

Dr. Pliny Smith: New Kid on the Block

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Dr. Pliny Smith is the “new kid on the block.” The second floor of the Johnson block that is, taking over an office previously occupied by a part-time faculty member.

Dr. Smith relocated to Lake Forest College for the start of the fall 2006 semester coming from Salt Lake City, Utah. There he left two part time positions at Huntsmen Cancer Institute and Westminster College. As an undergraduate student, Dr. Smith attended Grinnell College in Iowa, a school similar to Lake Forest College. It was there he obtained his interest in Biology and decided that becoming an undergraduate professor was his calling. He reports that being able to do his own research, interacting with faculty members from different fields, and getting to know students are among the many perks of being a professor. He notes that it is rewarding to see students leave here with a new ideas and that teaching is the best way for him to continue learning.

What is he bringing to the table at Lake Forest College? Dr. Smith, in addition to teaching *Organismal* and *Developmental Biology*, hopes to one day build a genetics course that can be offered to biology students. Also, in spring 2007 he is teaching a core seminar entitled *The Biology of Aging*. During this course, although planning is still underway, Dr. Smith hopes to start with the little concepts, like cellular based aging, and work his way up to entire biological explanations for population aging. This core class for biology majors and minors will incorporate concepts ranging from cell biology to evolution.

Dr. Smith, as a professor, reports he enjoys teaching at the college level in hopes of turning “undergraduate students into scholars” by teaching them to think critically and providing them a way to apply what they learn to the big picture.

In addition, he hopes to get to know a few select students really well, by employing them in his research lab. While the lab is not yet set up, Dr. Smith is already recruiting interested students to help him with his work on *C. elegans* and cell-fate. *C. elegans* have been an important organism to Dr. Smith for years and he reports it is because they are the smallest and best specimens to do genetics research.

In fact, the Nobel Prize 2006 for biology was given to a scientist for work done with *C. elegans* and Dr. Smith could only smile. He is proud that the spotlight is on his field of study and model organism.

While being a biology professor and scientist takes up most of his time, do not be shocked to see him out on a 30 mile bike ride or roaming around campus with his wife, an immunologist, and two children, Jason, 6, and Gillian, 9.

Dr. Smith is eager to find out what Lake Forest College has to offer in the way of extracurriculars, so he can get involved. And because of his late move to campus, don't be surprised to find his office and billboard undecorated. So, if you have any posters lying around, you know where to donate them.

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