On alert
New electronic communication system could be in place by fall

By Sharlita Forrest  
Assistant Editor

Cell phones may become more than just a means for keeping in touch with family, friends and co-workers. They could become part of a new emergency alert system at the Urbana campus.

The Emergency Notification Committee, which comprises staff members from the divisions of Housing, and Safety and Compliance as well as the Office of Admissions and Records and other units, is procuring an emergency electronic communications system.

Electronic communication systems such as the one the UI is planning to buy can work with phones, cell phones, computers and pagers to quickly broadcast audio and text messages to thousands of people. Authorized personnel can initiate communications from any telephone or computer with Web access, and recipients can choose their preferred means of receiving messages.

The system could be used to alert employees about less critical incidents, such as boil orders and utility outages; to call in plumbers, electricians or other workers when emergency repairs are needed; or by unit administrators at their discretion to communicate with faculty and staff members, although the UI does not plan to use the system in those contexts, at least initially. The Emergency Notification Committee is developing policies and procedures governing use of the system, such as who could use it and in what circumstances.

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See page 4 for information on what you can do to help prevent violence on campus, plus a list of campus resources.

Performing arts design
Preparation is under way for the 2007 Prague Quadrennial, June 14-24. The event showcases the best examples of current practices in performing arts production, design, technology and theater architecture.

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On the Web
www.news.uiuc.edu/ii

Larger than life “All That is Good, True and Beauty,” a sculpture by Teresa Wei, blooms on the Quad on April 30. Wei, a student in molecular and cellular biology, created the cardboard sculpture for the “Art for Public Places” course taught by Christine Mortens, professor of art and design.

Crises communications
Mark Briggs, campus risk manager, chairs a committee that will select an emergency alert system for the Urbana campus that could send thousands of text and audio messages nearly instantaneously. Similar systems are being adopted by many government agencies and companies to speed communication in emergencies prompted by events such as natural disasters or acts of violence.

The UI’s 136th commencement will be held in two ceremonies May 13 at Assembly Hall.

The speaker at both ceremonies will be Alumnus Jawed Karim, a co-founder of YouTube, a popular video-sharing Web site.

At the 10:30 a.m. ceremony, candidates in the colleges of Applied Health Sciences, Communications, Law, Liberal Arts and Sciences, and Veterinary Medicine; the Institute of Aviation; the Institute of Labor and Industrial Relations; the School of Social Work; and the Graduate School of Library and Information Science will receive degrees.

Candidates in the colleges of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences; Business; Education; Engineering; and Fine and Applied Arts will receive their degrees at the 2 p.m. ceremony.

Doors will open at 9:30 a.m. for the morning ceremony and at 1 p.m. for the afternoon ceremony. After all students and their guests are seated, the remaining seats will be available to the public. Shuttle buses also will stop at various locations on campus, including Assembly Hall, from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.

All students who have earned bachelor’s, master’s, doctoral and professional degrees and advanced certificates during the preceding year are honored at the annual commencement.

Karim will be the first recipient of the Chancellor’s No Boundaries Award. This distinction will be conferred upon alumni younger than 40 whose accomplishments reflect the Illinois heritage of excellence, service and global reach.

Karim attended Illinois from 1997 until 2000, when he joined PayPal to become one of its first developers. He completed his remaining credits at Illinois by correspondence and earned a bachelor’s degree in computer science in 2004.

Commencement ceremonies take place May 13

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Senate discusses undermining of state workers’ pensions

By Shariett Forrest

The Urbana-Champaign Campus is a busy training ground for students and future workers. Contact Illinois legislators to tell them that their votes to add a new retirement plan for state workers is unacceptable.

The state Senate Appropriations Committee on Fiscal Affairs and Stability Tuesday discussed the possibility of creating a new retirement plan for state workers. The plan, which would be similar to the one being set up for employees of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, would be funded by the state and provide a benefit similar to the one that is now provided for employees of the University.

The committee was also told that the new plan would be more expensive than the current plan.

"This is a very important issue," said Sen. Shariett Forrest, D-Metamora. "We need to make sure that we don’t create a situation where we have a better retirement plan for the employees of the University of Illinois than we do for the state workers who are working hard every day to provide services for our constituents."
Rapid response is critical to preventing violence. Call police emergency number if critical conditions are affecting someone, such as drug or alcohol overdose. Asking the person receiving the call to review their emergency operations plan is a critical aspect of an effective plan. A person who is known to have life-threatening issues needs to be monitored closely. Call police emergency number if critical conditions are affecting someone, such as drug or alcohol overdose. Asking the person receiving the call to review their emergency operations plan is a critical aspect of an effective plan. A person who is known to have life-threatening issues needs to be monitored closely.

By Shari Foret

The April 16 shootings at Virginia Tech, in which students killed themselves and 12 people, and themselves, has highlighted concerns about the need for better mechanisms to prevent suicide and violence on campus. The ser- vice's suicide prevention program and policy requiring any student to make a suicide attempt or attend four sessions of professional assessment, with the first eval- uation to occur within a week of the incident or the student's release from the hospital. Parents and student counseling pro- fessionals are involved in deciding who to contact. The Online Counseling Office still needs to be informed if the person is in danger. The software also allows instructors to view comments made by students on all posts made by a particular student.

The enhanced grading framework also allows professors to create one or more grading systems that may be applied to all students. The grading framework is set up by the instructor, who can then assign different grading schemes to different courses. The software also allows instructors to view comments made by students on all posts made by a particular student.

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Examination of radiation from birth of universe could alter theories

By James E. Kiepalla
newsroom.uiuc.edu

Using relic radiation from the birth of the universe, astrophysicists at the UI have proposed a new way of measuring the fine-structure constant in the past, and comparing it with today.

By focusing on the absorption of the cosmic microwave background by atoms of neutral hydrogen and helium, the researchers say, they could measure the fine-structure constant during the “dark ages,” the time after the Big Bang before the first stars formed, when the universe consisted mostly of neutral hydrogen and helium.

The fine-structure constant characterizes the strength of the electromagnetic force, which is one of the four fundamental forces in physics. But, the fine-structure constant may not be constant. Recent observations of quasars – active galaxies billions of light-years away – have found a slightly different value for the fine-structure constant.

If the fine-structure constant does vary over time and space, we could use it as a probe of new physics beyond the standard model and beyond general relativity,” said Benjamin Wandelt, a cosmologist at Illinois. "We developed the proposed measurement technique with graduate student Rishi Khatri.

A varying fine-structure constant also could help explain the mysterious dark energy that powers the universe, Wandelt said. "The measurements would be tricky, but not impossible," Wandelt said.

Measuring atomic transition

Benjamin Wandelt, a cosmologist at Illinois, developed the proposed measurement technique with graduate student Rishi Khatri.

New model describes avalanche behavior of superfluid helium

By James E. Kiepalla
newsroom.uiuc.edu

A physical model developed by Physics professor Paul Goldbart, right, with postdoctoral researcher Joseph W. Benjamin, left, describes the behavior of superfluid helium.

The model represents the key physical features of the Bokkeveld group’s experiment, including a high-temperature, synchronous regime, a low-temperature asynchronous regime, and a transition between the two, said Goldbart, who also is a researcher at the university’s Frederick Seitz Materials Research Laboratory.

The theoretical model developed by physicist, Benjamin and Goldbart balances a competition between interaction and disorder – two behaviors commonly associated with magnetic materials and sliding telecops.

The main components of the researchers’ model are nano-apertures possessing different temperature-dependent critical flow velocities (the disorder), and inter-aperture coupling mediated by superfluid helium.

The system, which is one of the four fundamental forces of nature, is formed when the universe consisted mostly of neutral hydrogen and helium.

For helium, the superfluid state begins at a temperature of 2.18 kelvin. Very close to that temperature, inter-aperture coupling tends to cause instabilities in a nano-aperture that already has phase-slipped also to slip. This process may cascade, creating an avalanche of synchronously slipping phases that produces a loud whistle.

However, at exactly one-tenth of a kelvin colder, the differences between the nano-apertures dominate, and the phase-slips in the nano-apertures are asynchronous.

Hans in 2005, Goldbart released a broadly defined strategic plan for the Urbana Campus in January 2006, followed by plans for each college/unit in June. A revised version of the Urbana Campus plan that provided more specific goals was released in January 2007.

More information on the strategic planning efforts at the Urbana Campus is available at www.strategicplan.uiuc.edu and can also be accessed on the campus’s home page.

Leadership for the 21st Century
Number of national academy members or citation recognition
Graduation rate
Academic Excellence
Total sponsored research expenditures by all sponsored research expenditures by university-equivalent faculty
Breakthrough Knowledge and Innovation
Number of sponsored publications in leading journals
Innovations
Level of deferred maintenance
Energy, Environmental
Total financial aid
Access to the Illinois Experience
Reduction rate
Total revenue compared to total costs
Number of students graduating per student per graduate
Percentage of students graduating on time
Percentage of faculty and staff members from underrepresented groups
Total revenue from licenses/patents, total number of spin-offs
Percentage of sections with under-20 students
Number of distance learning instructional units
State universities per student
Impact on student needs*
Percentage of time spent on engagement
Graduate student, faculty*,##/grade point average
Student,##/grade point average
Student graduation and retention rates
Units’ goals will include how to measure progress

By Shirlita Formet
newsroom.uiuc.edu

As the next step in the Strategic Planning process, college units on the Urbana campus have identified their top five priorities for 2007-2008, and are developing metrics for measuring their unit’s progress toward those goals. And, for the first time, college units will submit their goals and strategic initiatives to the Campus Budget Oversight Committee and link their resource requests accordingly.

Chancellor Richard Herman’s Strategic Plan for the Urbana campus is organized around five key goals: leadership for the 21st century, academic excellence, breakthrough knowledge and innovation, providing access to the Illinois Experience, and providing access to the Urbana Campus in January.

New model describes avalanche behavior of superfluid helium

By James E. Kiepalla
newsroom.uiuc.edu

A physical model developed by Physics professor Paul Goldbart, right, with postdoctoral researcher Joseph W. Benjamin, left, describes the behavior of superfluid helium.

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Hot flashes: Studies explore the role of genes, obesity and alcohol

By Diana Yates

May 3, 2007

Hot flashes: Studies explore the role of genes, obesity and alcohol consumption in contributing to—or lessening—the intensity and frequency of hot flashes in midlife women. These studies are part of a five-year research effort led by UI veterinary biosciences professor Jodi Flaws and colleagues at the University of Maryland, Mercy Medical Center in Baltimore and the School of Medicine at Johns Hopkins University.

Flaws has long noted that some factors, such as smoking, increase the likelihood that a woman will experience more—or more intense—hot flashes than other women. Race also appears to play a role, with African American women at higher risk than others. But the mechanisms that contribute to—or lessening—the intensity and frequency of hot flashes have remained a mystery.

“Even though more than 40 million women experience hot flashes each year,” the authors wrote in their paper published in Menopause, “little is known about the factors that predispose women to hot flashes.”

To examine whether genetics might play a role in hot flashes, Flaws and her colleagues conducted a cross-sectional study involving 659 women aged 45 to 54. The researchers looked at individual differences in the genes that code for various hormones. An earlier study by the same team had found that one of these genetic polymorphisms, in an estrogen metabolizing enzyme, cytochrome P450 1B1, was more common in women who reported higher frequency, intensity and duration of hot flashes. The new study trial used the same genetic polymorphism to lower levels of an androgen known as DHEA-S, and to lower progesterone levels.

These are the first two studies to find evidence of a genetic basis for hot flashes, and the first to look at genetic polymorphisms associated with hormone levels in healthy women with and without hot flashes. The provocative finding is of particular interest, said Flaws, because the medical community has focused almost exclusively on the role of low estrogen levels in bringing on hot flashes. Hormone replacement therapy, which is sometimes offered to women to alleviate hot flashes or other symptoms of menopausal transition, may include oral or transdermal estrogen alone or in combination with progesterone or an analog, progesterone.

“We think there should be more studies looking at the role of progesterone in causing hot flashes,” Flaws said.

The research team identified a second polymorphism, in a gene encoding an enzyme, 3-hydroxysteroid dehydrogenase, which also is associated with an increase in hot flashes. “People typically don’t think of hot flashes as having a genetic component,” Flaws said. “Now we have some evidence that there is at least in part some genetics behind it.”

In another paper, published in the journal Climacteric, the researchers used the same data to analyze the link between obesity and hot flashes. They had shown in an earlier study that obesity is associated with more frequent and intense hot flashes in midlife women. They now wanted to see what might be causing this effect. Did the higher incidence of hot flashes in obese women correlate with varying levels of specific hormones or other factors? When looking at blood levels of specific hormones and related enzymes, the researchers found a significant link between obesity and hormone levels. Higher body mass index (BMI) was significantly correlated with higher testosterone and lower total estradiol, estrone, progesterone and sex hormone binding globulin (SHBG) in midlife women.

The researchers were surprised by the findings related to estrogen, because adipose tissue produces and stores estradiol, the major estrogen in humans. Most people had assumed that obese women would have higher circulating estrogen levels because of this. Flaws said. That assumption turned out to be incorrect, at least for women in midlife.

“It could be that estrogen levels are higher in the fat, but not circulating in the blood,” she said. “It’s the blood that gets to the brain and to the thermoregulatory centers that govern hot flashes.”

A third analysis, published in the journal Fertility and Sterility, examined the influence of alcohol consumption on hot flashes. Higher alcohol consumption is linked to increased frequency and duration of hot flashes. But their analysis failed to turn up any significant hormonal differences between the alcohol users and the women who never used alcohol.

We don’t know why (moderate alcohol consumption) is reducing the risk of hot flashes, other than it doesn’t seem to be changing hormone levels,” Flaws said. Together these studies point to some risk factors for hot flashes that women can change and others that cannot be changed, Flaws said.

“We have the genetic factors we can’t change,” Flaws said, “and they lose weight, it will reduce their risk. If they engage in light drinking, that might also reduce the risk of hot flashes. And then there’s the genetic piece, which we can’t change.”

Hot flashes: Continued From Page 8

UI professor elected to AAAS

By Diana Yates

May 3, 2007

Renate Baillargeon, the UI Alumni Distinguished Professor of Psychology, has been elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the academic academy founded in 1780.

Baillargeon, who joined the Illinois faculty in 1983, was elected by the AAAS council in recognition of her “outstanding scholarship and dedication to the study of infant developmental psychology.” She is the first UI faculty member to have been elected to the AAAS.

“The academy’s long list of distinguished scholars includes many whose work has impacted the field of psychology,” said UI President Don DeWitt.

Baillargeon is the director of the UI Infant Cognition Lab, where she studies infants’ physical reasoning (their ability to make some of the placement, displacement and interposition of objects and psychophysical reasoning (their ability to make sense of others’ actions and interactions). Her work on infants’ physical reasoning has challenged previous theories of infant development by demonstrating that even very young infants are able to differentiate events on the basis of causality.

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Inside Illinois

O'Connor; New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg; Google Chairman and CEO Eric Schmidt; astronaut Donald Brown; and Smithsonian Spy Lens.

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Inside Illinois
Twenty honored for excellence in teaching and advising

F

orium faculty members, one academic professional and five teaching assistants at the U. were honored May 2 for excellence in teaching and advising. The award winners were recognized during the Celebration of Teaching Excellence banquet in the Illini Union.

Faculty members of the Campus Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching are Bruce A. Conway, aerospace engineering; Jeff G. Erickson, computer science; Walter L. Hurley, animal sciences; Prasanta K. Kalia, agricultural and biological engineering; and Shelly J. Schmidt, food science and human nutrition.

Instructional-staff winners of the award are Bruce W. Barron, associate English, and Ryan K. Gower, lecturer, recreation, sport and tourism.

Graduate teaching assistants who received the award are Erika Deneen-Offenstein, speech communication; Sarah Marie Kiefer, educational psychology; Jefrey Kohler, history; Ellen McWhorter, English; and Mark Ursinowski, natural resources and environmental sciences.

Janet S. Gaffney, professor of special education, and Robert M. Beasley, professor of atmospheric sciences, received the Campus Award for Excellence in Graduate and Professional Teaching.

The awards recognize professors and graduate teaching assistants who display consistently excellent performance in the classroom, take innovative approaches to teaching, positively affect the lives of their students, and make other contributions to improved instruction, including influencing the curriculum.

Faculty members selected for the award receive $5,000 and a $5,000 raise; instructional-staff members receive $4,000 and a $3,000 raise; graduate teaching assistants receive $3,500.

Others honored at the reception:

Bruce Michaelson, English, Hurley; and Kathy were recognized as Distinguished Teacher/Scholars for 2007-08. The program promotes excellence in teaching by honoring and supporting outstanding faculty members who take an active role in enhancing teaching and learning on the UI campus. During the coming year, these honorees will utilize their skills to mentor other faculty members. They will retain the title of University Distinguished Teacher/Scholar throughout their Illinois careers.

Lindal C. Smith, professor of library and information sciences, received the Campus Award for Excellence in Off-Campus Teaching, which provides $5,000 to the recipient.

Edward McAuley, professor of kinesiology and community health, received the Campus Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Research, a $2,000 award designed to foster and reward excellence in involving and guiding undergraduate students in scholarly research.

Two professors were honored with the Campus Award for Excellence in Mentoring Graduate Students: Janet Bue, professor of animal sciences, and Ruth Anne Clark, speech communication. Each will receive $2,000.

Denise DeMaris-Offenstein, academic adviser for psychology, and Charles Tucker III, professor of mechanical science and engineering, received the Campus Award for Excellence in Advising Undergraduate Students, which provides $2,000 to each recipient.

Team USA goes for gold at Prague Quadrennial

By Melissa Mitchell

oomed in on the 2007

ne the next Olympic games

wont take place until 2008, but a team at the UI has been going the distance to ensure that the U. is well represented in another major international event and competition held every four years.

Under the direction of Thomas V. Korder, technical director at the UI’s Krannert Center for the Performing Arts, several students and faculty members from the center and the Department of Theater, Division of Design, Technology and Management have been working long hours for the past year and a half coordinating, designing and building the USA exhibits that will be entered in the 2007 Prague Quadrennial, June 14-24.

Korder described the event as “the only exhibition of its kind and magnitude in the world that showcases the best examples of current practice in performing arts production design, technology and scenic architecture.”

“It is widely viewed as ‘the Olympics of performing arts design,’” he said.

And while Olympic competitors have their sights set on one goal — bringing home the gold — Korder and crew are similarly focused on a shiny, global object. The U.S. team is hoping to win the coveted ‘Golden Trig,’ a horseshoe-shaped award, and the Quadrennial’s highest honor.

Exhibitor entries are presented in three distinct categories: the national section highlights the work of professional theatre companies from throughout each country; the architecture and technology section features on innovations in architectural design, and “Scenofest” features the best work created by students.

This year, the multifaceted event, which has been held in the Czech capital every four years since 1967, will feature work created by theater professionals and students in 60 nations. In addition to displays by participating nations, the event provides a networking opportunity for theater professionals from every continent, and includes lectures, panel discussions, installations and performances.

While much of the activity is focused on the exhibits displayed in Prague’s industrial palace, a historic exhibition hall built in 1891, Korder said performances and activities are planned at venues throughout the city during the 10-day event.

The USA exhibit is sponsored by the United States Institute of Theater Technology, a nonprofit membership association of design, production and technology professionals in the performing arts and entertainment industry.

In his role as vice commissioner and exhibit project manager for the U.S. entries, Korder has been responsible for coordinating and facilitating the entire project. That has included carrying out the selections of a curatorial committee, comprising representatives of performing-arts professionals from throughout the United States.

“The person to make sure the physical exhibits were realized and put together,” he said.

“It’s the same with my job here, or what we did with ‘End of Cinnamones,’” he said, referring to Mike Ross’s multimedia production that premiered at Krannert Center, then traveled to other venues and is among the productions featured in the USA national exhibition. “They tell me what their dream is, and try to figure out how to make it happen.”

At the beginning of the process, he said, “I get sketches, and a lot of what I do is cost estimating engineering. Iting out how it’s going to be built. How can I support space, that kind of thing.”

Photo by L. Brian Stauffer

Team USA exhibit is a production of the Metropolitan Opera’s ‘The Magic Flute’ and the Krannert Center for the Performing Arts, is the first university exhibit for the USA in the 2007 Prague Quadrennial.

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Dream team Also included in the exhibit are production photos of 2007’s production of ‘A Midsummer Night’s Dream,’ directed by UI theater professor Bartlett. 
Scholar’s plan addresses ‘spousal refusal,’ nursing-home cost burden

By Mark Roettger

Nursing home staff writer

Spousal refusal, an increasingly popular way for elderly couples to qualify for Medicaid coverage to avoid nursing-home costs, has been painted by critics as an abuse of public funds.

But the opposite problem – a healthy spouse facing financial ruin because of the high costs of nursing care for an ailing mate – illustrates the complex economic, political and social issues surrounding spousal refusal and Medicaid, according to an article in the Elder Law Journal published by the UI College of Law.

Andrew D. Wone, an editor at the journal, noted that “Medicaid-planning strategies that work to mitigate the high costs of nursing-home care for families can introduce in a growing portion of America’s elderly struggle to live the high-quality life they want.”

One of those strategies is spousal refusal, under which a healthy husband or wife refuses to financially support a spouse in order to qualify for Medicaid, the federal program that pays medical costs for low-income people.

Medicaid pays for nursing homes and other long-term care with fewer restrictions than Medicare, the federal program for seniors financed mostly by Social Security funds.

Spousal refusal has been allowed since 1986, when Congress passed the Medicaid Catastrophic Coverage Act to protect spouses from “penetration,” or prevent the financially healthier spouse from being required to contribute some portion of income to come up with nursing-home costs. Unlike Medicare, Medicaid will establish mandatory contributions based on a couple’s combined wealth and limit the use of spousal refusal “to situations where there is substantial, documented need based on a case-by-case analysis,” Wone wrote.

While spousal refusal can reduce the possible contribution of assets, which would be on a sliding scale based on countable resources and income. The (healthy) spouse would retain the remainder of the assets and not be subject to recovery until after death, when a state’s standard Medicaid costs recovery procedures would apply.

This system could establish baseline standards across the nation and help control costs to taxpayers.

This article is titled, “Don’t Want to Pay for Your Institutionalized Spouse?” The Role of Spousal Refusal and Medicaid in Paying Long-Term Care.”

There is the potential to discover a phosphonate inhibitor for every biochemi-}

cal pathway that involves phosphorylated intermediates,” said microbiology professor William L. Metcalf, a principal investigator on the study “Because there are phenomena that are widely observed in biological processes.”

Metcalf is one of five principal investigators in the UI’s Institute for Genomic Biology. His collaborative efforts include “many more.”

Phosphonates have been found in all living organisms, including microorganisms, plants, animals, and fungi, and have found use in a variety of fields, from analytical chemistry to medicine.

In the future, the ability to engineer the metabolic pathways of living organisms called phosphates. These compounds aid in amino acid synthesis and other reactions that occur in organisms.

They can be used to create new antibiotics, according to Metcalf, and are being studied for their potential use in treating diseases such as cancer and diabetes.

Metcalf is a microbial geneticist, long known for his ability to bestow life on previously lifeless bacterial cell lines.

He has discovered and biochemically characterized a number of previously unknown enzymes involved in the metabolism of phosphatidylinositols.

As for Wicks, he’s just hoping to make a difference in the lives of his students, “as I class at a time. By the time the current group’s Kiva loans are repaid, those students will have moved on to other things.”

Bruce Wicks, a professor of recreation, sport and tourism, has incorporated a Web-based component into this semester’s entrepreneurship class that allows students to be micro-lenders.

He said Kiva reports a repayment rate of nearly 100 percent. Lenders don’t receive interest on the loans, when they do receive the funds can be withdrawn or channelled to support others. The five-year effort will explore the biological activity of some known phosphonates, such as the herbicide phosphinothricin. The van der Drift and Zhao groups have investigated the clinically useful phosphonate, fosfomycin.

Metcalf, a microbial geneticist, has long been intrigued by bacterial phosphate metabolism. He has discovered and biochemically characterized a number of previously unknown enzymes involved in the metabolism of phosphatidylinositols.

About 70 percent of the antibiotics currently in use come from bacteria. Metcalf’s research is targeting the ongoing “biological warfare between bacteria and life.”

Metcalf is one of five principal investigators in the UI’s Institute for Genomic Biology. His collaborative efforts include “many more.”

In the future, the ability to engineer the metabolic pathways of living organisms called phosphates. These compounds aid in amino acid synthesis and other reactions that occur in organisms.

They can be used to create new antibiotics, according to Metcalf, and are being studied for their potential use in treating diseases such as cancer and diabetes.

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PRAISE, Continued
Five Points
11

If you think you’ve heard the phrase “big bang to the construction process,”

In the recent science fiction exhibits, there have been more than a few extra
combination challenges. For starters, more than
life. These include an eight-year-old, mini-atlas managed to present, all three
photographs, videos, drawings, renderings, essential to building 3D life-size
these characters, and the director of the design
may be referred to us as key elements in the design,
it was impossible to work out, and ended up
in a room with the director of the design
the reason it thoroughly required the design
...it’s really such a fun thing to do...
May 3, 2007

**Benefits Brief**

**Benefit Choice** continues through May 31

The annual Benefit Choice Enrollment period continues through May 31. This is the only time during the year when all benefit-eligible employees may change their state of Illinois benefit plans and coverage levels without a qualifying event occurring.

This also is the time when employees may enroll or re-enroll in the Flexible Spending Account (FSA) for the 2007-2008 plan year. Employees must enroll in the FSA early during the annual Benefit Choice period to take advantage of this benefit, even if they are currently enrolled in the program.

Benefit Choice changes must be completed by May 31, and will become effective July 1.

To make enrollment changes or for more information, visit NESSIE at https://benefit.uiuc.edu, select the "Benefits" tab along the top of the page and then select Benefit Choice from the menu. Employees must use NESSIE to make any benefit-enrollment changes. Changes will be accepted online until midnight May 31. Employees with questions about their benefit options may contact the Benefits Service Center Office, benefits@uiuc.edu or 233-3111.

**What can be changed?**

- During Benefit Choice, you may make the following changes to the state benefits plans and coverage levels:
  - Change Health Plans.
  - Opt out of the state group health insurance plan (if you have another non-state group coverage).
  - Opt out of or enroll the dental plan.
  - Add/drop spouse or child life coverage.
  - Enroll registered same-sex domestic partner in state group health insurance plan.

- Enroll or re-enroll in the Flexible Spending Accounts (indicate or change the contribution to your Medical Care Assistance Plan or Dependent Care Assistance Plan).

**2007 Highlights**

Please take note of the following items for the 2007 Benefit Choice Enrollment Period.

- Further information will be provided in the Benefit Choices Options Booklet that will mail directly to each employee’s home.

- All current health plans, including the Quality Care Plan and all current managed-care health plans, will remain the same.

- While these are the only changes to health plans this year, employees will notice changes in deductibles, co-payments, out-of-pocket maximums and employer contributions. When plan changes have been negotiated, employees enrolled in the managed-care plans will receive a $40/month increase for themselves and a $50/month increase for dependent coverage. Quality Care premiums have increased $45/month for employee coverage and $65/month for dependent coverage.

- Although the monthly contribution for the Quality Care Dental Plan (QCDP) has remained the same, the coverage has been expanded to include dental implants, orthodontics and adult orthodontics.

- Contributions for the state optional Life Plan have changed, resulting in decreased monthly payments for employees age 40-44 and 50 and above.

A grace period has been implemented for the Flexible Spending Account – Medical Care Assistance Plan. Employees enrolled in this plan may now incur eligible medical, vision and dental expenses through the end of June 30. Employees who have these reimbursements from their previous plan year account balance.

**Parkin permit online renewals available May 7**

Renewals for campus parking permits will continue to be done online. Customers will not receive paper renewal forms in the mail. The online service also allows customers to view the permit account balance, pay a citation or provide comments to the Parking Department. Permits will be mailed out the week of June 11.

**For the “Inside Illinois” summer schedule, with advertising and editorial deadlines, see page 4.**

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**calendar of events**

May 3, 2007

**Monday**


**Tuesday**

1. Noon. Colloquium. Writing, Teaching, and the Teaching of Writing. 3:00 p.m. Spurlock Museum. ""Writing and Teaching Historical Writing."" (DH) 1:05 p.m. Illini Union Ballroom. ""Innovative Educational Programs in the United States of America and Caribbean Studies.""

**Wednesday**

1. Noon. Colloquium. Exploring the Future of Performing Arts. 2:00 p.m. Memorial Library, Spurlock Museum. ""The Future of Performing Arts."" (DH) 1:05 p.m. Illini Union Ballroom. ""Innovative Educational Programs in the United States of America and Caribbean Studies.""

**Thursday**

1. Noon. Colloquium. Exploring the Future of Performing Arts. 2:00 p.m. Memorial Library, Spurlock Museum. ""The Future of Performing Arts."" (DH) 1:05 p.m. Illini Union Ballroom. ""Innovative Educational Programs in the United States of America and Caribbean Studies.""
CALENDAR, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 17

17 Thursday


18 Saturday


18 Sunday

Family Day at the Arboretum. 10 a.m. A day of fun and education open to all ages. Free to the public. 5:00-7:00 p.m. Main lobby. More info: 244-6017. Arboretum.

18 Wednesday


NEW IN TOWN

Elise S. Brouwer, a member of the Women’s Club, enhances her walking coordination skills.

Now Hear This

Ted Gilligant, 10, sings into a microphone, held by physician professor Steven Ervin, that is connected to an instrument that displays sound waves. Ted’s mother, Judy Gilligant, a trainer for Campus Information Technologies and Educational Services, joins on with her daughter, Elizabeth, 8. Also in attendance are Tyesha Candler, left, 9, and Donisha Perry, age 10, brought by Tina Candler (not pictured), a staff secretary in the department of Kinesiology and Community Health. Also with the group were Danielle Perry, 7, and (not pictured). The students visited the Physics Mere Lab on April 26 for the Society of Women Engineers’ “Take One Daughter and Son to Work Day.”

CALENDAR, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 18

18 Friday

3-5 p.m. 501 E. Pennsylvania Ave., Urbana. 530 Lara - 5 p.m. Monday-Friday.

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Artistic challenge: keeping count of this professor’s projects

By Melissa Mitchell
News Bureau Staff Writer

T he UI art and design professor John Jennings were a superhero, he’d probably be drawn with multiple limbs and a large, oversized right brain.

That’s because in real life, the talented graphic design artist, scholar and educator could use a few extra hands — and feet — to keep up with all the creative projects he’s juggling this year.

On April 29, Jennings’ work created with Eye Trauma Comix collaborative partner and UI graduate student Damian Duffy — was featured in a showcase of titles by Chicago-based publisher Front Forty Press in the “Fine Print: Alternative Media” series at the P.S.1 Art Center in Long Island, N.Y., a non-profit arts space affiliated with New York’s Museum of Modern Art.

The program featured Front Forty’s book “Graffiticulture,” which presents the work of Chicago graffiti artists invited to draw and paint on photographs of architectural interiors. It also includes essays by Jennings and other scholars and observers of Hip Hop culture in America. He characterizes that culture, which has in recent years been appropriated by the media and corporate marketing machines, as “this generation’s rock ‘n’ roll.”

Jennings teaches a class on Hip Hop design at the UI and describes the course, its origin and structure in “Derryny Klass: Exploring Image-making Through the Visual Culture of Hip Hop,” a chapter in the anthology “Design Studies: Theory and Research in Graphic Design” (Princeton Architectural Press).

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He has contributed an essay titled “Glypograph: Low Class + High Ideas” to “Graffiticulture.” “Hipography,” he maintains that the art of typography has been replaced in today’s technology, a louder, bolder, hip-and-hype-based style of visual communication, which he dubbs “hipography.”

The Front Forty showcase also will include a reading from Jennings’ and Duffy’s upcoming release titled “The Hole: Consumer Culture.” Jennings describes “The Hole” as an “edgy, horror character” with a gaping hole in his stomach. The character, he said, pays homage to urban-legends mythologies and also has roots in pop culture representations of Haitian Voodoo.

The graphic novel is based on the “buying and selling of race in our culture,” Duffy said, and examines “the simultaneous worship and degradation of African Americans in popular culture and the bloody terror of boundaries being torn down.”

In “Hipography,” April, another major collaborative project curated by Jennings and Duffy was “Hipography: African American Comic Book Creators, Characters and Archetypes,” an exhibition on view through April 25 at Jackson State University. The exhibition, which Jennings hopes will travel to other venues in the future, included images of The Hole, Urban Kreep and other comic characters he created with Duffy. It was organized, he said, as a response to a 2005-06 exhibition in Los Angeles that celebrated the work of 15 legendary comic artists.

He and Duffy, he maintains, are working on plans for a second show, “Out of Sequence,” which will be exhibited at the UI’s Krannert Art Museum in 2008. “These shows are answers to the very narrow and backwards-looking show called ‘The Masters of American Comics,’ ” Jennings said. Though that exhibition, which featured “including individuals who canonized the art form (e.g., people like Jack Kirby and Will Eisner)” — it did not present a complete picture of the history, he said. “It shut out a certain mindset and demographic. There were no women and only one African American artist.”

In their clever introduction to the book-length catalog accompanying the Jackson State exhibition, Jennings and Duffy explain their motivations for organizing “Other Heroes,” how sequential, comic-style frames featuring their own caricatures and text bubbles.

“The show began, like most everything else as a sketchy idea,” says the Jennings character. The dynamically drawn duo goes on to explain that the exhibition grew from an initial idea of showcasing only African-American comic artists. They characterized that idea in one dialogue bubble as “an empowering and positive answer to the dehumanizing portrayal of black people in mainstream pop culture.”

They ultimately decided to expand the scope of their inquiry by incorporating “non-comic work that is inspired by racial representations in sequential art, photos that reference the trope of black superheroes archetypes … (or the mythic and religious antecedents of those tropes) … as well as illustrations that make use of racist caricatures of comics” (and really, all of popular culture’s) history in order to investigate negative stereotypes past and present.”

The exhibition and book feature veteran artists alongside the latest crop of upstarts who create Web-based comics. The talent line-up includes syndicated cartoon pioneer Jackie Ormes, originator of the 1930s character Torchy Brown and post-World War II stand-alone comic Party-Jo ‘n’ Ginger; Eisner Award-winning artist, writer and publisher Kyle Baker, known for the comics Birthright and Nat Turner; and illustrator Denys Cowan, senior vice president of animation for Black Entertainment Television and creator of Static Shock and Hardware.

The book also includes essays by Jennings and Duffy; Bill Foster, R.C. Harvey, Nancy Goldstein, Turrell Ohi and Alex Simmons. The book is available through print-on-demand publisher Lulu at www.lulu.com/content/7737106. All profits after printing costs will be donated to Scholarship America’s Disaster Relief Fund, which provides financial support to low-income Gulf Coast students displaced by hurricanes Katrina and Rita seeking post-secondary education.

A comic Jennings and Duffy created to bring attention to the struggles of individuals impacted by the hurricanes has been nominated for 2007 GLYPH Comics Awards in three categories: best male character, best writer and story of the year. The comic was published in conjunction with the UI’s Katrina: After the Storm summit in 2006. Award winners will be announced at the East Coast Black Age of Comics Convention in Philadelphia May 18-19.