

## New Kid on the Block

Dara Hardin



Dr. Louis-Gregory Strolger

Over the summer, the Physics and Astronomy Department added a new member to its team.

Dr. Louis-Gregory Strolger, a former researcher for the Space Telescope Science Institute in Baltimore, Md., was hired to bring his knowledge and enthusiasm to the department's physics and astronomy courses as well as to complement and expand the astronomy research in the department.

"Western's nice," Dr. Strolger said. "It's challenging to get organized to where I can do research and teach, but the students have been very eager to learn about astronomy." Dr. Strolger says his interest in space started at an early age and has only progressed over the years. Born in San Antonio, Texas,

he grew up in Reston, Va. Dr. Strolger said his parents played an important role for his interest in science. "My father was always technology driven," Dr. Strolger said, "and my mom always tried to keep that scientific interest in me." As a kid, Dr. Strolger visited the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum in Washington D.C., and attended summer camp at the U.S. Space and Rocket Center in Huntsville, Ala.

But Dr. Strolger has come a long way from his early experiments with metal objects and electrical sockets. He received his undergraduate degree in physics from Earlham College in Richmond, Ind., while playing nose guard for the football team. He continued his education at the University of Michigan by earning his masters and doctorate in astronomy.

At graduate school, Dr. Strolger worked as a teaching assistant for large, introductory level lecture courses and instructed a naked-eye astronomy class with a backyard approach.

"It was held inside a planetarium and allowed students to get a better concept of constellations," Dr. Strolger said.

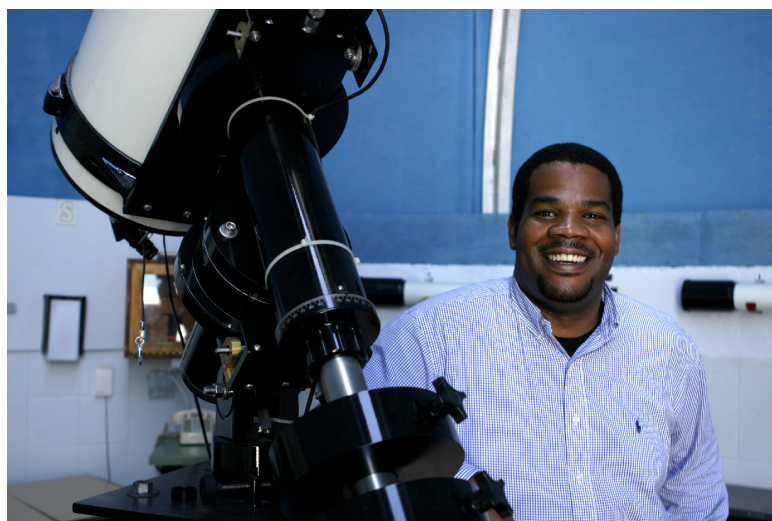
As Dr. Strolger continues to personalize his teaching methods at Western, he is also making plans to become involved with the Robotically Controlled Telescope (RCT). The RCT is an ongoing project to refurbish a research telescope in Arizona and automate its operation so it operates productively without a regular human presence. It is estimated to be completed within the next year. "The idea is to give the telescope a list of things to do at the beginning of the month and collect the data at the end of each night," Dr. Strolger said. "I'm looking forward to using it for supernova studies."

Dr. Strolger has dedicated much of his time and research to supernova studies, otherwise known as the study of exploding stars. Most recently, he submitted a paper to the international scientific journal, *Nature*, on the difference in gamma ray bursts and supernova environments.

"Another creature that goes bump in the night," he said, laughing.



Dr. Strolger instructs an introductory astronomy course.



Dr. Strolger, shown above at the TCCW Roof-Top Observatory, comes to WKU from the Space Telescope Science Institute.