ASU Today places MacIntyre, Niska on all-academic teams
By Sarah Auffret

Continuing an amazing record of academic achievement, more than 20 ASU students have been named to the UA Today's All-USA Academic Teams in the Feb. 17 issue of USA Today.

ASU has had more students named top U.S. undergraduate by the newspaper over the past 11 years than any other public school. Only Harvard and Yale have had more.

Scott MacIntyre, a senior in piano performance in the Herberger Institute of Fine Arts, has been chosen one of the top 20 undergraduates in the United States, named to the first team. Jared Niska, who graduated in December with a degree in bioengineering from the Ira A. Fulton School of Engineering, was named to the second team of 20 students.

The USA Today award winners are chosen annually from more than 600 top students nominated from their schools. The national recognition is especially meaningful because a panel of judges considers grades, leadership and activities – and, most importantly, how students entered their intellectual talents beyond the classroom.

MacIntyre, 19, is a talented classical pianist who entered ASU at the age of 14 and made his orchestral debut the following year, performing as guest soloist with the Phoenix Symphony.

MacIntyre, virtually blind since birth, will graduate in May with a 3.9 grade-point average. He navigates the campus easily with a cane and uses computer scanners, tape recordings and magnifying glasses to study. He has performed in hundreds of charity concerts across North America, appearing for the Braille Institute, Red Cross, Ronald McDonald Charities, the Mayo Clinic and the Canadian National Institute for the Blind.

His motivational speeches, has been a YMCA student teacher, tenor singing and ballroom dancing and ski with an amputated leg.

Parrots long have been a favorite pet animal, both for their personalities and their beautiful colors. An ASU researcher says he thinks he now knows what’s behind the chemistry that makes some parrots’ feathers red.

By Skip Dierra

Parrots, long a favorite pet animal, are attractive to owners because of their vibrant colors. But those colors may mean more to parrots than what meets the eye.

For more than a century, biochemists have known that parrots use an unusual set of pigments to produce their rainbow of plumage colors. But their biochemical identity has remained elusive. Now, an ASU researcher has uncovered the chemistry behind the colors of parrots, describing on a molecular level what is responsible for their bright red feathers.

The work casts a light on what is chemically responsible for the colors of birds, and the findings defy previous assumptions and explanations for color variations in parrots, says Kevin McGraw, an assistant professor in ASU’s School of Life Sciences.

“Evolutionary biologists have not really thought hard about parrot coloration,” McGraw says. “This research is exciting a whole new world of color communication in parrots – and the potential physiological and biochemical roles of the new molecules we found in our work.”

(See NOVEL on page 7)

Edison initiative bankrolls 16 student-led ventures
By Karen Leland

With the help of the inaugural Edison Student Entrepreneur Initiative selection process, 16 ASU student-led ventures are now under way.

The student teams competed for award money to explore their innovative ideas for business products or social services.

Submissions came from 99 teams from across the ASU campuses and disciplines.

The initiative, made possible by a $54 million donation from Elon Edson to the ASU Foundation, supports 16 new ventures.

Awards include up to $20,000 in seed funding, office space at the initiative’s facility located at the Bienveld in downtown Tempe, and training and networking opportunities with faculty, researchers and successful entrepreneurs.

“The students were great, and we had nearly 100 Venture proposals,” says Edson, the founder of Bayliner Marine Corp. and the firm’s benefactor. “There were many outstanding proposals, and we are pleased that we are able to help many students become entrepreneurs and further their business experiences.

Team members of the 16 Edison ventures come from a wide range of ASU academic units, including the W.P. Carey School of Business; the Ira A. Fulton School of Engineering; the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences; the Division of Undergraduate Academic Services; the College of Public Programs; the College of Education; and the College of Architecture and Environmental Design.

The 16 Edison venture awardees for 2005 are:

• A•Ease: Delivers low-cost, high-impact advertising and promotional services to small businesses and organizations whose target market includes 18- to 24-year-olds.

• Algal Biofilm Team: Patents and licenses an algal photosynthetic used for large-scale wastewater remediation and in the production of high-value natural, pharmaceutical and cosmetic products.

• AWAKE (A Worldwide Action Revitalizing Education): Enhances the learning experience for the students.

(See EDSON on page 6)

Architecture faculty named as finalist for 9/11 memorial
By Julie Ross

Terry Surjan, a visiting assistant professor of architecture at ASU’s College of Architecture and Environmental Design (CAED), is part of a team that has been chosen as a finalist in the Flight 93 National Memorial competition to design a permanent memorial for the 40 people who died Sept. 11, 2001, in rural Pennsylvania.

Surjan and team member Laurel McSherry comprise one of five teams to enter Stage II of the competition chosen out of 1011 designs entries. Their competition entry is titled “Fields, Forests, Fences.”

McSherry was a member of the CAED landscape architecture faculty unit until 2003, when she was named director of the School of Landscape Architecture at The Ohio State University.

A second finalist team with ties to ASU is headed by Frederick Steiner, past director of the School of Planning, who is the dean of the School of Architecture at the University of Texas-Austin. His team comprises E. loa Miller, a past adjunct faculty in landscape architecture at ASU.

The finalists for Stage II were announced Jan. 25 at the University of Texas at Austin. Each team will be awarded $25,000 to advance their designs before participating Feb. 24 – 25 in a Maslow Planning Workshop in Somersett, Pa., the site of the plane crash.

The final decision on the winning concept is due by May.

(See FACULTY on page 7)
Novel chemistry at play behind parrots' red plumage

(Continued from page 1)

Drs. Robin McGraw and Mary Nogare, both of the University of Washington, have discovered a new mechanism that is responsible for the red coloration of parrot plumage. Their work has been published in the journal Biological Letters. In their study, the researchers analyzed samples from 44 parrot species that have red plumage and found a suite of five molecules, known as carotenoids, that are responsible for the red coloration.

Carotenoids are a type of pigment that are produced by plants and can be used by animals to create vibrant colors. In the case of parrots, these pigments are produced in the bird's feathers and play an important role in maintaining the health of the bird. The researchers believe that these pigments may also have a valuable role in maintaining the health of the parrot species as a whole.

The researchers also found that these pigments may play a valuable role in the economic sustainability of the parrot species. They found that parrots that produce these pigments are more likely to be hunted and sold as pets, which can help to fund conservation efforts.

The researchers believe that this discovery could have important implications for the conservation of parrot species, as well as for the study of coloration in other animals. They recommend that further research be conducted to understand the mechanisms behind these pigments and how they are produced in different species.