UI employees’ efforts brighten the holidays for others

By Shalita Forrest
Assistant Editor

The approaching holiday season will fall far short as “the most wonderful time of the year” for the many people who are struggling just to feed, house and clothe their families, let alone buy toys for the children and trinkets for the adults. And even though the UI’s faculty and staff members aren’t immune from the repercussions of the economic recession, they’re still opening their hearts and wallets to help make the season a little brighter for others.

Recognizing that moms and dads need some holiday cheer, and necessities such as clothing as well, members of the Secretariat are donating gifts for a mother and her two small children through the Faculty-Staff Assistance Program’s Adopt-a-Family initiative. D.J. Weidler, chair of the Secretariat’s new Philanthropic Committee, is leading the effort to collect new clothing, bedding, toys, videos and grocery and department store gift cards for the family. Secretariat members chose the Adopt-a-Family program because they wanted the chance to contribute to the inaugural philanthropic endeavor to improve life for UI employees and their families.

Weidler said while maintaining confidentiality about the family’s identity, the Faculty-Staff Assistance Program provided information such as the children’s ages, clothing sizes and interests so that the Secretariat, with the participation of the University of Illinois Food Bank and three large bags of winter clothing for Salt and Light last year. “We get a great deal of pleasure doing this,” said Carter, who is collecting toys, food and winter clothing again this year and would return the donations to the appropriate organizations.

Additionally, pet lovers in the College of Veterinary Medicine’s Teaching Hospital will haul the donations to the appropriate organizations.

As they have done for the past several years, employees at Beckman are donating toys to the Salvation Army’s annual toy drive again this year. “A lot of people have told us they enjoy participating in the toy drive because they hope their donation can make a child’s holiday a little brighter,” said Sue Johnson, manager of external relations at Beckman Institute. “My little girl, Amalie, and I have made a tradition out of going to the store and choosing a toy. She then loves coming by Beckman to drop the toy in the box.”

Helping hands

Sue Johnson, manager of external relations at Beckman Institute, and her daughter, Amalie, 5, drop a toy in the collection box for the annual toy drive at Beckman. Amalie enjoys the annual ritual of shopping for a toy and delivering it to the donation box in the director’s suite at Beckman, Johnson said. Toys are donated to the Salvation Army’s Champaign County toy drive, which has set a goal of collecting 5,000 toys for needy children in the Champaign area this year.

Shared Benefits program

Program helps ease financial burden during illness

One night last summer Lois “Jeanne” Carter, of the UI Extension office in Champaign, started feeling chest pains. She already had an appointment with her doctor scheduled for the next day, so she waited and reported the pain when she met with the doctor. After a brief exam, the doctor insisted she go straight to the hospital. She was admitted immediately. Three days later she underwent quadruple bypass heart surgery, and she was out of work for many weeks while she recovered.

Carter said she quickly exhausted her vacation and sick leave, and had it not been for a university program to provide supplemental benefits to campus employees, she likely would have lost her home and her life savings.

Carter is one of thousands of Civil Service and academic professional employees of the university who have donated at least one day of sick or vacation leave to a campuswide pool called the Shared Benefits program. The program allows employees who have contributed to the pool to receive up to 45 days of pay a year when they face a health issue that requires a long absence from work. “If you had warning you were going to get sick you would prepare for being out of work without pay, but that’s not how life works,” Carter said. “I don’t know what I would have done without this program.”

Although Don Gerard, the facilities manager for Veterinary Medicine’s Teaching Hospital, said membership in the program is an important option for campus employees. “When I first started working at the university about 10 years ago, I was a shipping and receiving clerk on a loading dock and I found that I burned up a lot of my time with my children who were very young at the time,” Gerard said. “They would be sick, or I would be sick, and I realized quickly that I would be in a precarious predicament if I ever needed time beyond what I had accrued.”

As Gerard’s children outgrew childhood illnesses, he remembered what it felt like to worry about running short of sick leave, so he decided to contribute some of his own time to the program.

Marilyn de Jong, records manager for Staff Human Resources, said employees who have contributed at least 11 sick, vacation days, or both, may donate to the pool. The donation provides “membership” in the pool for as long as the employee remains at Illinois.

Carter remembers a year when the pool was running low, and the university began a push to recruit new donors. “I had joined the pool earlier – as soon as I was eligible – but when I heard they needed more time, I gave another day, because I knew how important the program is. We all need to help each other, and if everybody gives a little bit nobody has to give a lot.”

When a person is dealing with a health crisis that exhausts paid sick leave and other benefits, help from the Shared Benefits program is critical. “The mother is very reluctant to get really sick. I think this is a wonderful program, and even if I never needed it myself I’m glad I contributed to it. I’m proud to be at a university where people take care of each other.”

More information, including how to contribute, is available online. 

Economic Impact

Provost Linda Katehi discusses the economic forecast for higher education in Illinois and the UI’s strategy for weathering adverse conditions.

Academic retirees

Retirement means something different for each individual. We feature several recent retirees who fill their days.

On the Web

www.news.uiuc.edu/ii

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On the Web

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Q&A with Provost Linda Katehi

"ALL OF OUR UNITS WILL NEED TO ENGAGE IN THOUGHTFUL DISCUSSIONS ABOUT THEIR MISSIONS, THEIR STRATEGIC PLANS AND THEIR FINANCIAL RESOURCES."

Just like corporations and families across the nation, colleges and universities are facing with some difficult decisions – revenues fall below targets and the economy slips deeper into recession. Some state governors are considering massive reductions in appropriations for higher education, forcing colleges and universities to reallocate funds and stretch each dollar. We need to engage in thoughtful discussions with faculty and students. Provost Linda Katehi discussed the economic forecast for higher education and how the UI will weather adverse conditions.

Has there been any communication from the Board of Illinois officials in Springfield as far as state budget cuts or campus cuts that will affect the university?

In order that the state’s $2 bil- lion Fiscal Year 2009 budget deficit, Gov. Rod Blagojevich proposed to the General Assembly an across-the-board cut of 5% in all state agencies, including the university. The university was granted authority to hold back in contingency reserve as much as 8 percent of total ap- propriations and distributions for all Gen- eral Fund spending, including agencies under the governor, the state Board of Education, higher education, state pension funds and the University of Illinois. The legislature, however, did not move that initiative when it met in November and the Illinois Board of Higher Education last week called on public universities to hold 2.5 percent of their fiscal 2009 state appropriation in reserve – a total of about $50 million. The UI campus is taking on the same percentages. So, those are two possible scenarios of mid-year budget rescissions, and others are possible. Are there units on campus that have already begun to identify creative solutions?

Yes, the university’s leadership in the central administration and on the three campuses have been developing various options for operating budget reductions and are expected to make recommenda- tions soon. All the deans and vice chancel- lor have been working with their units to explore best practices for absorbing these cuts. We have a campus filled with creative people, and through them we will find creative ways to address this situation. Will federal grant-funded programs be reduced?

Certainly, for developments of this sort. I do not think it is possible, however, that the university can absorb a dra- matic cut without impacts. Will federal grant-funded programs be reduced.

Jerry Meyer, health sciences

What principles/goals will guide the resource allocation decision-making process in the coming months?

The goal is to emerge from this finan- cial situation as a stronger, more effective university, one that uses its resources more efficiently, and one that is poised to extend its traditions of academic excellence into the future. We will be guided by values and initiatives articulated in our Strategic Plan: protect our excellence in teaching, research and engagement with our broader community; provide an environment in which our students learn from our formal instruction and from each other; and sustain the infrastructure in which our produc- tiveness as students, teachers, scholars and researchers is grounded.

Is an across-the-board budget cut the solution?

No, an across-the-board budget cut is not the solution. The potential cuts we are facing are sufficiently deep that no unit will be spared the responsibility to econ- omize. But the first priority will be to ensure that we maintain excellence in our chief missions – teaching and research. Dif- ferential cuts will be used to protect that priority. We are planning an approach that will both identify new revenue streams and redeploy existing resources. Additionally, we will mobilize our academic communities through retire- ments, resignations and selective cuts.

What is the greatest risk we face as an institution?

The greatest risk we face is loss of faith in our ability to deal with this financial situation, equitably and effectively, to pre- serve our fundamental strengths. We must stay focused on what is most essential to the future of the university, and we must keep our nerves steady, and we will emerge from this financial situation strengthened as an institution and ready to move on.

Is the international financial situation a threat or an opportunity?

I think it depends a great deal on how we approach these times. There is no doubt that the financial situation feels threatening to most of us. However, outside threats can bring rich opportunities if we plan ahead. It is crucial to use each instance of budget reduction as an opportunity to create new efficiencies, to think hard about what is most essential to each of our activities, and to shape the future of our university around those activities most vital to preserve, ex- tend and develop.

What is the greatest risk we face as an institution?

We have enormous resources on our side – chief among them, extraordinary students at every level, a world-class facul- ty; a large and loyal and generous alumni base; experienced, reliable staff performing excellent work on essential tasks that make the university functionally operational every day; and a beautiful, high functioning in- frastructure that reflects the investment of all Iowans in our campus over decades.

What does all of this mean to me, the faculty member/staff member/ student?

We must all have a better experience if we bring a spirit of cooperation, creativity and trust. We will all be touched by the effects of this financial downturn, and we will need our individual and collective re- sourcefulness to manage it. The essentials, however, will remain in place, because we are an extraordinary education institution, and we expect our students to find deep satisfaction in excel- lent teaching and path-breaking research and scholarship.

How can I (faculty member/staff member/student) help?

Provost Katehi said, "All of our units will need to engage in thoughtful discussions about their missions, their strategic plans and their financial resources. Those discussions will be most fruitful if everyone participates – faculty and staff members and students. Our abil- ity to be innovative and nimble hinges on our partnership with all of our academic family. In addition, these times de- mand that we all be open to change. If we are to emerge as a stronger institution, we have to adopt an approach that encourages creative thinking about how we best use our resources to accomplish our goals."

ON THE WEB

Budget deficit news release from the governor’s office
http://illinois.edu/goto/illinoisdeficit

Oct. 25 e-mail from President B. Joseph White
http://illinois.edu/goto/unc_outlook

Campus Economic Outlook from Chancellor Herman
http://illinois.edu/goto/campus/outlook

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http://news.illinois.edu/ii/
I also sing with a gospel music group from church called ‘Chosen’ that does
Besides volunteering, do you have any other hobbies?
poor background. When we had work that needed to be done, it was a
too take a shower. She said it was 300 times better than living in a FEMA trailer.
there to wash them every day. She had to walk to her son’s house every night
painted the inside of a woman’s house.
doing a lot of drywall and construction, and then we went out into the city and
This last summer we worked with a church group in St. Bernard’s Parish
You’ve also volunteered in New Orleans, correct?
questions asked.
The whole trip made a huge impression on me. I would go back in a second, no
That particular area is hard-hit with political issues. The mission trips there are
in the clinics we set up. I worked in the pharmacy, with record-keeping and
counting pills, that sort of thing.
which Tchaikovsky wrote the music with the world of the child in mind is also impor-
tall, every 5-year-old ballerina wants to Waltz like a flower! Is “The Nutcracker” performed much in Russia today?
One of our doctoral candidates in Rus-
ian history and music, Rebecca Mitchell, told me that she recently attended a pro-
duction of the work at the Imperial Ballet’s Marinsky Theater, where it was originally pre-
ferred and it is still part of the standard rep-
ertoire, and that she heard musical excerpts everywhere – on Russian televi-
sion and even in the grocery store. It also remains a staple of the Moscow Ballet
company, which has made the “Great Rus-

cracker” is how it illustrates an important
characteristic of Tchaikovsky’s composi-
tural suite from eight dance num-
bers and it was with this suite that the work
was premiered in St. Petersburg in March

On the Job Joyce Roberts

Joyce L. Roberts is the business manager for the 17 departments, programs and
centers in the School of Literatures, Cultures and Linguistics. Roberts
started at the university in April 1984 as a secretary II in the department of
plant biology. In 1987, she moved to the department of mathematics and
worked there until she accepted her current position two years ago. Roberts

grew up in Assumption, Ill., and later graduated from Monticello High School.
She and her husband, Doug, a mechanic in the university’s Garage and Car
Pool, have two children and three grandchildren. They live in the Mahomet area.
Tell me about your job.
My office is the business arm of the school, so anything that requires an
account number has to come through this office in some way or another. I have
four people on my team who work with me and help me with those tasks.
What do you like most about your job?
I like the complexity of it – there are never two days in a row where I do the
same thing. By virtue of having 17 different departments, programs and
centers, there are always questions to field and always someone who has a
problem that needs to be solved. It’s a very busy environment here, and I very
much enjoy that. I like multi-tasking – I don’t twiddle my thumbs very well at all.
How does this job differ from your previous one at the department of
mathematics?
When I worked at the mathematics department, some called me the
departamental psychologist because anybody who had a problem or issue
would come to me. They knew that their issue was not going to go anywhere
outside of my office. I learned a lot of things about people in that job.
This school is multi-cultural and multi-lingual. It’s been a lot of fun to get to
know people in this building.
Describe your volunteer work experiences.
My husband and I belong to the Mahomet Christian Church and I’ve gone on
two weeklong mission trips with the church. One was a medical trip to Port-au-
Prince, Haiti. We saw at least a hundred people a day, sometimes over that,
in the clinics we set up. I worked in the pharmacy, with record-keeping and
counting pills, that sort of thing.
That particular area is hard-hit with political issues. The mission trips there are
few and far between now because it is not safe.
The whole trip made a huge impression on me. I would go back in a second, no
questions asked.
You’ve also volunteered in New Orleans, correct?
This last summer we worked with a church group in St. Bernard’s Parish
outside of New Orleans. What’s happened is the government has forgotten
those people, and there’s not much of a governmental effort to put things back
outside of New Orleans. What’s happened is the government has forgotten
this to take a shower. She said it was 300 times better than living in a FEMA trailer.
there to wash them every day. She had to walk to her son’s house every night

does a seasonal classic. “The Nutcracker,” the fantasy ballet set to an
adaptation of T.E.A. Hoffmann’s original tale and Piotr
ilyich Tchaikovsky’s score, seems to be as popular today as when it was first
performed in St. Petersburg in 1892. Ulf professor Donna
Buchanan, who specializes in Russian and Balkan music,
teaches courses focusing on Russian art music, including
“The Nutcracker.” She discusses the timeless appeal of
the ballet and its music with News Bureau Arts Editor Melissa Mitchell.

French dance master of the St. Petersburg Imperial Ballet, and Tchaikovsky.
Petipa produced the component with a distinctive
program for the ballet that indicated how
he envisioned the character and length of each section, and the
much of the music in just two weeks. Not satis-
fied with the score, he continued to fiddle
with his first piano version. Hector Berlioz,
who was successful as a Symphonic Dance
Suite, earned a reputation for his grandiose
scale in the world of music. The
score includes some of
Tchaikovsky’s most recognizable music,
including “The Dance of the Sugar Plum
Fairies” which introduced the distinctive
sounds of the celesta to generations. Is
this music considered to be among the
commerson’s best work?
Beauty and greatness are usually in the eye and ear of the beholder. “The Nut-
cracker” is featured in practically every college and university ballet program, but
the leading texts for music majors fre-
quently only mention it in passing, choos-
ing Great Tchaikovsky’s operas “The
Queen of Spades” and “Eugene Onegin,”
his symphonies 4, 6, his “Roméo and Ju-
liet”, his six piano concertos, or the
“Serenade for Strings” instead. Tchaik-
ovsky himself reportedly expressed anxiety
following the score’s completion that it was not successful as a “Symphonic Dance
Suite”, but his melancholic personality often hindered a more rational self-assessment
of his work. What is like about “The Nut-
cracker” is how it illustrates an important
characteristic of Tchaikovsky’s composi-
tional persona – the tension between his very serious European conservatory training and
mastery of conventional forms with his
hypontically Russian sensibilities and knowledge of local folklore. The addition
of the celesta was an expert touch – one
that he feared Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov
and Alexander Glazunov would discover
and take advantage of before the ballet’s
debut. ♦
A Minute With ...™
Donna Buchanan

As the winter holidays approach, so does a seasonal
classic. “The Nutcracker,” the fantasy ballet set to an
adaptation of T.E.A. Hoffmann’s original tale and Piotr
ilyich Tchaikovsky’s score, seems to be as popular today as when it was first
performed in St. Petersburg in 1892. Ulf professor Donna
Buchanan, who specializes in Russian and Balkan music,
teaches courses focusing on Russian art music, including
“The Nutcracker.” She discusses the timeless appeal of
the ballet and its music with News Bureau Arts Editor Melissa Mitchell.
As “The Nutcracker” opens, a family is gathering for a Christmas Eve
celebration – which explains why it is
traditionally performed at this time of
year. But how do you account for its
enduring and extraordinary popularity?
This probably has to do with the whims-
ical, fantastical allure of the plot, which appears to imag itional scene of melodies;
the coloristic, pictorial orchestrational effects;
and the swirling, vivid, almost kaleido-
scope, dance scenes. It’s a bit like watching
an early Disney animated film, like “Snow
White,” unfold on the stage with real live
characters. For youngsters, the effect

could be spellbinding. Orchestras and dance
companies across the U.S. have made the work a seasonal standard, the fact that
children play the main roles in the story and
that Tchaikovsky wrote the music with the world of the child in mind is also impor-
tant. After all, every 5-year-old ballerina
wants to Waltz like a flower! Is “The Nutcracker” performed much in Russia today?
One of our doctoral candidates in Rus-


Faculty members, academic professionals retire

Between Sept. 1, 2007, and Aug. 31, 2008, 115 faculty members and academic professionals retired from the UI, according to the Office of Academic Human Resources. The retirees, their positions, units and approximate years of service appear online.

44 + 41 + (40 x 3) = five mathematicians’ retirements

By Sharita Forrest
Assistant Editor

During her 31-year career at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Nancy Kobel worked her way up through the Civil Service ranks from a position as a clerk-typist in the College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences to an academic professional position as assistant director of administration in International Programs and Studies, with a dual appointment in other campus units along the way. Now Kobel is using the insights and experiences she gained during her time at IPS to bring a perspective into the classroom.

A vital component of her job was budgeting, the grants and contracts and the accounting, said Kobel about her job at IPS. “It took every bit of my learning and contributed everything I could, it was time to move on,” said Kobel, who worked in various accounting positions in units around campus and in other Illinois campuses two years ago and now visits at least once a month, even during the winter.

There are family roots there too, as three of Fossum’s cousins, who are retired farmers, live in the Midwest.

Infinite possibilities
Mathematicians

Robert Fossum, who retired this year after a 44-year career at the UI, is working on an invariant theory project and contributes mathematics to computer vision projects at Beckman Institute. “I have lots of friends in mind and still live in the St. Louis area and want to do,” said Fossum, who, with his wife, Robin, founded a distinguished lecture series that brings leading scientists to Beckman as invited speakers.

Kobel’s retirement plans include ‘to teach from the beach’

By Sharita Forrest
Assistant Editor

During her 31-year career at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Nancy Kobel worked her way up through the Civil Service ranks from a position as a clerk-typist in the College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences to an academic professional position as assistant director of administration in International Programs and Studies, with a dual appointment in other campus units along the way. Now Kobel is using the insights and experiences she gained during her time at IPS to bring a perspective into the classroom.

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nearby. “They have red cedar growing on their property, and they cut it down and take it to the Amish mill across the road to get it planked and then bring it to our place,” Fossum said.

Naturally, Fossum is working on a project in invariant theory with one of his former doctoral students, and he contributes mathematics to projects related to computer vision, such as facial recognition, with colleagues Tom Huang and Yi Ma, faculty members with appointments in electrical and computer engineering and at the Beckman Institute, where Fossum also has an office.

“I have lots of projects in mind and still some research that I want to do,” Fossum said.

Fossum began a full-time appointment at Beckman eight years ago, and as a way of giving back to Beckman and the academic community, he and Robin founded the Rob- en Endowment Fund, which supports junior faculty. “It is a gift to the University that I have been here so long that I couldn’t,” Fossum said. “They’re in the wrong place. The best raw material that we have is undergraduate students.

“I’ve always been interested in teaching, and I’ve tried to get in front of a class. Now, I’m getting in front of a computer.” Still active with NetMath, Uhl plans to develop more online courses on real and complex analysis.

Although he once bred a litter of eight Bernese mountain dogs that produced several litters (“purely by accident, not due to my skill”), Uhl now has only one of the many he bred, 4-year-old Yodeler. Named in recognition of the breed’s Swiss heritage, Yodeler is Uhl’s companion on Uhl’s country property near Homer, where Uhl hosts barbecues, grows trees native to Illinois and collects beer steins.

“People who arrive as undergraduates have not listened to the beauty and the power of geometry,” said Alexander. “My calling was to provide it.” And having “good students here, who really wanted to learn it” kept Alexander excited about teaching and geometry for nearly four decades. “The most important thing to me was the life of the mind, and this campus sustained it.”

And in considering the ambitious research agenda that Alexander has planned for the years ahead, she realized that she needed to devote herself to it entirely – and retire from teaching this summer to begin getting it done. Her current work is in metric geometry and Alexandrov spaces of curvature, Riccimanian and Lorentz geometry, and applications of metric geometry to convexity and robotics.

During 2008, Alexander was an invited speaker at several events, most recently at the Conference on Metric Geometry/Alexandrov Geometry in Beijing in November, and at Notre Dame University and Pennsylvania State University in April.

“I just got back from Beijing and it was thrilling,” Alexander said. “I thought I wouldn’t do much sightseeing, but I ran around absolutely entranced and am already planning another visit.”

In April, the Alexanders will be traveling to Big Bend National Park in Texas to view some of the more than 430 bird species that inhabit the area. Members of the Audu- bons Society, the Alexanders have been on several trips organized by the World Wild- life Federation during the past few years, including destinations such as Alaska and Churchill, Manitoba, Canada.

During July 2009, Alexander will be a researcher in residence for about three weeks at the Oberwolfach Institute in Ger- many’s Black Forest.

Alexander was thesis adviser for six doctoral candidates and currently is advis- ing two students.

“I shared in the general experience of not having geometry presented to me in a way that I could understand,” Alexander said about her earliest encounters with the field that would become her life’s work. However, once her interest was sparked, “I had to be a geometer,” Alexander said.

An alumna of Mount Holyoke College, where Alexander earned her bachelor of arts degree with majors in math and literature in 1961, Alexander arrived at Illinois as a graduate student shortly thereafter. Having earned her doctorate at Illinois in math in 1967, Alexander joined the faculty as a half-time instructor in 1968 and was appointed as an assistant professor in 1972 and as a full professor in 1992. Along the way, she discovered her passion for teaching.

Over the course of her career, Alex- ander was one of the Flash Index, were up- ward, including the Prokasy Award for Distinguished Teaching and the Luckman Undergraduate Distinguished Teaching Award, each of which she received in 1993. More recently, Alexander’s contributions to her field through research were recognized when she was named a fellow of the Kuo-Tsai Chen Award for Distinguished Mathematical Research, 2004-2006.

Her lengthy list of written works in- cludes two journal articles that are awaiting publication.

Joining her husband and colleague in the mathematics department, Ralph Alex- ander, in retirement allows Alexander time to leisurely walk a couple of miles each morning and evening and to savor sunrises, stars and trees’ annual transformation from green to autumnal hues. From time to time, the couple will visit Chicago, New York, rented cabins in scenic places or wild- life trips.

But, not surprisingly, “for the rest of the time, I sit at my desk and work,” Alexander said.  

**UI Flash Index drops to 100**

*The Illinois economy continues to slide along with the national econ- omy, according to the UI Flash Index. The first monthly barometer of the state’s economy dropped to a reading of 100.0 for November, continuing a de- cline that began in July 2007. The index was 100.6 in October.*

A Flash Index level of 100 marks the dividing line between economic growth and economic decline. The index has not fallen to the 100 level since July 2004 and has not been below that mark since March 2004. It reached a post-2001 re- cession peak of 107.4 in April of last year.

More important than the index drop- ping to 100 is the absence of any signal that the downward spiral will end soon, said UI economist J. Fred Giertz, who compiles the Flash Index for the univer- sity’s Institute of Government and Public Affairs.

“There is nothing unique in regard to the Illinois economy,” he said. “The U.S. economy is almost certainly in recession and most other economies around the world are in a similar situation.

“The question now is not if there will be a recession, but how long and deep it will be,” Giertz said.

Most observers now expect the downturn to be more severe than the mild recessions of 1990 and 2001, but less damaging than the twin recessions of the early 1980s when unemployment peaked at 10.7 percent in October 1983. Tax receipts were down markedly in real terms in November from the same month last year. Corporate tax receipts, the third component of the Flash Index, were down because of an anomaly resulting in very low receipts in November of last year. The fourth component, a weighted average of Illinois growth rates in corporate earnings, consumer spending and personal income, was down because of a bigger adjustment for inflation between growth rates are calculated. The growth rate for each component is then calculated for the 12-month period using data through Nov. 30.  

**Geometry fan**

Although Stephanie Alexander retired from the mathematics department in June, she maintains an ambitious research agenda and remains active by geometry after 40 years of teaching and research. In November, Alexander visited Beijing, where she was an invited speaker at the Conference on Metric Geometry/Alexandrov Geometry.

A native of Pittsburgh, Uhl earned his bachelor’s degree at the College of William and Mary and a master’s degree at Carnegie Mellon University, both in mathematics. Uhl, an innovator in online mathemat- ics education and calculus instruction, brought UI mathematics to students around the world through the NetMath online ini- tiative. Wolfram Research, developer of Mathematica, recently honored Uhl as the inaugural recipient of its Pioneer Award in recognition of his groundbreaking work developing Calculus and Mathematica coursework.

In addition to writing or collaborating on numerous research papers, Uhl co-wrote several textbooks on calculus and Math- ematica. During the 1980s, he served as editor of the research journal Proceedings of the Ameri- can Mathematical Society.

Among the honors that Uhl accumulated during his career were the Award for Distinguished Teaching from the Illinois section of the Mathematical Association of America (1998) and the Award for Innovation in Undergraduate Instruction from the UI (1996).

He is proudest, though, of the 11 students that he shepherded through their doctoral theses. “I expect that a professor should be an excel- lent researcher and teacher, and that students who claim they are too busy to teach,” Uhl said. “They’re in the wrong place. The best raw mate- rial that we have is undergraduate students.

“I came in 1968 and loved the place,” Uhl said, who joined the UI faculty after serving two years as chief of the Scientific Analysis Section of the Defense Intelligence Agency Computer Center at the Pentagon. “It actually never occurred to me to leave until I’d been here so long that I couldn’t,” Uhl said. “It actually never occurred to me to leave until I’d been here so long that I couldn’t.”
Software aids researchers in finding federal funding

By Shanta Forrest
Assistant Editor

A software program that is now being implemented at the three UI campuses is helping automate and expedite the processes of finding and applying for research funding from federal agencies. More than 500 departmental users are using the UI eRA Grants Management System, software developed by InfoEd International, a company that develops technologies for researchers.

UI eRA "helps reduce the complexities of putting proposals together," said Kathy Young, director of the Office of Sponsored Programs and Research Administration. "There is so much angst that they won't get funded — that many faculty members are afraid to take that first step. Our goal is to provide a tool for them that will be as user-friendly as possible, that they can engage with at any time they choose. This system allows them to access it whenever and wherever they may be." 

"A solution has been about 12 years in the making," said Stephanie Graham, assistant director of the UI eThe Grants Management System. "The UI was trying to find an integrated tool that would automate the pre-award process and track the results. The functionality that existed in SCT Banner was not sufficient, so a third-party tool was found to provide pre-award information.

Although the software is being implemented with as few modifications as possible, "we have some options within the application to customize it for the UI," Graham said. "We can add certain fields and apply certain functionalities in our business processes. There are certain things we want to track that are specific to the UI. If the system doesn’t have it, we have places to put it in.

"The system also ensures compliance with a federal law that requires researchers to submit proposals electronically to federal agencies through the Web portal http://grants.gov. The Federal Financial Assistance Management Improvement Act, Public Law 106-107, signed by President Bill Clinton on Nov. 20, 1999, mandates electronic submission of federal grant applications. The act was intended to simplify the federal grant process and improve the effectiveness of federal grant programs, which dispense more than $400 billion in awards annually. The National Institutes of Health was the first agency to mandate submission through http://grants.gov. Other agencies are now following suit.

The UI was the first university to successfully submit an electronic proposal through http://grants.gov via the InfoEd application in 2007. Since then, several units at each campus have submitted proposals for each NIH deadline.

UI eRA’s funding search and delivery mechanisms, SPIN/SMARTS, complement other programs such as the Illinois Research Information System (IRIS) and Community of Science by providing additional conduits for locating funding opportunities. A database called SPIN provides up-to-date information on current national and international government and private funding sources. Additionally, SMARTS, an electronic matching and notification database, matches investigators’ search terms or profile information with current national and international research funding opportunities and e-mails notices to users at defined intervals.

The proposal development module eases some of the burden of preparing proposals by automatically filling in standard or repetitious information. Users can save copies of proposals, curriculum vitae and other information to the system to re-use or modify as needed for subsequent submissions. Validation mechanisms within the system cross check data that are entered with proposals’ specifications to reduce errors.

Once investigators and administrators have requested and received UI eRA accounts, they can access the reporting functions, build queries to extract data from the system and export it to Excel spreadsheets. Which data users can access is determined by their defined roles in the system; departmental administrators, for example, have access to all proposals from researchers in their units while users defined as investigators can access only their own proposals.

About 160 units across the UI campuses have participated in the implementation process, and many have volunteered to use the proposal-development module, which currently supports submissions to NIH and the National Science Foundation and is scheduled to support submissions to all other federal agencies early next year. Full implementation is being phased in over the next several months, and UI eRA staff are working with constituents at the three campuses to develop and launch a process that existed in SCT Banner was put in.

"We've got an effort going on to develop a generic form set that will enable us to roll the software out to more of campus," for submitting electronic proposals to other federal agencies such as the Department of Defense, Young said. "We’re testing that right now, identifying the issues and working with the vendor to ensure that we deliver a quality product.

For more information about UI eRA, including online tutorials and Web events, visit the UI eRA Web site.

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**Deaths**

Edward W. Ernst, 84, died Nov. 14. Ernst was a professor emeritus of engineering. He joined the department of electrical and computer engineering in 1958 and retired in 1989. Memorials: St. Paul United Church of Christ, 113 W. St., Belleville, IL 62220, and UI Foundation, Harken Hall, 1305 W. Green St., MC-386.

John D. Haltiwanger, 83, died Nov. 27 at Meadowbrook Health Center, Urbana. Haltiwanger was a professor of civil engineering and retired in 1990 with 39 years of service. From 1967 until 1983, Haltiwanger served as associate head for undergraduate affairs of the department. Memorials: Civil Engineering Trust Fund through the UI Foundation, Harken Hall, 1305 W. Green St., MC-386 or First United Methodist Church, 210 W. Church St., Champaign, IL 61820.

Robert C. Hiltibrand, 88, died Nov. 13 at his Urbana home.

Hiltibrand retired in 1992 as a biochemist with the Illinois State Natural History Survey. Memorials: American Alzheimer’s Association; Carle Cancer Center, Urbana; or American Heart Association; Carle Cancer Center, Urbana. Hiltibrand was a full professor emeritus and later became a professor of general engineering. He spent his entire career at the UI, retiring in 1982. He developed equipment that led to the discovery of the nuclear magnetic resonance spin echo that contributed to Magnetic Resonance Imaging and also worked on the development of Doppler radar systems. He also taught courses in aeronautical and astronautical engineering. Memorials: Beagle Rescue Education Welfare Mid-West (BRW Mid-West) PO Box 522, Fox Lake, IL 60020-0522.

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**Web**

UI eRA
www.uiowa.edu/eRA for all other funding sponsors.

As with any software implementation, there are issues cropping up that must be resolved before the final product is made broadly available. “With the UI being so decentralized, there are a lot of things going on that we don’t know about until they actually hit our door,” Young said. “We have to make sure that all the issues that we see get resolved before we roll out that product because there’s a potential for misunderstanding or an inability to use the product if we don’t get those things resolved.

“Now we’ve got an effort going on to develop a generic form set that will enable us to roll the software out to more of campus,” for submitting electronic proposals to other federal agencies such as the Department of Defense. Young said. "We’re testing that right now, identifying the issues and working with the vendor to ensure that we deliver a quality product.”

For more information about UI eRA, including online tutorials and Web events, visit the UI eRA Web site.
How difficult is the learning curve for a first-time chief executive, especially one stepping into such turmoil? I don’t think anyone is ever prepared, really, to be chief executive, whether it be governor or president. I’d been secretary of state and it’d been in the legislature, so I had a pretty good understanding of state government, but we’ve got to tell you I didn’t sleep a wink the night of my election or the night of my inauguration to the desk where the buck stops, as Harry Truman said. I don’t think you truly are prepared to just kind of wake themselves because you just cannot anticipate the crises and pressures you’re going to face.

No matter how good your resume is, there has to be a lot of growing as chief executive. And I think that’s the key. Can a President Obama grow? My sense is he can. You watch him over the last 10 years and it seems to me that he’s grown. I look back to the most successful presidents in history, Abraham Lincoln, who had probably a weaker resume than Barack Obama and he was able to do remarkable things as president.

What were the biggest surprises for you after you became governor? I think the surprise, and I think you don’t have the luxury of thinking about things for a few weeks or even a few days sometimes. Plus, if you mess up, there’s nobody behind you and there’s nobody in front of you. That’s pretty scary because if you miscalculate you could see the economy completely collapse in an instant. That is terrible to see people killed by a terrorist attack. So the stakes are extremely high.

How would you rate setting a tone for the new administration? It’s very important, and I think Sen. Obama started setting the tone on election night. People don’t always have their minds made up about a candidate even if they vote for them. They have to wait and see them in office, but it doesn’t take long before they form judgments. And once those judgments are formed it’s very difficult to change them. Do you think the history surrounding Obama’s election has heightened expectations, and could that ultimately pose a problem for his administration? Could it shorten the honeymoon?

Americans will give him? I think his honeymoon might be shorter just because of the crisis he faces. There’s also a segment of the population out there—minorities in particular—who are very exicted about this election and probably have higher expectations than he can deliver on. A lot of the people are going to look at their particular problem, and I’m not sure how many problems he’s going to be able to solve because he’s got to prioritize and the big priority is the economy. How he handles that, how he explains to the American people—particularly his strongest supporter, his wife—he has to do everything as soon as they want him to do it to go to a key to his success. My sense is he’ll make a lot of decisions that are not the best, not the best choice, but he’s got to do it. And the people around him are crucial.

What advice would you offer the president elect? That the people around him are crucial and that it’s important to reach out. Try to get as many points of view as possible and understand that you’re going into a very difficult situation."
Replacing corn with perennial grasses improves carbon footprint

By Diana Yates
Life Sciences Editor

Converting forests or fields to biofuel crops can increase or decrease greenhouse gas emissions, depending on where – and which – biofuel crops are used, UI researchers reported this month.

The researchers analyzed data from dozens of studies to determine how planting new biofuel crops can influence the carbon content of the soil. Their findings appear in the journal Global Change Biology Bioenergy.

Plants use the sun’s energy to convert carbon dioxide from the atmosphere into the organic carbon that makes up leaves, stems and other plant parts. As plants decay, this carbon goes into the soil. Organic carbon is an important component of soil health and also influences atmospheric carbon dioxide levels. Whenever the soil is disturbed, as occurs when land is plowed or cleared of vegetation, some of this carbon returns to the atmosphere in the form of carbon dioxide.

“From the time that John Deere invented the steel plow, which made it possible to break the prairie soil and begin farming this part of the world, the application of row crops to break the prairie sod and begin farming,” said Evan DeLucia, a professor of plant biology at Illinois and corresponding author on the new study.

Any debate on the environmental consequences of using plants to produce liquid fuels should also consider how each option affects terrestrial pool of carbon. About 20 percent of the corn crop currently goes into ethanol production in the U.S., DeLucia said, “so we began with the hypothesis that it might be good for soil carbon to put a perennial biofuel crop on the landscape instead of corn.”

The researchers analyzed published estimates of changes in soil organic carbon in landscapes converted from natural or agricultural land to biofuel crops. They focused on corn, sugar cane, Miscanthus, switchgrass and native prairie grasses. They also evaluated the impact of harvesting and using corn stover (the plant debris left over after corn is harvested) as a cellulosic biofuel source.

Their analysis showed that converting native land (grassland or forest) to sugarcane dramatically reduced soil carbon, creating a carbon deficit that would take decades to repay. While perennial grasses add carbon to the soil each year, DeLucia said, it could take up to a century for the sugar cane to rebuild soil carbon to former levels on native land.

Harvesting the corn residue for cellulosic ethanol production also reduced the carbon in the soil. The more plant residue was removed, the more the soil carbon declined. "Consistent with our hypothesis, the perennial feedstocks like Miscanthus and switchgrass start building soil carbon very, very early on," DeLucia said.

“From a purely carbon perspective, our research indicates that putting perennial biofuel crops on landscapes that are dominated by annual row crops will have a positive effect on soil carbon.”

The finding “seems to walk you right into the food-for-fuel debate,” DeLucia said, referring to the controversy over using agricultural land for fuel production. But because the U.S. is already devoting about 20 percent of its corn crop to ethanol production, he said, it would make sense to eventually use that land to produce a much higher yielding biofuel feedstock that has the added benefit of increasing organic carbon in the soil.

DeLucia and his colleagues will present their findings this month at the 2008 Fall Meeting of the American Geophysical Union. DeLucia also is an affiliate of the Institute for Genomic Biology and the Energy Biosciences Institute at the UI.
Changes in White House documents raise concern

By Craig Chamberlain
Social Sciences Editor

There were 45 nations in the “Coalition of the Willing” when the U.S. invaded Iraq. Or 46 or 48 or 49.

The number depends on which version of key White House news releases you read. And different versions of three releases all appear to be the originals. But the words are different and so are the facts, depending on when, over a period of several years, you accessed the releases on the White House Web site.

And in the case of two releases, the original document is simply missing from the site.

The Bush White House has been rewriting part of its history, according to UI researchers Scott Althaus (ALL'-touse) and Kalev Leetaru (KAHL'-iv lee-TAR-oo). It “has quietly deleted or modified key documents in the public record that are maintained under its direct control,” they write, in a report posted online.

Their detailed evidence focuses on five releases. They have not yet looked for changes to other documents on the White House Web site, and do not know why the changes were made. (Was it sloppy work by webmasters? Or were there political motives?)

But the evidence still leads them to “the troubling conclusion that major changes to the public record of the United States were not isolated events,” Althaus and Leetaru write. They are the first to show a pattern of changes in documents over time, but note that others have, on previous occasions, pointed to suspicious changes to archived documents on the White House Web site.

They are concerned enough about the potential implications — for the historical record, future scholarship and the interest of the American public — that they are suggesting others do their own online research over the next two months. Their report even includes instructions on how to do it.

Come Jan. 20 and a new administration, the current White House site could be removed from public view and not surface again for decades, they said. Even then, archivists may have the only access.

Althaus is a professor of political science and of communication at Illinois, as well as a faculty affiliate of the university’s Cline Center for Democracy, which has posted the report. Leetaru is the center’s coordinator of research and the Institute for Computing in the Humanities, Arts and Social Science.

Information is often malleable and ever-changing on the Web, especially on pages currently on the Web, the researchers said they realize that can make their concern seem overly paranoid.

They argue, however, that “updating lists to keep up with the times is one thing. Deleting or re-writing documents from the White House archives is another. Back-dating later documents and using them to replace the originals goes beyond irresponsible stewardship of the public record. It is rewriting history.”

They also note that though they are the first to document these revisions in archived news releases, they are not the first to note “unusual content changes” on the White House Web site. In one case, following the vice-presidential debate of Oct. 5, 2004, between Dick Cheney and John Edwards, and a contentious exchange during that debate about whether “Operation Iraqi Freedom” was a misnomer, several news reports noted the disappearance of the coalition list from the White House site. (When the document was later returned to the site, Althaus and Leetaru discovered, it was backdated a year earlier, with one country missing.)

Althaus said he discovered the problem by accident. A proofreader checking an article of which Althaus was a co-author discovered that a previously recorded Web address to one of the archived news releases now led to a blank page. Althaus confirmed that the document had been deleted, and that related White House lists of coalition countries appeared to contradict one another, even though they sometimes carried the same date.

He then showed his findings to Leetaru, an expert in online research, and Leetaru’s analysis revealed that several of the White House releases had been revised after the fact to list different numbers and names of coalition countries.

Leetaru also did general searches of the Web using a key phrase common to White House releases containing the coalition list, and in that way found pages referring to that release on more than 50 other sites. A Wikipedia site, for example, claims to have a copy of the original release, but that release is a revised version, the researchers said. Likewise, documents found through LexisNexis do not agree with those currently on the White House site.

Because the content of seemingly original releases was ever-changing, inaccuracies and inconsistencies have been spread throughout the Web, the researchers said.

On or off the Web, the consequences are troubling for scholarship and the future writing of history, Althaus said. “This raises the question of whether other parts of the documentary record maintained in White House archives accurately reflects the information that was produced and released in real time,” he said.

The average citizen, as well, is inclined to look at government Web sites as the authoritative source for certain factual information, Leetaru said, and this research calls that into question.

“We’re hoping that other people hearing about our findings might go and check up on documents that may be important or interesting to them,” Althaus said. “We’d like to know what other deletions and revisions might have been made before this Web site becomes difficult or impossible to access after the presidential transition in January.”

Altering history Scott Althaus, a professor of political science and of communication, right, and Kalev Leetaru, coordinator of research in the Cline Center for Democracy, show how ever-changing versions of several White House news releases have spread a distorted historical record on the Web. They hold five deleted or revised documents listing the “Coalition of the Willing” from the Iraq invasion, and are surrounded by pages from more than 50 sites that contain versions of the list.
Economy will worsen if layoffs used to curb company losses

By Jan Dennis
Business & Law Editor

Widespread layoffs that stem corporate financial losses but leave workers out in the cold would deepen the looming recession that sparked them, a UI labor expert warns.

Displaced workers with no paychecks or severance packages could add a potentially catastrophic drug to a U.S. economy already facing its worst downturn in decades, says Joel Cutcher-Gershenfeld, the dean of the School of Labor and Employment Relations.

But he says businesses can cushion the blow of layoffs that are inevitable in the months ahead as companies align labor supply with sagging demand.

In the first of a series of commentaries on labor and the crippled economy, Cutcher-Gershenfeld urges employers to provide a softer landing for both workers and the economy through programs ranging from severance packages to retraining benefits.

“We’re not asking businesses to do this out of charity,” he said. “There are ways to approach layoffs that maintain options with the displaced workers, deepen loyalty with remaining workers, give meaning to stated corporate values, and help avoid an accelerated collapse in the economy. Instead of knee-jerk, across-the-board job cuts that will have a contagion effect on the economy, Cutcher-Gershenfeld said. But collectively, a flurry of layoffs will accelerate a downward spiral if employees are simply cut loose, he said.

Providing safety nets may seem more costly than just letting workers go, but could save money in the long run, said Cutcher-Gershenfeld, whose research includes labor-management relations, public policy and economic development.

“I think what’s at stake is a slow, lingering, deep recession versus a somewhat faster, somewhat less deep recession,” he said. “You’ll be able to gauge it in human lives.”

Labor’s links to the economy are only now being considered after a more than yearlong financial meltdown, but companies can learn from the lessons of past recessions, Cutcher-Gershenfeld said.

During the 1980s recession, for example, the auto industry partnered with unemployment offices, community colleges and others to achieve a nearly 90 percent placement rate for more than 200,000 displaced auto workers, he said.

Retraining is just one of the options, he said.

Providing safety nets may seem more costly than just letting workers go, but could save money in the long run, said Cutcher-Gershenfeld.

“Providing safety nets may seem more costly than just letting workers go, but could save money in the long run,” he said.

Former Bush adviser lauds Obama’s economic team

By Jan Dennis
Business & Law Editor

A former economic adviser for President Bush and John McCain threw bipartisan support to the economic team assembled by President-elect Barack Obama to help lead the U.S. out of its deepest financial crisis since the Great Depression.

UI finance professor Jeffrey R. Brown says Obama “clearly hit the ball out of the park” by nominating a team led by Tim Geithner as treasury secretary, Lawrence Summers as the head of the National Economic Council, Christina Romer as the chair of the Council of Economic Advisers and Peter Orszag as the director of the Office of Management and Budget.

“This is clearly a first-class economic team, composed of some of the best and brightest economists of our day,” said Brown, a senior economist with the President’s Council of Economic Advisers in 2001-2002 and an economic adviser for McCain’s presidential campaign.

Brown has worked closely with Orszag, who would head a White House office that writes and helps sell the president’s annual budget plan and also serves as a funnel for federal agency budget requests.

“Peter Orszag is, without question, the leading authority on federal budget issues of our generation,” Brown said. “He has served as the director of the Congressional Budget Office for the past two years, and has thus been deeply involved in every economic issue coming before Congress. From personal experience, I can tell you that he is brilliant.”

Orszag and Brown co-wrote a 2002 paper on hedging risks in pensions and annuities, and worked together on projects focused on pensions and Social Security for the National Academy of Social Insurance and the Aspen Institute.

Brown also has worked closely with Austan Goolsbee, who Obama has named chief economist for a special economics advisory board that will be headed by former Federal Reserve Chairman Paul Volcker. Goolsbee and Brown met in graduate school at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in the mid-1990s, and co-wrote a 2002 paper that provided some of the first empirical evidence that price shopping on the Internet lowered consumer costs.

“Austan is one of the smartest, most talented and most respected economists of his generation,” Brown said. “He has not served in any prior administration, and thus he would bring a fresh perspective, new ideas and an incredibly high energy level to the new administration.”

Brown, the director of the Center on Business and Public Policy in the College of Business, says he has sometimes differed with Orszag, Goolsbee and other Obama economists on policy issues, including tax policy and Social Security reform. He says Obama’s economic team will likely advocate an activist government that wields its power to influence markets, particularly in times of economic crisis.

Brown prefers to rely on market solutions whenever possible, with government intervention only when there are clear market failures the government has the ability to correct.

“These differences are important, and I fully expect I will disagree with them on several important policy questions over the next few years,” Brown said. “Despite those differences, I can say without any reservation that this is one of the most intelligent and talented economic teams ever assembled.”
Among the newcomers to the Urbana campus are faculty members whose appointments began this summer or fall. Inside Illinois continues its tradition of introducing some of the new faculty members on campus and will feature at least two new colleagues in each fall issue.

**New Faces 2008**

**Teresa A. Barnes, associate professor of history, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences**

**Education:** B.A. and M.A. (African economic history), University of Zimbabwe; B.A. (international relations), Brown University.

**Research Interests:** The experiences of Zimbabwean women through research that has relied heavily on, though not exclusively, oral histories in the 20th century.

**At Illinois:** Barnes taught “Gender, Autobiography and Contemporary Southern Africa” during the fall semester and will teach “Atlantic Slave Trade From the African Perspective” in the spring.

“Professor Barnes is an established authority on various aspects of women, gender and feminist histories in Zimbabwe,” said Antoinette Burton, chair of the department. “She joins a history department with a long tradition of training African historians interdisciplinarily. Her expertise in women’s and gender studies, both in terms of history and also in terms of institutional culture, will be a tremendous asset in Gender and Women’s Studies by widening the vision of its core curriculum and helping to sediment a transnational Ph.D. program in the making.”

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**Ronald Lee Jackson, associate dean for research and faculty development and professor of communications and African American Studies, College of Media**

**Education:** Ph.D. (rhetoric/intercultural communication), Howard University; M.A. (organizational communication), University of Cincinnati; B.A. (speech communication), University of Cincinnati.

**Research Interests:** Intercultural communication; identity and communication; African American communication and rhetoric; communication theory; masculinity, culture and communication; and public speaking.

**At Illinois:** Jackson comes to the UI from the Pennsylvania State University with an impressive body of scholarship centered on race and identity negotiation,” said Cliff Christians, director of the UI Institute of Communications Research. “His award-winning research has appeared in many major communication journals and his eighth and most recent book on black masculinity in popular culture, ‘Scripting the Black Masculine Body,’ has been a highly regarded text on race, masculinity and communication. Additionally, he has applied his theoretical work to empirical research and to classroom pedagogy. Beyond his national leadership in academic and professional associations, Jackson served as an Administrative and Leadership Fellow at Penn State and in the Council on Institutional Cooperation/Big Ten before joining the faculty here at the UI.”

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**Rita Mumm, associate professor of maize breeding and genetics and director of the Plant Breeding Center, College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences**

**Education:** Ph.D. (genetics and plant breeding) and B.S. (agricultural sciences), University of Illinois.

**At Illinois:** Mumm plans to work on the development of corn lines that will maximize energy production per unit of land.

**Research Interests:** Plant breeding, genetics and cytogenetics, and quantitative genetics.

“Dr. Rita Mumm brings to Illinois a wealth of knowledge about commercial corn breeding,” said Robert G. Hoefl, professor and head of crop sciences. “In her time with industry, she was credited with making several scientific discoveries that advanced the profession of plant breeding. Her accomplishments include the development of corn lines that were more productive and less susceptible to pest problems. She was on the team that developed Roundup-resistant corn. She was credited with developing new testing systems that have allowed the breeders to move new products to the market faster and with more assurance that the product was safe.”

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achievements

A report on honors, awards, appointments and other outstanding achievements of faculty and staff members.

agricultural, consumer and environmental sciences

Jack Widholm, professor emeritus of plant physiology in the department of crop sciences, has received the Lifetime Achievement Award given by the Society for In Vitro Biology. This award is the highest honor given by the society and is presented annually to a scientist who is considered a pioneer in the society’s field of research. Widholm’s laboratory was the first to report the regeneration of soybean plants. Other firsts include isolating and characterizing biochemical plant cell mutants, following root plant cells photoautotrophically at a rapid growth rate, developing viability stains for cultured cells, and showing that most corn inbreds cannot be regenerated by changing the culture conditions.

education

Richard Anderson, professor of educational psychology and director of the UI Center for the Study of Reading, was a panelist on the National Academy of Education’s policy forum titled “Education Policy in Transition: A Briefing on the National Academy of Education” in Washington, D.C., on Nov. 18. The forum featured researchers, policy leaders and advisers to President-elect Barack Obama and his congressional staff in a discussion of some of the most urgent issues in education policy.

engineering

John A. Rogers, the Lee J. Flory Founder Chair in Engineering Innovation at Illinois, has been selected as a National Security Science and Engineering Faculty Fellow. The program provides grants to top-tier researchers from U.S. universities to conduct long-term, unclassified, basic research involving the most challenging technical issues facing the Department of Defense.

fine and applied arts

The UI ranks fourth among “Universities With 10 or More Licensed African-American Graduates,” according to a report in the fall 2008 issue of NOMA Magazine. The magazine is a publication of the National Organization of Minority Architects. In its ranking process, the magazine considered all accredited programs at American collegiate schools of architecture.

The report tallied the number of individual graduates from the UI School of Architecture at 53.

Total counts included non-professional degrees, master’s degrees and doctorates; individuals are counted one time only, even if they received multiple degrees from the same institution.

The Pacifica Quartet, the faculty quartet in residence at the UI, has been recognized as Ensemble of the Year by Musical America.

The annual directory and online site – regarded as the bible of the performing arts industry – hailed Pacifica as “a model string quartet of the 21st century.”

Musical America also applauded the ensemble for its “open-minded approach to repertory” that “embraces both venerable and modern masters, overlooked gems and brand-new works.”

The members of the quartet are Sibbi Bernhardsson and Simin Ganatra, violin; Masumi Per Rostad, viola; and Brandon Vamos, cello.

liberal arts and sciences

Martin Gruebele, the James R. Eizner endowed Professor of Chemistry, has been awarded the 2008 Raymond and Beverly Sackler Prize in the Physical Sciences. The award, given by Tel Aviv University, was established to support and recognize dedication to science, originality and excellence. The Sackler Prize is intended for young scientists, under the age of 45, who have made outstanding and fundamental contributions in their fields. Prizes are awarded each year in the disciplines of either physics or chemistry. Gruebele will receive the prize next spring.

John Katzenellenbogen, the Swanlund Professor of Chemistry, has received the Leading Edge in Basic Science Award from the Society for Toxicology. The award recognizes a scientist who has made a recent seminal scientific research contribution/advance to understanding fundamental mechanisms of toxicity. Katzenellenbogen will receive a plaque and a cash award at the awards ceremony, which will be held in March in conjunction with the 2009 SOT Annual Meeting in Baltimore.

Ralph Nuzzo, professor of chemistry, has been named to the G.L. Clark Professorship in Analytical Chemistry. He has earned this honor through his extensive work in the field of materials and surface chemistry. Nuzzo’s research and contributions to the science of self-assembly has led to major scientific advancements earning national attention.

media

The National Communication Association recently announced that Kent Ono, UI professor of communication and of Asian American Studies, and John M. Sloop, from Vanderbilt University, are the 2008 winners of the Charles H. Woolbert Research Award.

Ono and Sloop were selected based on their article “The Critique of Vernacular Discourse” which appeared in the 1995 edition of Communication Monographs. The selection committee felt that the essay “has stood the test of time and become a stimulus for new conceptualizations of communication phenomena.” The award is presented to an association member who has published a journal article or book chapter that has stood the test of time and has become the stimulus for new conceptualizations of speech communication phenomena. All entries were read and reviewed by a selection committee comprised of college professors from around the country.

HOLIDAY GIVING, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

In addition to collecting toys for children served by the Don Meyer Boys and Girls Club, the Division of Campus Recreation will host a party for 40 of the children at the Activities and Recreation Center on Dec. 18, when the children will receive their presents and participate in various activities.

Giving is a tradition for staff members in the department of electrical and computer engineering too, who select a charity to support each holiday season, collect donations and present a check to a representative of the chosen organization at their departmental holiday luncheon in December, according to Brad Petersen, assistant director of communications. Last year’s beneficiary was the Champaign County Humane Society, which received a donation of more than $1,200.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

The charity initiatives mentioned here are just a few of the many charity drives under way this year that reflect the generous spirit of people in the campus community. If you’d like to contribute:

• Salvation Army toy drive – New unwrapped toys accepted through Dec. 19 at 3329 Beckham Institute or the Receiving Area at the VetMed Basic Sciences Building (8 a.m. - noon, 1-4:30 p.m.);

• Don Meyer Boys and Girls Club toy drive – New unwrapped toys may be dropped off in the Wellness Center at Activities and Recreation Center before Dec. 15.

• New, unopened, nonperishable food items for the Eastern Illinois Food Bank, and new or used winter clothing in good condition for Sall & Light also accepted through Dec. 35 at VMSB Receiving Area.

Creatures comforts

Employees at the Veterinary Medicine Teaching Hospital are again collecting pet food, cleaning supplies and other necessities that will be donated to the Champaign County Humane Society. From left (with pets that were adopted from CCBS): Debra Jede, a veterinary technician, with Baxter; Tom Wyckoff, a storekeeper; and Murray, and Rebecca Kaserer, a veterinary technician, with Tink.

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Families must register online at www.seeyoursoldier.uiuc.edu no later than 5 p.m. Dec. 23 to be eligible for a time slot. To find out how it works, don’t miss the Holiday Magic Show put on by the UI chemistry department this month. Produced by chemistry teaching faculty members and students, the show demonstrates and explains many principles of chemistry, including kinetics, thermodynamics, gas laws and atomic theory. The show is free and open to the public and will include about 25 demonstrations that will explain the science behind the “magic” of chemistry. The show will be at 100 Noyes Lab. Show times: 7 p.m. Dec. 10 and 2 p.m. Dec. 14. For more information, contact Don DeCoste at decoste@illinois.edu.

Holiday show reveals magic of chemistry

A cold liquid is added to another cold liquid and the mixture turns pink. A glass rod touches a cotton ball and the cotton ball disappears in a burst of flame. This is an example of chemistry.

To see how it works, don’t miss the Holiday Magic Show put on by the UI chemistry department this month. Produced by chemistry teaching faculty members and students, the show demonstrates and explains many principles of chemistry, including kinetics, thermodynamics, gas laws and atomic theory.

See what happens to a pickle subjected to high voltage. Discover why helium gas and not hydrogen gas is used in balloons. Learn about this … and about gunpowder, liquid nitrogen and more.

The show is free and open to the public and will include about 25 demonstrations that will explain the science behind the “magic” of chemistry. The show will be at 100 Noyes Lab. Show times: 7 p.m. Dec. 10 and 2 p.m. Dec. 14. For more information, contact Don DeCoste at decoste@illinois.edu.

‘See Your Soldier’

Sign up for video visits with troops

The Champaign Extension Center will host “See Your Soldier” videoconferences Jan. 12 and 13 for area families and their soldiers stationed in Iraq.

Families must register online at www.seeyoursoldier.uiuc.edu no later than 5 p.m. Dec. 23 to be eligible for a time slot, and reservations will be made on a first-come, first-served basis. Families will be able to indicate their preferred location for the video viewings.

The live audio/video linkages are being offered in collaboration with the Freedom Calls Foundation, which provides free live audio/video linkages to soldiers deployed in Iraq.

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‘IT@Illinois Symposium’ is Dec. 10

The Office of the Provost and the Office of the Chief Information Officer will host a symposium Dec. 10 on information technology at Illinois.

‘IT@Illinois Symposium,’ which will look at reconfiguring the campus IT environment to support pre-emergence in research, education and service, will include presentations by faculty members and other professionals.

The symposium will be from 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. in Illini Rooms B and C in the Illini Union. Advance registration is not required.

More information is available at www.cio.illinois.edu.

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**Jan 1**

- **Monday, Jan 4** - Graduating Senior Recital, Ryan Ash, cele. 7:30 p.m. Recital Hall, Smith Hall
- **Tuesday, Jan 5** - Senior Recital, Robert Zeng, violin. 7:30 p.m. Recital Hall, Smith Hall
- **Wednesday, Jan 6** - Women's Basketball. University of Wisconsin. 7:30 p.m. Assembly Hall
- **Thursday, Jan 7** - Women's Basketball vs. Ohio State University. 7:30 p.m. Assembly Hall
- **Friday, Jan 8** - Women's Basketball. University of Wisconsin. 7:30 p.m. Assembly Hall

More information is available from Marty Yeakel at 333-1085.
Dec. 4, 2008

Urbana Free Library, 210 W. Spanish Story Time.

Dec. 10 Wednesday
“IT@Illinois Symposium.” 8:30 a.m.
Campus Informational Technology Center.

Dec. 14 Sunday
Advanced Climbing Techniques. 5 p.m. Adventure Recreation.

Dec. 8 Monday
“Exposure: Dance and Photography in Dialogue, or tography in Dialogue, or tography in Dialogue, or tography in Dialogue, or..." 7:30-10 p.m. Friday (when there are no Illini hockey games).

Dec. 13 Saturday
“Celebrating Children in a World Community.” 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Spurlock Museum. Explore hands-on exhibits, watch films, join a panel discussion and learn about family-based resources available in and around Champaign-Urbana.

Dec. 20 Saturday

Jan. 16 Friday
Second Annual Midwest Conference for Undergraduate Women in Physics. 8:30 a.m.-141 Loeb Lab. For more information and to register, visit http://physics.illinois.edu/conference/08/Physics.

Dec. 10 Sunday
Library Tours
Self-guided of main and underground libraries. To go to http://www.campusrec.illinois.edu/skating/publicskate.html

Dec. 11 Monday
“Children Just Like Me” Through May.
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.

Dec. 17 Thursday
Krae...
E-learning can have positive effect on classroom learning

By Phil Ciclora

Traditional classroom teaching in higher education could learn a thing or two from online teaching, otherwise known as e-learning, according to a UI professor who studies computer-mediated communication, information exchange and the Internet. Caroline Haythornthwaite, a professor in the Graduate School of Library and Information Science, says that the value of e-learning has been underestimated at the college level, and that some of its methods and techniques can augment traditional classroom learning.

“Compared to the more traditional educational paradigm, where knowledge is delivered from professor to student from on-high, e-learning turns teaching and learning into a shared endeavor,” she said.

E-learning is defined as technology-based learning. Lectures, homework, quizzes and exams are delivered almost entirely or completely online. In some instances, no in-person interaction takes place over the length of the course.

A global economy hungry for customized, portable and in-demand educational platforms coupled with the Internet’s rise to dominance as the ubiquitous medium of information delivery means that e-learning is increasingly gaining respect as an innovative and viable pedagogical tool, especially for subjects that require multimedia, collaboration tools (wikis, blogs and course-management systems, for example), and other bandwidth-hungry applications.

At Illinois, Haythornthwaite teaches in classrooms real and virtual in the college’s 13-year-old LEEP program, a distance-education program that enables graduate students to complete a master class in library and information science, a certificate of advanced study or a K-12 library and information science certificate online.

For the current crop of more than 700 students seeking a master’s degree through GSLIS at Illinois, a little more than half are online students.

Haythornthwaite said she enjoys the robust interaction with her online students.

“With the online classes,” she said, “I interact with my students more frequently, dropping into asynchronous discussion daily for a half-hour or an hour. With my classroom students, if I e-mail them an article on Tuesday and we meet for class on Friday, that’s one of many things we might discuss. The impact isn’t quite as immediate.”

Compared with the traditional, face-to-face classroom learning that centers on instructors dictating content and pedagogy, e-learning is a more learner-friendly alternative.

“By appointment with the role of a teacher to be quite significant in an e-learning environment, Haythornthwaite said.

“Since there’s an emphasis on more learner-centric activities than traditional lecture-based classroom instruction, the teacher is more of a facilitator in an online classroom,” she said. “Not only does that enhance the collaborative nature of online learning, it also motivates students to be much more engaged and to take more responsibility for what they’re learning.”

However much e-learning may reshape education, Haythornthwaite noted that it’s not necessarily meant to supplant classroom learning, but is more of a supplement to it. She cited the Massachusetts Institute of Technology’s example of putting all of its classroom materials online for non-commercial use in 2001 as an example of how “blended learning” can be created from a mixture of e-learning and classroom interaction.

“My traditional classes, I might see them once a week for a three-week lead time. Call

CALENDAR, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 15

Best of both worlds: Caroline Haythornthwaite, a professor in the Graduate School of Library and Information Science, says that the value of e-learning has been underestimated at the college level, and that some of its methods and techniques can augment traditional classroom learning.

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