UI experts: Economy teetering, but could still avert recession

By Jan Dennis
News Bureau Staff Writer

The U.S. economy is sputtering amid a lingering housing slump and growing jitters on Wall Street, but whether a recession lies ahead is still anyone’s guess, a trio of UI economic experts say.

“To summarize the economic situation in one word, it is ‘uncertainty,’” says Jeffrey R. Brown, a finance professor and the director of the Center on Business and Public Policy in the UI College of Business. Brown and economists J. Fred Giertz and Anne Villamil say dark clouds that have hovered over the economy since last year don’t necessarily foreshadow the nation’s first recession since 2001.

They say five interest rate cuts since September could jolt the sagging economy. So could a $150 billion economic stimulus package proposed last month by President Bush and congressional leaders.

“But the risks of recession are rising,” said Villamil, whose research has examined how household economic conditions affect consumer confidence. "The U.S. economy is fundamentally strong, but these problems will provide a drag over the next few quarters and continue to avert major problems and, more importantly, to keep minor problems from spiraling into catastrophe, Giertz said.

“The record the last 25 years has been very good in this regard,” he said. “We can only hope it continues.”

Anne Villamil, professor of economics, studies the impact of inflation on public finance.

Finance professor Jeffrey R. Brown summarizes the economic situation in one word: “uncertainty,” said.

Brown, who has served as a senior economist with the President’s Council of Economic Advisers, says interest rate cuts could be a double-edged sword. For example, he says the Fed’s surprise cut of 75 basis points last month should provide a short-term boost, though the “unexpected timing and magnitude of the cut may have also inadvertently damaged consumer confidence by signaling that the economy may be worse shape than we thought.”

Giertz, the interim head of the UI economics department, says it’s too early to tell whether the economy is simply slowing or is in actual decline. But he says a recession, if it comes, likely would be relatively modest.

“Most observers believe that the modern economy is better able to adjust to changing economic conditions than in the past. This means that firms make quick adjustments to changes in their situations that avoid more drastic consequences later on,” said Giertz, a professor in the UI’s Institute of Government and Public Affairs.

While the nation’s economic policymakers cannot be expected to provide complete economic stability, they should be counted on to avert major problems and, more importantly, to keep minor problems from spiraling into catastrophe, Giertz said.

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Anne Villamil, professor of economics, studies the impact of inflation on public finance.

Boosting nutrition
Researchers can now inexpensively screen different maize varieties and breed those that contain provitamin A. This will boost the nutritional quality of the maize.

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Internationalization
The campuswide International Advisory Council is working toward implementing the international component of the Strategic Plan.

PAGE 10
Global Campus, campus projects discussed by trustees

By Christy Blandford
UIC News Bureau

The UI Board of Trustees approved extending in-state Global Campus tuition rates to any UI graduates who contribute to the UI Alumni Association. Board members decided at their Jan. 17 meeting to offer out-of-state alumni a 10 percent discount on Global Campus tuition, the same rate paid by Illinois residents.

To receive the tuition break, alumni must be contributing members of the university’s Alumni Association.

“It’s in the interest of increasing U. of I. alumni who contribute educational dollars,” President B. Joseph White said. “To do it through Global Campus, this is a really attractive way to do it.”

Global Campus programs began in 2002, offering online degree programs in nursing and business. The programs, which are attended by more than 3,000 students, include the University of Illinois own online labor studies courses launched the Jan. 17 edition of “Inside Illinois” on Outreach in the Office of Continuing Education were omitted from a story in the Jan. 17 issue.

Other business:

■ Agreeing that funding for health-care education and training. Trustees voted to seek an additional $150 million in state support, phased in over the next five years.

■ It’s our job as the board of trustees to take this on,” said Trustee Kenneth Schmidt, a Des Plaines physician and UIC medical graduate, after an impassioned presentation at the board meeting.

■ Trustees voted to support the Illinois Bill of Health Initiative, a campaign to establish a separate stream of state funding for health-care education and training.

■ In his first presentation to the board as UIC interim chancellor, Eric Gislason told trustees the cost of educating future physicians, dentists and other health practitioners — already much higher than for undergraduates — continues to increase.

■ Raising tuition to help cover costs can’t continue, Gislason said. UIC tuition and fees for medicine and dentistry are already about 17 percent higher than at comparable institutions.

■ Lawyer Lawrence Eppley was re-elected board chairman by a unanimous vote.

■ Trustees also re-elected comptroller Knorr, secretary Michele Thompson and university counsel Thomas Bearrows.

■ Trustees Niranjan Shah and Schmidt also were selected to join Eppley on the board’s executive committee.

■ Several construction projects that were on the agenda were deferred until then and approved at a Jan. 25 meeting of the Executive Committee. At the Urbana campus, the Executive Committee approved projects that included a $0.44 million expansion of the School of Social Work building; a $1.02 million Football Performance Center; a $2.3 million expansion of Huff Hall that will provide 36,000 square feet of new interdisciplinary research areas and assisted support spaces.

Ikenberry’s long service recognized with ‘living legacy’

By Christy Blandford
UIC News Bureau

A student housing area and new dining hall will be named after former university president Stanley O. Ikenberry in recognition of Ikenberry’s years of service to the UI.

At its Jan. 17 meeting in Chicago, the UI Board of Trustees agreed to name the area bounded by Gregory and Peabody bodies, and First and North streets, the Stanley O. Ikenberry Commons. A dining hall within the Student Dining and Residential Programs Building, currently under construction near Gregory Drive, will be named the Stanley O. Ikenberry Dining Hall. It will seat 1,172 students.

“It’s very important that the Ikenberry name be part of the living legacy of the campus,” Chancellor Richard Herman said at the meeting.

The residence hall wing scheduled to open in fall 2010 is the first phase of what will become the Stanley O. Ikenberry Commons. It will house 150 students, including some with physical disabilities who now live off campus.

The long-term project will replace the under-conditioned six residence halls that at the time. The six residence halls, built in the late 1950s, have outdated building systems and rooms that are smaller than the market standard.

Once the project is complete, the Stanley O. Ikenberry Commons will be home to more than 3,000 students.

Ikenberry, who was university president from 1979 to 1995, was honored because of his contributions to the campus, such as establishing the Beckman Institute for Advanced Science and Technology, and the School of Public and Labor and Industrial Relations. Online math courses for UI undergraduates have been available since 1991 through the mathematics department’s NetMath program and the university’s Guided Individual Study, which has offered online courses on subjects ranging from history and literature to psychology and political science for more than a decade.

Ikenberry’s legacy

The area surrounding a new student housing complex and the dining hall in the Student Dining and Residential Programs Building being constructed there are to be named the Stanley O. Ikenberry Commons and the Ikenberry Dining Hall in honor of the UI’s 14th president. The Student Dining and Residential Programs Building is shown above in an architectural drawing as viewed from Gregory Drive. The $75 million housing complex will replace six residence halls constructed in the 1950s, often referred to as the “six pack,” and is scheduled for completion in July 2010.

Upon Ikenberry’s departure from the presidency, he was named president emeritus and regent professor of education. From 1996-2001, Ikenberry served as the Presi- dent and CEO of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. In 2001, he returned to the university to serve as a professor in the department of educational policy studies in the College of Education and in the Institute of Government and Public Affairs.

clarification

Online programs administered by Academic Outreach in the Office of Continuing Education were omitted from a story in the Jan. 17 edition of “Inside Illinois” on new online labor studies courses launched this spring by the university’s Institute of Labor and Industrial Relations. Online math courses for UI undergraduates have been available since 1991 through the mathematics department’s NetMath program and the university’s Guided Individual Study, which has offered online courses on subjects ranging from history and literature to psychology and political science for more than a decade.
On the Job: The Great Womble

Feeding starving artists may not be part of Crystal Womble’s job description, but she’s proved she’s up to the task of artists at Krannert Center for the Performing Arts need to eat. A community affairs specialist at Krannert Center, Womble is an enthusiastic supporter of the arts whose responsibilities include group sales, volunteer recruiting and the coordination of a small army of volunteers. She’s also a talented cook and baker whose culinary specialties include chocolate swirl pound cake and sausage bread.

Tell me about your career at the university.
I’ve been here 35 years now. I started in the ticket office as the assistant manager. Most of my experience is working in customer relations.

Tell me about your job responsibilities.
I work with group sales, follow up with contacts and receive phone calls and e-mails for ticket purchases. I am also part of our Dream Intersections team that plans and coordinates artist engagement and outreach activities. We partner with organizations in the community and look for ways to encourage collaborations with arts components, whether through the artist-in-residency program or cross-promoting an event. We’ve been successful working with the park districts, the libraries, and the Urban League in reaching out to populations that are not as well represented here. Events such as Krannert Uncorked and the Afterglows are ways of giving access to people.

I also schedule and coordinate schedules for our community volunteers, a core group of about 185 people, retirees mostly, who support our Youth Series program by ushering daytime performances and assisting with bulk mailings.

If there are other needs for assistance, I contact volunteers to find out if they’re available. I coordinate volunteer schedules for larger special events with our patron services director, Courtney Egg. We are also the staff advisers for our volunteer coordinator.

What do you enjoy most about your job?
I enjoy working with people and getting to know them. The volunteers are a great resource and great ambassadors. It’s like having 185 grandparents: they really keep me on my toes. I enjoy seeing people have those ‘a-ha!’ moments about the arts. The engagement activities are a good way to get to know artists, and artists are very appreciative of having chances to connect with audiences in a different way.

What’s the most challenging part of your job?
Time. Trying to do everything. And making sure that you’re where you need to be or have an artist where they need to be. We have a huge support system here, so you never feel like you’re out there by yourself.

Have you met any artists who left a lasting impression?
Oh yes, many because they were very genuine in spirit, generous with their time and involved with the community. The Uptown String Quartet was a core group of about 185 people, retirees mostly, who support our Youth Series program by ushering daytime performances and assisting with bulk mailings.

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Faculty retreat aims to enhance teaching and learning

By Sharita Forrest
Assistant Editor

More than 250 faculty members and instructors met at the Illini Union on Jan. 31 for the 14th annual Faculty Retreat, titled "Using the Science of Instruction to Foster Teaching, a commitment that has been present from the beginning of this event," said Steve Doolittle, director of the Educational Psychology Research Program in the department of learning sciences and technology at Virginia Tech, was the key- way to manufacture the arrays reliably and in large quantities, allows us to build circuits and transistors with high performance and ask the next question," Rogers said. "That question is: 'What type of electronics is the most important role to play in high-speed analog electronics, where benefi- cial learning theory and practice in a multimedia world.'

"Multimedia Learning: The Science of In-" and his afternoon talk was titled "Bogus and Beneficial Pedagogical Con-" and performance of the nanotube-transistor radios, which in nanotube devices provided all of the key functions. The radios were based on a heterodyne receiver design consisting of four capaci- tively coupled stages: an active resonant antenna, two radio-frequency amplifiers, and an audio amplifier. Headphones plugged directly into the output of a nanotube transistor. In several nanotube devices were incor- porated into the design of each radio. Block and circuit diagrams of a radio that uses carbon nanotubes for the resonant antenna, two radio-frequency amplifiers, radio-frequency mixer and an audio amplifier.

Four new teaching certificates to be offered

The Center for Teaching Excellence is offering four new teaching certificates to address faculty members’ and teaching assistants’ professional development needs and interest in teaching excellence and enhancing student learning. For many years, the CTE has offered a Graduate Teacher Certificate for TAs, and this year the center has developed sever- al additional certificates so that faculty members, academic professionals, instructors and TAs can have additional opportunities for professional development and can document their efforts accordingly, said Cheolan Bo-Lin, head of instructional development in CTE.

The new certificates:
- Certificate in Foundations of Teach- ing, for graduate students who have limited teaching experience (less than two semesters), provides an opportunity to explore teaching and prepare for acade- mic research and higher education.
- Teacher Scholar Certificate, for all teachers (faculty members, academic professionals, TAs) who teach at least three semesters, provides a structured process for exploring pedagogy from a discipline-based perspective.
- Certificate in Technology-Enhanced Teaching, for all teachers who use educational technologies, provides an opportunity to explore educational technologies and to practice and assess technology-enhanced teaching.

Citizen Scholar Certificate, for teachers of service learning courses, provides an opportunity to explore and participate in the service learning movement.

To receive announcements about teach- ing development workshops, sign up for the CTE’s e-newsletter.

ON THE WEB
Teaching Certificate programs
www.cte.uiuc.edu
(click on Faculty Services or TA Services)

Criteria for Accreditation
Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association

"We were not trying to make the world's tiniest radios," Rogers said. "The nanotube radios are a demonstration, an important milestone toward building the technology into a form that ultimately would be com- mercially competitive with entrenched ap- proaches." The work was funded by the National Science Foundation and the U.S. Depart- ment of Energy.

New transistor radios show capability of nanotube technology

By James E. Kloepfer
Nanoscale electronics researcher Steve Doolittle is leading a team of researchers at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign that has fabricated nanotube transistor radios, which in nanotube devices provided all of the key functions. The radios were based on a heterodyne receiver design consisting of four capacitively coupled stages: an active resonant antenna, two radio-frequency amplifiers, and an audio amplifier. Headphones plugged directly into the output of a nanotube transistor. In several nanotube devices were incorporated into the design of each radio.

In one test, the researchers tuned one of the nanotube-transistor radios to WBAL- AM (990) in Baltimore, to pick up a traffic report.

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Units, campus develop, fine-tune emergency plans

By Sharita Forrest
Assistant Editor

The Office of Campus Emergency Planning is requesting that facility managers from units across the Urbana campus collaborate with the office in developing and testing unit-level and campuswide emergency preparedness plans.

On Jan. 9-10, 91 facility managers from across campus met with OCEP during a series of meetings at the National Center for Supercomputing Applications to discuss new policies, plans and ongoing projects related to emergency preparedness.

“We wanted to reach out to the facility managers to say they’re extremely important in terms of emergency planning because they have a huge amount of institutional knowledge about the various facilities on campus, and we need to establish good communications with one another,” said Kip Mecum, director of emergency planning in the Division of Public Safety. “They can provide us with information that will help speed along some of the projects OCEP is working on. Our plan is to meet with them annually.”

OCEP’s current database of campus facility managers contains 157 entries. Units are encouraged to contact the office to update their information, Mecum said.

Among OCEP’s projects is a proposal approved and funded by Chancellor Richard Herman’s office to expand the distribution of National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration weather radios to campus units. The UI plans to use the radios to broadcast messages over the NOAA/National Weather Service messaging system to the campus about non-weather-related threats or emergencies that have the potential to substantially disrupt campus operations. The radios also will help keep units apprised of the latest information about threatening weather.

An Interoperable Communications Plan for use during campus emergencies also is under development, and OCEP is building a database of tornado shelters around campus that will be available on the OCEP and Division of Public Safety Web sites.

During 2007, OCEP developed an Active Threat Response Plan as an addendum to the Campus Emergency Operations Plan. The OCEP Web site, www.ocep.uiuc.edu, also contains a Tornado Preparedness Template, an Evacuation Template, and other updated emergency preparedness documents for units to download and customize in developing their own emergency response plans.

The OCEP will assist units with developing their emergency operations plans and with reviewing and testing those plans through tabletop or live exercises. At least 65 units on campus have developed or are developing Emergency Operations Plans for their facilities, Mecum said.

The OCEP is exploring the possibility of establishing campus lockdown procedures in the event of threats such as active shooters. Many universities have developed lockdown procedures to protect students and faculty and staff members as a result of incidents such as the shootings at Virginia Tech in April 2007. Campus officials are exploring whether lockdown procedures would be feasible at the Urbana campus, and if so, how to best approach it, said Todd Short, a UI police officer and member of the campus Crisis Intervention Team.

University Laboratory High School developed an Active Threat Response Plan that includes lockdown procedures and tested the plan last spring. Short said, “It went very well. They simplified a plan that everybody could use to secure students and faculty and staff members in a timely manner taking into account the physical layout of the building and the internal and external locking systems. In a very short amount of time, they were able to secure all faculty and staff members by locking people into various rooms throughout the school.”

The week after Thanksgiving, administrative staff members in the College of Education and OCEP tested the college’s Active Threat Response Plan with an exercise. During a de-briefing following the exercise, the strengths and vulnerabilities of the college’s plan were discussed and additional security measures were put into place.

In early May, OCEP plans to conduct an exercise that will test the Infectious Disease Response Plan and will involve emergency planners from across campus.

This summer, the campus again will offer introductory level courses on the National Incident Management System, a standardized approach for handling critical incidents. Employees in positions that could be called upon to handle a critical incident that could disrupt campus operations or threaten health or safety are required to undergo the training, which is mandatory for all organizations that receive grants, contracts or other federal funding for preparedness activities.

Short, who is one of only a few people in the U.S. certified as an Incident Command System instructor by the International Association of Campus Law Enforcement Administrators, will lead the training.

The university recently put to the test a contract that university officials signed in December with BMS Catastrophe, a company specializing in commercial and industrial property damage restoration and disaster recovery services. Officials at the Chicago campus called upon BMS to assist with cleanup and smoke and odor remediation following a Jan. 19 fire that caused millions of dollars in damage at its College of Pharmacy.

BMS, which is based in Fort Worth, Texas, will supplement the disaster recovery services provided by UI staff members with specialized services such as protection of artifacts, data, collections and equipment; and mold and fungus control. The contract covers all three UI campuses, UI Extension offices and regional campuses.

ON THE WEB

Campus Emergency Operations Committee
www.ocep.uiuc.edu

REGISTER FOR EMERGENCY NOTIFICATION

Students and faculty and staff members are requested to log on to the emergency system Web site at emergency.illinois.edu and enter their contact information. Each person can enter up to three e-mail addresses and two text-message addresses. Users can change, add to or delete their contact information at any time.

- Ad removed for online version
- Ad removed for online version

RESOURCES

The Office of Campus Emergency Planning will assist units with developing and testing Emergency Operations Plans. Contact Kip Mecum at 333-1491 or e-mail emergencyplanning@ad.uiuc.edu.

Templates to assist units in developing response plans for various types of emergent situations are available on the OCEP Web site at www.ocep.uiuc.edu.

The Emergency Response Guide for Faculty, Staff and Students flip chart also is available on the Web site or can be requested by calling 333-4660 or e-mailing dp-scomments@ad.uiuc.edu.
National study: UI ranks high for young professors

By Dave Evensen
LAS Media Communications Specialist

While Donna Korol arrived at the UI in 2000, the move, she says, hit her “like a breath of fresh air.” The spirit of cooperation and support among faculty members struck her as unique.

The assistant professor of psychology had worked at three universities prior to the UI, but in Urbana-Champaign she found her fit. It was as if a sense of community had permeated the work space, she says, creating a mix of high-power scholarship and collaboration. She had only just arrived when other faculty members began calling out of the blue to ask if she’d partner on research projects.

“As a junior faculty member that serves not only the practical part of being on grants with people, but also the emotional and psychological part, like ‘Wow, I’m part of being on grants with the best in the country living create a family- friendly atmosphere that young faculty members find attractive. The academy realizes that appealing to the psychological part, like ‘Wow, I’m part of being on grants with the best and worst aspects of the job).”

In a recent survey by the Collaborative on Academic Careers in Higher Education (COACHE), junior faculty members were asked to rank satisfaction in various areas. Of the 56 universities that participated, the UI’s scores ranked among the top four in the categories of tenure, promotion, and work environment, and we want to help them.”

According to a recent study, Korol’s impressions are not isolated ones. The Collaborative on Academic Careers in Higher Education (COACHE) surveyed almost 7,000 junior faculty members at universities across the nation and found that the UI is one of the best places to roll out the red — or orange, perhaps — carpet for its professors. In several categories, junior faculty members at the UI ranked among the most satisfied in the country.

The results are an affirmation at the UI, where the proportion of junior faculty is growing due to a generational turnover in faculty members, and where much effort has been placed upon smoothing the typically uncertain first years of a faculty appointment.

Paul F. Diehl, the Henning Larsen Professor of Political Science and director of the LAS Teaching Academy at the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, says junior faculty members appreciate the supportive environment unique to the academy’s programs and events that are designed specifically to assist junior faculty members.

“Of course, the research is brought close to a substrate until a liquid meniscus, the solute nucleates and precipitates as the solvent quickly evaporates.

Based on the rapid evaporation of the solvent from simple “inks,” the process has been used to fabricate free-standing nanofibers, stacked arrays of nanofibers and continuously wound spools of nanowires. Potential applications include electronic interconnects, biocompatible scaffolds and nanofluidic networks.

“Process is like drawing with a fountain pen — the ink comes out and quickly dries or ‘solidifies,’” said Min Feng Yu, a professor of mechanical science and engineering, and an affiliate of the Beckman Institute. “But, unlike drawing with a fountain pen, we can draw objects in three dimensions.”

Yu and graduate students Abijit Suryavanshi and Jie Hu describe the drawing process in a paper accepted for publication in the journal Advanced Materials, and posted on its Web site.

To draw longer nanowires, the researchers begin with a reservoir of ink connected to a glass micropipette that has an aperture as small as 100 nanometers. The micropipette is brought close to a substrate until a liquid meniscus forms between the two. As the micropipette is then smoothly pulled away, ink is drawn from the reservoir. Within the tiny meniscus, the solute nucleates and precipitates as the solvent quickly evaporates.

So far, the scientists have fabricated free-standing nanofibers approximately 25 nanometers in diameter and 20 microns long, and straight nanofibers approximately 100 nanometers in diameter and 16 micrometers long (limited only by the travel range of the device that moves the micropipette).

To draw longer nanowires, the researchers developed a precision spinning process that simultaneously draws and winds a nanofiber on a spool that is 1 millimeter in diameter. Using this technique, Yu and his students wound a coil of microfiber. The microfiber was approximately 850 nanometers in diameter and 40 centimeters long.

To further demonstrate the versatility of the drawing process, for which the UI has applied for a patent, the researchers drew nanofibers out of sugar, out of potassium hydroxide (a major industrial chemical) and out of densely packed quantum dots. While the nanofibers are currently fabricated from water-based inks, the process is readily extendable to inks made with volatile organic solvents, Yu said.

“Our procedure offers an economically viable alternative for the direct-write manufacture of nanofibers, which is partially supported by the U.S. Department of Energy.

Cultivating collegiality For faculty members such as Donna Korol and Paul Gold, who are colleagues in the department of geology and geophysics, the collaborative spirit among UI faculty members outweighs disadvantages such as the campus’s location.

In a recent survey by the Collaborative on Academic Careers in Higher Education, UI junior faculty members ranked higher than the national average in satisfaction with their workplace.

Process makes nanofibers in complex shapes, unlimited lengths

By James E. Kroppel
News Bureau Writer

The continuous fabrication of complex, three-dimensional nanoscale structures and the ability to grow individual nanowires of unlimited length are now possible with a process developed by researchers at the UI.

Based on the rapid evaporation of the solvent from simple “inks,” the process has been used to fabricate free-standing nanofibers, stacked arrays of nanofibers and continuously wound spools of nanowires. Potential applications include electronic interconnects, biocompatible scaffolds and nanofluidic networks.

“Our procedure offers an economically viable alternative for the direct-write manufacture of nanofibers, which is partially supported by the U.S. Department of Energy,” Yu said. “In addition, the process can be used to integrate nanoscale and microscale components.”

The Grainger Foundation, the National Science Foundation and the Office of Naval Research provided funding. Part of the work was carried out in the university’s Center for Microanalysis of Materials, which is partially supported by the U.S. Department of Energy.

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A team of plant geneticists and crop scientists has pioneered an economical approach to the selective breeding of maize that can boost levels of provitamin A, the precursors that are converted to vitamin A upon consumption. This innovation could help to enhance the nutritional status of millions of people in the developing world.

The new method was described last month in the journal Science. The team includes scientists from Cornell University, the University of Illinois, and another Institute, DuPont Pont Genetics Research, the University of North Carolina, the City University of New York, the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

The innovation involves selecting the parent stock for breeding maize, and significantly reduces the amount of time and expense of finding varieties that yield the highest provitamin A content available. As part of this investigation, the researchers have identified a naturally mutated enzyme that enhances the provitamin A content of maize.

Vitamin A deficiency is a leading cause of eye disease and other health disorders in the developing world. Some 40 million children are afflicted with eye disease, and another 250 million suffer with health problems resulting from a lack of dietary vitamin A.

“Maize is the dominant staple crop in much of Sub-Saharan Africa and the Americas,” the researchers write, “where between 17 and 30 percent of children under the age of 5 are vitamin A deficient. Maize also is one of the most genetically diverse food crops on the planet.”

Rocheford, who also is affiliated with the University of North Carolina, the City University of New York, the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center and a corresponding author on the paper.

This diversity is tantalizing to those hoping to make use of desirable traits, but it also provides a formidable challenge in trying to understand the genetic basis of those attributes.

One hurdle to increasing the provitamin A content of maize has been the expense of screening the parent stock and progeny of breeding experiments, Rocheford said.

A common technique, called high performance liquid chromatography (HPLC), can assess the provitamin A content of individual plant lines. But screening a single sample costs $50 to $75, he said.

“That’s really expensive, especially since plant breeders like to screen hundreds or more plants per cycle, twice a year,” he said. “The cost was just prohibitive.”

The new approach uses much more affordable methods and gives a more detailed picture of the genetic endowment of individual lines. Once the researchers identified a naturally mutated enzyme, they used association mapping, which involves studying genetic variation in a set of markers and using a panel of maize lines to find the alleles that boosted levels of vitamin A in the plant.

This approach led to an important discovery. The team found a mutant form of an enzyme vital to the cascade of chemical reactions that produce the precursors of vitamin A. They also used association mapping, which involves studying genetic variation in a set of markers and using a panel of maize lines to find the alleles that boosted levels of vitamin A precursors in the plant.

“Maize is the dominant staple crop in much of Sub-Saharan Africa and the Americas,” the researchers write, “where between 17 and 30 percent of children under the age of 5 are vitamin A deficient. Maize also is one of the most genetically diverse food crops on the planet.”

By Diana Yates

News Bureau Staff Writer

Team finds an economical way to boost the vitamin A in maize
UI librarian launches extensive Web database of field guides

By Andrea Lynn
News Bureau Staff Writer

Diane Schmidt, the biology librarian at the UI Library, has built and launched the most complete database of field guides to date. “The new database is getting at least 5,000 hits per month,” Schmidt said.

The database has a “book bag” feature that allows users to download information from items they select, which includes the title, author, date and place of publication, a description of the book, often the ISBN number and approximate cost, plus the region the book focuses on. The site offers more than 5,000 records today.

The field guides are classified by type of organism and region covered. Eighteen categories are represented: from animals and edible plants, to flora and fauna, and miscellaneous – the latter category a most amusing read. Each field guide is described with the type of keys – important for identifying difficult groups, and range maps and “other useful details that help users decide which field guide to use.”

Still, the site has one limitation. The entry doesn’t link to the actual book – either at a library or a bookstore. “That’s an upgrade that I’d really like to make,” she said.

Schmidt believes that amateurs and researchers will find the database useful.

What were Schmidt’s criteria for inclusion in the database?

“The basic criterion is that they must be guides to the identification of plants, animals or other mostly natural objects. And they must be designates to be taken out into the field, so they need to be small and portable.”

Aside from that, I try to discover field guides for all groups of organisms and all regions of the world, and in any language. The emphasis is on books that are still in print, but I’ll include older books, too. While it’s impossible to include each and every field guide from around the world, that’s my ultimate goal,” she said.

Schmidt said she first started working on a list of field guides about 16 years ago and began the new database in 2005. When she went on sabbatical in the fall of 2006, she worked on the database exclusively, visiting more than 75 libraries and bookstores over the course of six months.

Some regions seem more heavily represented than others, she conceded.

The reason: “People in some regions, especially the former British Commonwealth countries like Australia, are more into ‘into’ amateur natural history than people in countries like Russia or China,” she said. “And popular ecotourist spots like Costa Rica have more field guides than countries where the plants and animals haven’t been studied as much.”

Language also can be a problem, she said.

“Libraries in the U.S. don’t collect as many books in non-Roman alphabets as they do in English, and I rely on library collections for a lot of the information on field guides.”

Even if you aren’t going anywhere, just browsing the database is a trip. Sure, Aboriginal rock engravings in Australia are one thing – obvious topics for field guides. A field guide to the stray shopping carts of Eastern North America, on the other hand, must be a whole new realm of nearly unexplored territory.

Far-reaching field guides
Diane Schmidt, the biology librarian at the UI Library, has built and launched the most complete database of field guides to date. “The new database is getting at least 5,000 hits per month,” Schmidt said.

No worries, there’s a field guide for you, in fact, an entire digital database of weird and wacky – but mostly practical – field guides to all matter of, well, everything. “The new database is getting at least 5,000 hits per month,” Schmidt said.

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Herons persist in Chicago wetlands despite chemical exposure

By Diana Yates
News Bureau Staff Writer

Herons nesting in the wetlands of southeast Chicago are still being exposed to chemicals banned in the U.S. in the 1970s, a research team reports. The chemicals do not appear to be affecting the birds’ reproductive success, however.

The findings appear in the current issue of the Journal of Great Lakes Research.

UI veterinary biosciences scientist Jeff Levengood led the study. Levengood, a wildlife toxicologist at the Illinois Natural History Survey, said that chemicals banned 30 years ago for their deleterious effects on wildlife are still showing up in the offspring of black-crowned night-herons in a Chicago wetland.

The researchers found PCBs and DDE in the eggs of night-herons nesting in the wetlands abutting Lake Calumet, in southeastern Chicago. The Lake Calumet wetlands are surrounded by industrial developments along Lake Michigan near the Illinois-Indiana border.

The Lake Calumet birds appear to be picking up the contamination primarily from Lake Michigan by means of an invasive fish, the alewife.

Alewives harbor comparable levels of PCBs and DDE in their tissues, Levengood said. The spawning season of the alewife in Lake Michigan coincides with the nesting season of the night-herons.

“They come to shore to spawn when the first warm waters of spring run into the lake and the temperature starts to rise,” he said. “There are untold millions of these things along the (Lake Michigan) shore in April.”

On several occasions the researchers saw large numbers of night-herons – “in some cases a hundred birds or more” – along the sea walls on the southwest shore of Lake Michigan, Levengood said. “They’d be standing there peering into the water, and then they’d kind of do a belly flop into the water and grab a fish.”

The researchers collected data over two years and conducted several genetic, biochemical and reproductive analyses to determine whether the chemical exposures were adversely affecting the birds. They looked at DNA strand length (a measure of genetic damage) and oxidative stress (a contributor to aging and disease) and compared the number of eggs and the viability of the eggs and young chicks to those in other, less polluted reference colonies of black-crowned night-herons in Minnesota and Virginia.

“These were all normal compared to the reference colonies,” Levengood said.

The team found no evidence of eggshell-thinning, which is sometimes associated with exposure to DDE.

“So that’s the good news. Even though they’re getting an exposure, it’s not enough to cause problems – at least in those parameters we measured,” Levengood said.

The researchers did see an increase in some liver enzymes, he said, “but that’s not unexpected because the liver is trying to detoxify these compounds.” The long-term consequences of the rise in these liver enzymes are unknown, he said.

Populations of black-crowned night-herons in the Lake Calumet wetlands have fluctuated dramatically in the last 20 years, peaking at more than 1,500 birds in the early to mid-1990s. This population increase coincided with prolonged flooding in nearby rivers, which may have disadvantaged these short-legged herons, Levengood said.

Birders counted 447 black-crows in Lake Calumet wetlands in 2005, the last year for which data are available.

Numbers of black-crowned night-herons and other colonial fish-eating birds had declined nationally – and in Illinois – by the 1960s. Many populations started to rebound after the ban on DDT. Illinois’ populations of black-crowned night-herons did not experience this comeback, however.

Many of the remaining heron colonies are found in or near industrial areas, Levengood said.

“Wetlands have persisted in these areas because they were out on the back 40 of a degraded site,” he said. “No one has been going out and developing them or polluting them.”

Although banned chemicals are still showing up in the eggs and young of black-crowned night-herons nesting in the wetlands of southeast Chicago, the exposures do not appear to be affecting the birds’ reproductive success, according to Jeff Levengood, a UI veterinary biosciences scientist and a wildlife toxicologist at the Illinois Natural History Survey.

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New UI advisory council focusing on international issues

By Melissa Mitchell
New Bureau Staff Writer

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Weyhenmeyer

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Genomic

Biology.

Easter,

dean

of

the

college

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ACES

and

professor

of

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of

animal

sciences,

as

chairman

of

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International

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William

Sullivan,

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Illinois Program for Research in the Humanities

The Illinois Program for Research in the Humanities will present screenings of five 2008 film series beginning Feb. 7. The series will show films related to the 2007-2008 IPRH theme, “Rupture.” Although the fall films considered ruptures of a personal nature, the spring schedule focuses on rupture in the political, social and cultural realms. The films will be shown free of charge.

The Illinois Academy of Sciences, in partnership with the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, will present “Community As Classroom,” an exhibit that will take place in the MCAD Gallery in the Illini Union. The exhibit opens Thursday, Feb. 21, and runs through March 27. It will feature the work of Community Informatics students and faculty. For more information, visit www.igpa.illinois.edu or contact the UMCH undergraduate program coordinator, Nancy Hertzog, at nfhertzog@uiuc.edu.

Research Integrity

Symposium focuses on grad education

The UI Graduate College, in conjunction with the Office of Vice Chancellor for Research, will host its six-annual Symposium on Graduate Education. This year’s event is dedicated to responsible conduct of research and will be from 1-6 p.m. Feb. 25 in Illini Union Rooms B and C. The symposium will focus on the article “Why Did You Write My Paper? R & R In Academe,” which will explore issues of authorship, peer reviewing, and the influence of commercial interests in academic publishing.

For more information about pet dental health, visit www.adeptdental.com.

Pet Dental Health

Small animal clinic offers dental exams

February is National Pet Dental Health Month. The dental service at the UI Small Animal Clinic is offering Saturday appointments on Feb. 9 to raise awareness about the importance of dental care for pets. Good dental care can save pets expense and pain in the long run and prevent infections that spread to other parts of your pet’s body.

Center for African Studies

African films to be shown during festival

The Center for African Studies will once again sponsor the African Film Festival. The festival offers a rare opportunity to see a half-dozen of the best new films originating from Africa.

Organized by the Center for African Studies at the UI

SHEE, PAGES 12-13
with support from several campus units, the weeklong Afri-
Can Film Festival will take place Feb. 22-28 at the Beverly
Hills Hotel at 5100 N. Lake Shore Drive. The festival will be
screened on a rotating basis throughout the festival.
Three will be shown, beginning at 7 p.m., on the opening
day, and several films will run continuously each day,
beginning at noon. Admission is $5, with tickets available
to the theater box office prior to each showing.
"There are a lot of foreign film festivals that take place in
town," said Finke. "It's great to see a screening of an Afri-
can film at a conference or at a festival, nothing like this has
been happening in this community since I have been teach-
ing here. I hope that this kind of excitement will get the
students interested in studying African literature and film.

Eaton will discuss the recent scrutiny given to accredita-
tion, regulation and the tipping point. He is the author of two
books, "The Murphy Stories" and "Murphy Stories," both
published by The University of Chicago Press.
21 Thursday 
“Knowledge Processing in Living Cells: Beyond First Approximations.” Ido Golding, Northwestern University. 4 p.m. 1005 Beckman Institute. 3 p.m. Attribution: Beckman Institute.

22 Friday 
“Graphical Models for Video Analysis.” Aleksandar Vucetic, 1:30 p.m. 1215 Beckman Institute. Attribution: Beckman Institute.

22 Friday 
“Microfluidics: The Unbearable Lightness of Being Small.” Frank Gomez, California State University, 4 p.m. 116 Roger Adams Lab. Attribution: Beckman Institute.

23 Saturday 
“Biosynthesis of Human Pharamcopeia.” Rolf C. Henningson, Virginia Commonwealth University. 10 a.m. 110 Life Science Library. 4 p.m. 1005 Beckman Institute. Attribution: Beckman Institute.

23 Saturday 
“Much of this information is drawn from the online Campus Calendars on the UI Web site at www.uiuc.edu/uicalendar. Other calendar entries should be sent 15 days before the desired publication date to insideill@uiuc.edu. More information is available from Marty Yeakel at 333-1085.

24 Sunday 

24 Sunday 

24 Sunday 
“Calendar of Events/University of Illinois.” This document was prepared by students in a strict boarding school. Attribution: Beckman Institute.

24 Sunday 
“Calendar of Events/University of Illinois” by students in a strict boarding school. Attribution: Beckman Institute.
CALENDAR: CONTINUED FROM PAGE 14

Feb. 7, 2008

CALENDAR

more calendar of events

2-4 Sunday

Wrestling. UI vs University of Iowa. 7 p.m. Huff Hall. $

Women's Basketball. UI vs University of Michigan. 5 p.m. Assembly Hall. $

et cetera

7 Thursday


Talk with Audrey Nitsch, author. 9 a.m. Rare Book and Manuscript Library, 346 Lincoln Hall. Rare Book and Manuscript Library.


8 Friday


9 Saturday


Spanish Storytime. 2 p.m. Children’s Department, Urbana Free Library. Latin American and Caribbean Studies, and The Urbana Free Library.

10 Tuesday

Family, Friends, and Dating Too: Healthy Relationships Start With You!” 7 p.m. 406 Illini Union. Counseling Center.

Wednesday

Around the World Wednesdays. 9-10 a.m. noon. Spurlock Museum. Crafts and activities from around the world. $2 donation. Spurlock Museum.

Nature ABCs and 123s. “It’s for Me.” 10-11 a.m. Allerton Education Center. 515 Old Timber Road, Monticello. Children ages 2 to 5 and their parents are invited to come and play while learning about nature at Allerton. Each program will include stories, songs, and hands-on exploration. $ Allerton Park and Retreat Center.


13 Friday

Fourth Annual Reading and Reception. 6-10 p.m. Krannert Art Museum auditorium. A night of readings and presentations. Ninth Letter.

Saturday

Nature ABCs and 123s. “It’s for Me.” 10-11 a.m. Allerton Education Center. 515 Old Timber Road, Monticello. Children ages 2 to 5 and their parents are invited to come and play while learning about nature at Allerton. Each program will include stories, songs, and hands-on exploration. $ Allerton Park and Retreat Center.


Center for Teaching Excellence.

Book reading. Mark Costello, author. 4-5 p.m. Illini Union Bookstore. Care Reading Series/English.

Thursday


20 Wednesday

Around the World Wednesdays. 9-10 a.m. noon. Spurlock Museum. Crafts and activities from around the world. $2 donation. Spurlock Museum.


21 Thursday

Discussion. “ICE Online: Web-Based Student Ratings of Instruction at UIUC.” Chris Mignogna. UI. 1:30 p.m. 428 Armory Building. To register, go to www.allerton.uiuc.edu/cte_022108. Center for Teaching Excellence.

22 Friday

Workshop. “Quick and Simple Classroom Assessment Techniques.” Sandy Fisler. UI. 1:30-3 p.m. 428 Armory. To register, visit www.allerton.uiuc.edu/cte_022208. Center for Teaching Excellence.

23 Saturday

Kids@Krannert. 10 a.m.-noon. Krannert Art Museum. An event for the entire family with demonstrations, hands-on art projects, dance, music and performance. Krannert Art Museum.

24 Wednesday

“Women in Politics: Latin America and the Caribbean.” Latin American and Caribbean Library.

25 Thursday

“The Time is Now! Overcoming Procrastination.” Dr. Jennifer Oinoo. UI. 4:00 Illini Union. Counseling Center.

27 Saturday

Kids@Krannert. 10 a.m.-noon. Krannert Art Museum. An event for the entire family with demonstrations, hands-on art projects, dance, music and performance. Krannert Art Museum.

exhibits


“Ancient Egypt: The Origins” Through Feb. 24. Five galleries featuring the cultures of the world. Spurlock Museum. 600 S. Gregory St., Urbana. Noon-5 p.m. Tuesday, 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Wednesday-Friday, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Saturday, Noon-4 p.m. Sunday.

“Absence the Landscape of Journey” Stephen Hudson, Parkland College. Through Feb. 29. Humanities Lecture Hall. IPFIU, 805 W Pennsylvania Ave., Urbana. 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday-Friday.


“Jay Ryan: Animals and Objects In and Out of Water” Through May 11.

“The Archaeological Heritage of Illinois” Through June 1, 2008. Krannert Art Museum and Krannert Pavilion. 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday, until 9 p.m. Thursday, 2-5 p.m. Sunday. Free admission; $3 donation suggested.

“Community as Classroom” University YMCA. 8:30 a.m. Monday-Thursday. 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Friday, 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Sunday. open to all faculty/staff at no charge during scheduled hours with valid ID card.


english as a Second Language Course

See CALENDAR, Page 16.
Ad removed for online version