Because of its temperature and relative proximity, this planet will most probably be a very important target of the future space missions dedicated to the search for extraterrestrial life. On the treasure map of the Universe, one would be tempted to mark this planet with an X."

The planet is somewhat larger than Earth, with a mass roughly 5 times larger and a calculated surface gravity about 1.5-1.6 times greater than Earth standard. The gravity would be uncomfortable but livable for a human. A 150 pound man on Earth would weigh 225 pounds on 581c.

"This could be very important," said NASA astrobiologist

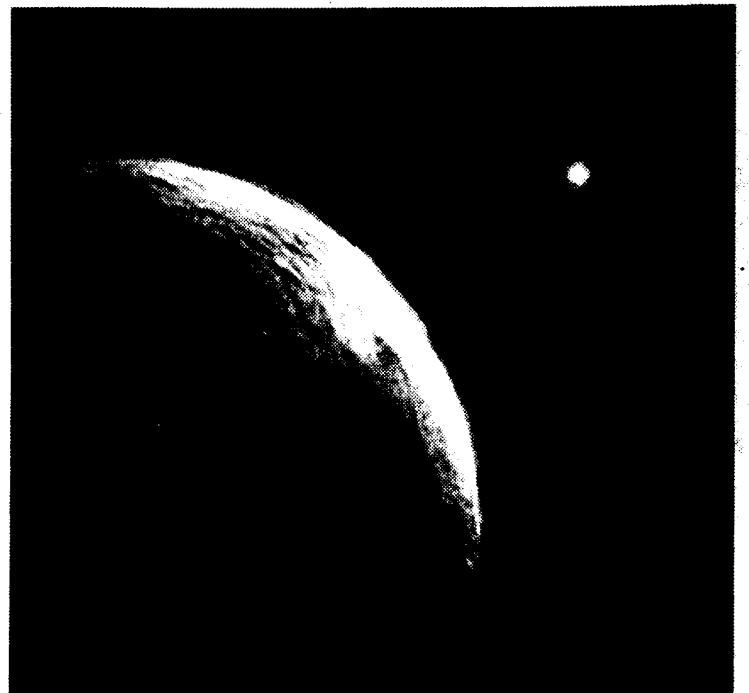
Chris McKay. "It doesn't mean there is life, but it means it's an Earth-like planet in terms of potential habitability."

The star itself is so dim that it cannot be seen without a telescope. The planet was first detected by a sensitive instrument called the High Accuracy Radial Velocity for Planetary Searcher, which measures the "wobble" in light emitted by stars as it passes by a nearby planetary mass. After the first detection, other methods were used to determine its distance from Gliese 581 and its approximate mass, from which the likely range of temperatures was deduced. Many things about the planet are still unknown, such as details about its atmosphere, whether it has any axial spin or tilt and how much, and whether it is comprised of rock or a mixture of rock and ice.

"You need more work to say it's got water or it doesn't have water," said Steve Maran, press officer for the American Astronomical Society. "You wouldn't send a crew there assuming that when you get there, they'll have enough water to get back."

Many scientists are excited that a planet so similar to Earth was found so close to our own solar system.

"It's a significant step on the way to finding possible life in the universe," said University of Geneva astronomer Michel Mayor, a European scientist on the team that found the new planet. "It's a nice discovery. We still have a lot of questions." Astronomers had discovered 220 planets outside of our solar system before 581c. Before now, the search for Earth-like planets has been focused on yellow stars similar to our own sun. This practice may change since 581c was found orbiting a red dwarf.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

This illustration simulates the newly found planet orbiting red dwarf star Gliese 581.



Source: CNN.com, Yahoo! News

### Students stress about the approach of finals week

By Jeff Barber  
contributing writer

Each and every year, hundreds of thousands of college students dream of their summer vacation. As the spring semester ends, plans for summer begin. However, there is only one thing that stands between a student and their perfect summer: finals. As the semester here at Penn State Behrend comes to an end, students are preparing for finals.

Preparing for finals can be very stressful for some students. According to the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) journal, each year thousands of students nationwide become clinically depressed due to finals. From late night cram sessions and excess amounts of caffeine, to lack of sleep and over exhaustion, finals week in general takes a toll on a student's body.

Roger Lafferty, a senior Communication major, says finals week is always a stressful time for him. Not only does Lafferty have a full course load, he also works two part-time jobs. "Finding time to study can be a problem some- times," said Lafferty. "I



Mike Sharkey/THE BEHREND BEACON

As finals week approaches, Behrend students are hitting the books and study in the Lilley Library more often.

usually have to take time off work in order to get some studying accomplished." Lafferty, like most college students, takes a simple but exclusive approach when it comes to studying for finals. He said, "I typically spend my nights studying in solitary confinement by myself." Lafferty's study tactics consist of reading the book and going over notes, a typical approach for students.

However, with all the stress finals week causes, many students have found

that relaxing is just as important as studying. Lafferty said he makes sure he does not overload himself with too much studying. "I try to have a lot of alone time, take breaks, and just relax," he said. Lafferty also said that exercise has been a good way for him to find relief from all the stresses of finals. Lafferty also gave some advice to freshman students who may not be accustomed to dealing with finals. "Don't take anything lightly. Just because it's your first year, don't slack off and mess around. Get things done, study hard and try to get the best possible grade, because it will reflect you later in your life," he said.

Although, freshman year is the least demanding of the college years for most students, freshmen can also become stressed out about finals. Alanna Stecura, a freshman political science and history major, stated that the demands of finals week can be overwhelming at times. "There are times where I feel like I didn't learn anything, and I just freak out," said Stecura. In order to cope with the stress of finals, Stecura said she usually finds herself shopping or sleeping. "A nice nap always works for me," said Stecura.

Like many students, Stecura said her studying habits usually depend on the type of class she is studying for. "If it's a history class, I reread notes; algebra, I work on problems, political science I usually reread the text," she said.

However, one thing that Stecura learned from her first semester is that when it comes to studying for finals you need to start as soon as possible.

"Don't wait until the last minute" said Stecura. "You'll regret it."

While finals may be a stressful time in a student's life, it is important to know that if you are feeling stressed while studying, you should take a break, a nice long walk, or head to the mall. Most importantly, find something you like to do and step away from the textbooks for an hour or so. In the end you'll find it a lot easier to study and a lot less stressful come finals week.

### SGA offers new constitution continued from page 1

The SGA is the governing body of the student population at Penn State Behrend. This organization strives to voice opinions on issues within the student body and works to continuously maintain the well-being of the college overall. Beyond all that, SGA contributes to the betterment of the social and intellectual student life.

SGA weekly meetings are open to the entire student body and are generally held on Wednesdays at 5:20 p.m. at the Reed Union Building, room 114. Students can become involved in student government by running for the Council or Senator Positions. The Council Presidents also hold regular forums to hear about student concerns. To find out more information about the Student Government Association visit [www.clubs.psu.edu/bd/sga](http://www.clubs.psu.edu/bd/sga).

Anyone interested in working for *The Behrend Beacon* for the Fall 2007 semester, contact Christ LaFuria at [csl5005@psu.edu](mailto:csl5005@psu.edu).



Mike Sharkey/THE BEHREND BEACON

Matchbox Players give a toast after performing their second annual Murder Mystery Dinner in McGarvey Commons.

### Quotes on Civility

"Manners easily and rapidly mature into morals."

- Horace Mann

Janet Neff Sample Center  
for Manners & Civility

