

Alumnus showcases technology

By Sarah Peters
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

A Penn State alumnus and blind chemist recently demonstrated products at the White House to help blind and low-vision students learn science with a more hands-on approach.

Cary Supalo, Class of 2010, met with Kareem Dale, associate director of the White House Office of Public Engagement and special assistant to the president for disability policy, to demonstrate products that will help blind and low vision students learn science.

Supalo said the Obama administration is currently making a push for Americans to enter the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) because America is falling behind in those fields.

"People with disabilities have to problem solve to overcome their disability challenges," Supalo said. "You look at what STEM professionals do, and it would be foolish not to tap their abilities or take



Courtesy of Lillian Rinkel

advantage of their expertise." Dale, who is also blind, tested technology developed at Penn State's Independent Laboratory Access for the Blind (ILAB) and the Talking LabQuest. The Talking LabQuest collects temperature and pH information and stores it and then uses speech software to read the data aloud.

"He indicated that it's a valuable tool, and he's looking forward to when it comes out," Supalo said. Supalo said Dale said he would send information about the products to the Department of

Education and make them aware of the technology. Supalo's work involved modifying the Talking LabQuest, sold by Vernier Software & Technology, to eliminate the need for a computer and special software, he said. Supalo said he hopes to have the application ready for sale in the spring of 2011. Alyssa Bates (senior-meteorology) said in science classes the blind person is usually the note taker, who writes down data their partner collects.

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Students abroad warned of attacks

By Eddie Lau
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Despite a travel alert, Penn State student Ariel Chow said she and her classmates have not felt uneasy studying abroad in Paris.

The latest "travel alert" was issued by the U.S. Department of State on Sunday, cautioning American travelers of potential dangers in Europe after officials said they received intelligence indicating that al-Qaida may be plotting attacks on cities there.

"Current information suggests that al-Qaida and affiliated organizations continue to plan terrorist attacks," the State Department statement reads. "U.S. citizens are reminded of the potential for terrorists to attack public transportation systems and other tourist infrastructure."

Penn State's University Office of Global Programs sent an e-mail to all study abroad students Monday, one day after the alert was issued.

The e-mail provided six major pieces of advice, including avoiding crowded tourist areas like the Eiffel Tower and the London Eye. It also cautioned against students frequenting "typically" American locations like McDonald's, Starbucks and Hard Rock Cafe.

The e-mail also reminded students to keep their cell phones fully charged, turned on and with them at all times.

"This is an alert rather than a warning. We have no intention of closing any programs in Europe," said Barbara Rowe, executive director of Education Abroad. "It is important, however, that [students overseas] exercise caution during [their]

daily activities and especially when traveling on weekends or semester breaks."

Chow (senior-media studies), who is studying in a Paris language school with four other Penn State students, said she didn't know about the travel alert until she received the e-mail from Penn State.

"I wasn't too nervous about it, but it definitely caught my attention," she said. "The French media is talking about it. You can find many articles online and in the newspapers."

The newspaper safety was mentioned during the study abroad orientation, Chow said, students were warned more so about the pickpockets in Paris rather than terrorist threats.

"My feeling is that the French are not particularly concerned about the issue," she said. "None of my French teachers or my host family mentioned the topic."

Chow, who has been in Paris for a month, said she hasn't felt the security has been particularly strict at major tourist attractions during her stay thus far.

"They usually just take a quick look into your bag and that's all," she said.

In August, the State Department renewed a "worldwide alert," saying counterterrorism officials remained "concerned about the continued threat of terrorist attacks" against Americans overseas.

The current "travel alert" is one notch below an official U.S. "travel warning," which would advise American citizens against certain foreign travel, according to the State Department.

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Walk to raise awareness, support

By Alyssa Sweeney
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Penn State Office of Donor Services employee Bob Cross said during the darkest days of his depression, he barely knew his children.

The disease Cross battled for more than a decade ended his marriage of 17 years, alienated him from his kids and put him on suicide watch for months. Now, three years later, he is walking hundreds of miles across the country spreading awareness and offering encouragement to those with depressive disorders.

The Walk to Washington is a 50-day, 835-mile walk from St. Louis, Mo., to Washington, D.C. to spread depression awareness. The walkers departed from a mental health 5K walk in St. Louis on Aug. 14, 2010, and will arrive in the nation's capital today on National Depression Screening Day, after having rallies in more than 20 towns along the way.

Despite the long days, Cross said the purpose of the walk keeps him energized.

"I'm not tired. I go to bed wishing I could walk more every day," he said. "We talk to these people and they can vent to someone who understands [...] For someone in their condition, that means more than most realize."

Cross joined up with the team of three in Washington, Pa., two weeks ago. They are led, Cross said, by a man who failed at a suicide attempt years back, before getting treatment. Organization director Steve Curran said the team was small because they had to raise upwards of \$10,000 dollars to participate. However, the organization also has "virtual walkers" who donate and get daily updates on the walkers' progress.

Walk to Washington has also started a petition to send to government officials to gain greater access, research and treatment for dealing with depression, which has over 8,000 signatures so far. This could be helpful, Cross said, because not many insurance companies completely cover the treatment for depression.

The walk was recognized by Maryland Gov. Martin O'Malley

with a proclamation, making Oct. 5 the statewide Walk to Washington Day in Maryland.

Cross said he is thrilled with the positive impact the walk is getting.

"It's a real disease, it's just that people don't know about it," Cross said. "People don't know what's wrong with them or are embarrassed to seek help."

He attributed his improvement to his faith and the counseling and medication he receives. Cross said one of the most important elements of recovery is the support of family and friends.

Office of Donor Services Director Lori Baney said Cross maintains a similar attitude in the workplace.

"He is very much a team player," Baney said.

Cross will speak at the arrival ceremony in Washington D.C. at the National Mall. He said his personal reasons for participating were for his children's sake, and to propel the movement for depression awareness.

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