

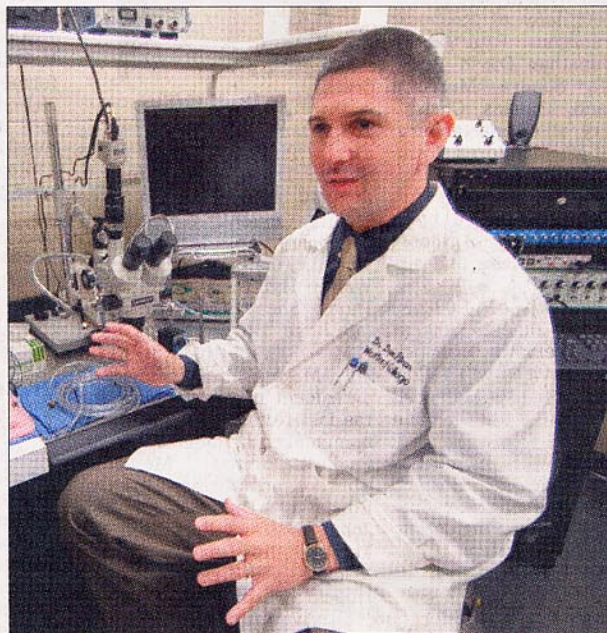


Kimberly Smith shows off one of the rats used in David Pittman's class at Wofford College inside the Milliken Science Building.

PHOTOS BY GERRY PATE/STAFF



David Pittman, Meaghan Crawley, Kimberly Smith and Cameron Corbin (standing) use a computer to monitor a rat at Wofford College inside the Milliken Science Building.



David Pittman talks about the fat study he and students are conducting at Wofford College.

Could taste make a fat rat pig out?

Wofford researcher, students study how fat chemicals stimulate taste systems

By MESHIA Y. WILLIAMS
Staff Writer

Imagine if those who love hamburgers and French fries could indulge in their favorite foods without worrying about packing on the pounds.

Wofford College professor David Pittman, a professor of psychology, hopes that the research he's conducting will help make that delicious dream a reality.

Pittman, a Florida native and 1994 Wofford graduate, has been interested in the topic of taste since his days as a graduate student at Florida State University.

For the past couple of years, he's studied how fat chemicals stimulate the taste system, and his research could lead to the development of artificial fat "tastants," which provide the value of dietary fat without the high caloric content.

What's unique about his studies, Pittman says, is that there hasn't been much research done on the topic. So, he plans to spend the summer in the laboratory.

Along with three psychology students, Pittman will try during the next couple of weeks to answer whether fat produces a specific taste sensation.

The students will study rats licking chemicals found in dietary fat.

Pittman is thrilled to be able to perform his research.

"To be able to conduct this type of research and have my students participate is invaluable," he said.

For his students, this summer's research prepares them for future work.

"It's a wonderful opportunity that typically doesn't exist on the undergraduate level," said senior psychology major Cameron Corbin.