Capital bill will fund Lincoln Hall and other UI projects

By Sharita Forrest
Assistant Editor

The renovation of Lincoln Hall and other capital projects on the three UI campuses were stalled for years because of a lack of funds will finally move forward because of the statewide capital construction bill signed into law by Illinois Gov. Pat Quinn July 13.

The $31 billion “Illinois Jobs Now!” capital construction/economic recovery plan will grant the three UI campuses the first capital appropriations that they have had in nearly a decade.

The plan contained $1.5 billion for higher education projects, including $32.2 million for repair and renovation of facilities at all three UI campuses, more than half of which – $18.7 million – was for deferred maintenance projects at the Urbana campus. The plan also contained $57.3 million to renovate Lincoln Hall, $20 million to construct the Post Harvest Crop Processing and Research Laboratory, $44.5 million in matching funds to construct the Electrical and Computer Engineering building, and $60 million for the Peta-scale supercomputing facility, which was contained in the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity’s budget.

“We are very grateful that the state of Illinois has provided funding for these projects and look forward to seeing them go forward,” said UI President B. Joseph White.

The $31 billion “Illinois Jobs Now!” capital construction/economic recovery plan that Quinn signed into law July 13 will finally move forward because of a lack of funds years because of a lack of funds.

Two resign from board of trustees

By Sharita Forrest
Assistant Editor

UI Board of Trustees Chairman Niranjan Shah announced his resignation from the board on Aug. 3, becoming the first trustee to resign from the board in the midst of a state investigation into admissions practices at Illinois. Shah’s resignation came less than a week after trustee and former chair Lawrence Eppley submitted his letter of resignation to Illinois Gov. Pat Quinn and called upon the other eight trustees to do the same.

The Illinois Admissions Review Commission, a seven-member commission chaired by former federal judge Abner Mikva that is expected to submit its final report Aug. 6, preliminarily recommended on July 31 that Quinn dismiss all of the UI trustees to resign and then decide which of them to retain. Over two months, the commission heard testimony from dozens of witnesses and reviewed thousands of pages of documents about Illinois and alleged instances of applicants who were admitted during the past five years because of special-interest connections.

The applicants were part of the so-called Category I list, an internal log of applicants flagged for review after trustees, lawyers or others with connections to Illinois inquired about them or expressed interest in seeing them admitted. Shah wrote in his resignation letter to Quinn that he had “strongly supported” the investigation into admissions practices but had decided to resign because of public statements by Mikva and other members of the commission that indicated they believed all the trustees should go and Quinn should replace some or all of them.

“I am not in public service for self-aggrandizement and therefore have no interest in a protracted process regarding my role,” Shah wrote. “My interest is solely in the vitality of the UI. I hope those who will serve the UI in the future, and who have executive and legislative authority over the university, share that goal and will use their power and influence to achieve the best for the university.”

Interim policy allows furlough days in case of budget shortfalls

By Mike Lillich
University Relations

An interim policy will enable the university to institute unpaid furlough days for faculty members and academic professionals if significant budget shortfalls occur. A second policy addition allows the university to shorten the appointment period for employees whose salaries are paid from grant and contract funds, if funding is lost.

The policy was announced in a July 21 e-mail to employees by UI President B. Joseph White and the chancellors of the university’s three campuses. The interim furlough policy will be included in all Notification of Appointment letters to faculty members and academic professionals issued Aug. 16 and thereafter at the three campuses.

If workforce reductions are necessary because of a budget shortfall, civil service employees would be covered by civil service layoff provisions. Reductions of union-represented employees would be covered by collective bargaining and statutory provisions.

The policy’s goal is to keep people employed by cutting personnel costs fairly at all levels and across all categories of UI employment, while continuing to fulfill the university’s teaching and research missions.

Diffusion confusion

New findings raise fundamental questions concerning the statistical nature of the diffusion process.

Empowering kids

Ideas for public Safety’s radKIDS® program learn valuable skills to keep them safe in a myriad of situations.

I N D E X

ACHEIVEMENTS 6
BRIEF NOTES 6
CALENDAR 7
DEATHS 4

On the Web
www.news.illinois.edu/ii
FURLOUGHS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Funds, the president, in consultation with the campus responsible for designing and implementing the program would be designed around the university’s costs are employee salaries. Including the president, chancellors, presidents of financial integrity, accountability, innovation and registering Global Campus, making each campus landmark.”

The new online structure will provide more opportunities for faculty members to strengthen their students’ online teaching skills, Ringiesen said. “For an e-learning initiative to be successful, the university’s finances limit the opportunity for faculty development,” he said.

“We have made a commitment to ending any misuse of the admissions process — whether it is intentional or unintentional — wherever it may exist or from whomever it may emanate, including the University Board of Trustees,” the statement said in part.

“From our point of view, we’re doing everything we can to make sure that the state knows that we’re ready to go with the projects as soon as they’re able to get the funding,” Baas said. “Timing is really under their control, but I know that the state as well as the university understands the importance of getting these projects going to spur economic growth and job creation.”

The plan will said the plan will create 439,000 jobs over the next six years. State legislators financed the capital program by legalizing and taxing video gambling machines, raising taxes on alcohol and increasing vehicle registration and driver’s license fees.

Following the university’s shared governance practice, university administrators will confer with faculty and academic professionals in the next steps of the process of making the interim furlough policy permanent.

Truances approved appointments for three interim positions at Urbana. Robert Easter will serve as interim provost and vice chancellor for academic affairs for 17. He succeeds Linda Katehi, who is leaving the university to become chancellor of the University of California at Davis.

Robert Hauser will become interim dean of the College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences on Aug. 17. He replaces Easter.

Walter Harrington will serve as interim dean of the College of Media, effective Aug. 17. He will work to full-time faculty status.

Characteristics present e-Learning Initiative to trustees

The university will have to match the funds provided by the state to construct the $95 million Electrical and Computer Engineering Building. The project is in the design phase under the direction of the SmithGroup. The building is expected to be completed in 2010, and it and the ECE Building are expected to achieve silver certification under the U.S. Green Building Council’s LEED in Energy and Environmental Design standards.

The $18.7 million appropriation for repairs and renovations will be used to address deferred maintenance needs in academic buildings such as deteriorating building envelopes and heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems, Baas said. UI officials are exploring possible sources of supplemental funding for the capital projects, particularly federal economic stimulus funds related to energy conservation and energy efficiency. The DCEO agreed with Baas about the program.

“Our point of view, we’re doing everything we can to make sure that the state knows that we’re ready to go with the projects as soon as they’re able to get the funding,” Baas said. “Timing is really under their control, but I know that the state as well as the university understands the importance of getting these projects going to spur economic growth and job creation.”

The plan will create 439,000 jobs over the next six years. State legislators financed the capital program by legalizing and taxing video gambling machines, raising taxes on alcohol and increasing vehicle registration and driver’s license fees.
Rethinking Brownian motion with the emperor's new clothes

Four at Illinois elected fellows of American Chemical Society

In a paper to be published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, the UI researchers show that Einstein's explanation, commonly cited in textbooks, fails in certain important cases. The experiments were conducted by precisely tracking the motion of 100-nanometer colloidal beads using fluorescence microscopy.

In one series of experiments, the researchers watched as the beads moved up and down tiny tubes of liquid molecules by Brownian motion. In a second series of experiments, the researchers watched as the beads diffused through a porous membrane and were then immobilized with macromolecular fills, again by Brownian motion.

In both sets of experiments, there were many features in full agreement with Einstein and the bell-shaped curve; there were also features that did not fit. In those cases, the beads moved much farther than the common curve could predict. In those extreme displacements, the classic fairy tale “The Emperor’s New Clothes,” the UI researchers show that Einstein’s explanation, commonly cited in textbooks, fails in certain important cases.

Ul expert: Too early to consider another stimulus package

By Jan Dennis

A new official stimulus package would be premature and could be counterproductive if the U.S. economy has not turned the corner yet, many analysts expect, a UI economist says. J. Fred Gertiz says the jury is still out on the stimulus plan’s effects. Given the ultralow interest rates and the fact that the stimulus package is small compared to the size of the recession, the impact of the stimulus package is hard to pin down.

“Would be premature to consider a second stimulus before we see the results of the first stimulus package,” Gertiz said. “In the first place, [the stimulus package] hasn’t been spent, a second probably wouldn’t be spent for another year or more. By then, the economy could be back on track and more stimulus could make things worse instead of better.”

The Stages of Brownian motion

Einstein’s explanation of Brownian motion was a bell-shaped curve used to describe the motion of a liquid as it diffuses through another material. The new findings raise fundamental questions concerning the statistical nature of the diffusion process, said Granick.

“Now, we have found that the bell-shaped curve isn’t always the right way to think about a particular problem, process, or operation, we can begin to design around it, and maybe take advantage of it.”

Granick said that, “But now, with the ability to measure very small displacements much more precisely than was possible 100 years ago, we have found that we can have extremes much farther than previously imagined.”

By James E. Kleoppe

Four UI faculty members are among 287 new fellows elected by the American Chemical Society: Scott E. Denmark, Deborah E. Leckband, Thomas B. Rauchfuss and Steven C. Zimmerman.

The election of a fellow is an honor bestowed upon members by their peers. In this instance, 1122 members were elevated to this rank because of their contributions to the chemical enterprise coupled with distinctive service to the society and to the broader world of chemistry. The fellows will be recognized at a ceremony Aug. 17, during the society’s fall national meeting in Washington, D.C.

Scott E. Denmark, a 1982 graduate in chemistry, is an expert in metallic materials and semiconductor materials. He focuses on photovoltaics, optoelectronics and nanocrystals. He has led research at the UI since 1986 and is interested in the development of nanomaterials and their application in energy and electronics. He studies the synthesis and reactivity of inorganic, organometallic and main-group compounds and materials.

Deb Leckband, the UI’s 2008 Excellence in Multimedia Systems Award winner, is interested in environmental and biological chemistry. She has led groundbreaking research on the synthesis and reactivity of organometallic and main-group compounds and materials. She is interested in the development of nanomaterials and their application in energy and electronics. He studies the synthesis and reactivity of inorganic, organometallic and main-group compounds and materials.

K.-J. Nahrstedt, a Ralph M. and Sarah D. Scheller Professor of Computer Science, received the UI’s highest honor in computer science at the UI, has been selected to receive the Humboldt Research Award.

The Humboldt Research Award is given, by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, in Bonn, Germany, is named for the Prussian naturalist and explorer, and recognizes lifetime research achievements. The award includes a prize of 60,000 Euros (about $85,000 at current exchange rates). Recipients also are invited to conduct research of their choice with colleagues in Germany. The foundation grants more than 1300 such awards annually. Recipients must first be nominated, then elected for recognition by a panel of international scholars from a variety of disciplines.

K.-J. Nahrstedt, the Ralph M. and Sarah D. Scheller Professor of Computer Science, received the UI’s highest honor in computer science at the UI, has been selected to receive the Humboldt Research Award.

The Humboldt Research Award is given, by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, in Bonn, Germany, is named for the Prussian naturalist and explorer, and recognizes lifetime research achievements. The award includes a prize of 60,000 Euros (about $85,000 at current exchange rates). Recipients also are invited to conduct research of their choice with colleagues in Germany. The foundation grants more than 1300 such awards annually. Recipients must first be nominated, then elected for recognition by a panel of international scholars from a variety of disciplines.

K.-J. Nahrstedt, the Ralph M. and Sarah D. Scheller Professor of Computer Science, received the UI’s highest honor in computer science at the UI, has been selected to receive the Humboldt Research Award.

The Humboldt Research Award is given, by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, in Bonn, Germany, is named for the Prussian naturalist and explorer, and recognizes lifetime research achievements. The award includes a prize of 60,000 Euros (about $85,000 at current exchange rates). Recipients also are invited to conduct research of their choice with colleagues in Germany. The foundation grants more than 1300 such awards annually. Recipients must first be nominated, then elected for recognition by a panel of international scholars from a variety of disciplines.

K.-J. Nahrstedt, the Ralph M. and Sarah D. Scheller Professor of Computer Science, received the UI’s highest honor in computer science at the UI, has been selected to receive the Humboldt Research Award.

The Humboldt Research Award is given, by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, in Bonn, Germany, is named for the Prussian naturalist and explorer, and recognizes lifetime research achievements. The award includes a prize of 60,000 Euros (about $85,000 at current exchange rates). Recipients also are invited to conduct research of their choice with colleagues in Germany. The foundation grants more than 1300 such awards annually. Recipients must first be nominated, then elected for recognition by a panel of international scholars from a variety of disciplines.

K.-J. Nahrstedt, the Ralph M. and Sarah D. Scheller Professor of Computer Science, received the UI’s highest honor in computer science at the UI, has been selected to receive the Humboldt Research Award.

The Humboldt Research Award is given, by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, in Bonn, Germany, is named for the Prussian naturalist and explorer, and recognizes lifetime research achievements. The award includes a prize of 60,000 Euros (about $85,000 at current exchange rates). Recipients also are invited to conduct research of their choice with colleagues in Germany. The foundation grants more than 1300 such awards annually. Recipients must first be nominated, then elected for recognition by a panel of international scholars from a variety of disciplines.
Program teaches kids safety, self-defense and empowerment

By Shantia Forrest
Assistant Editor

In this week’s Division of Public Safety is offering the radKIDS® Personal Empowerment and Safety Education Program for children ages 5–12. The program, being held this week, is based partially upon techniques of Rape Aggression Defense, a self-defense program for women, also taught by the UI police.

According to Rob Murphy, who is a detective with the UI police and one of the UI police instructors, the program teaches children techniques to defend themselves against attempted abduction, including general safety at home, at school and in the car; bullying; fire safety; and good-bad-uncomfortable touching.

“The training puts the kids in charge of their destiny somehow, to where they’re not afraid to speak up,” Murphy said. “If they’re in a store and someone tries to take them, or they’ve lost their parents and the clerk’s not paying attention to them, we teach them techniques to get attention. Some of the kids are shy the first day, but by the end of it, even the shyest ones are shouting.”

Parents are encouraged to actively participate in the classes, which are held at the Asian American Cultural Center, so they can learn the techniques along with the kids, Murphy said.

“It’s really a safety course that parents and kids can work together on to make their lives safer,” and includes homework activities such as creating fire-escape plans for the home and clearing household cabinets of poisons, said Sgt. Joan Fiesta, who is certified in both the R.A.D. and the radKIDS® programs. “And it really puts the onus on the child to make good positive choices, but if a child forgets and makes a mistake, we also give them the physical and practical ways to get themselves out of a situation. We train their instincts to go to safety (techniques). And if they have to poke a bad guy in the eye, they can do it.”

The classes last for five days, with 5- to 7-year-olds training from noon to 2 p.m. and 8- to 12-year-olds training from 2 to 4 p.m. The classes average about 13 children each.

Since radKIDS® began in 1998, about 125,000 children in 43 U.S. states and Canada have been trained in the techniques, according to the program’s Web site. In addition to offering summer sessions at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, City of Champaign, and the local Girl Scout troops, area churches and schools, including Leal School in Urbana, where she volunteers and where the radKIDS® program has been incorporated into the physical education curriculum.

“A couple of times a week I go there for a half hour and we go through the drills,” Fiesta said. “The kids really seem to love it and are able to retain it pretty well. We try to keep it as light and fun as possible, even when we’re covering gun safety, but it’s done in a way that we’re training their instincts.”

As with the R.A.D. training for women, alumni of radKIDS® can attend refreshers for free anywhere they’re offered by showing their certificate of completion until their 12th birthdays. In addition, 13-year-olds can assist with the training as peer mentors.

“The idea of peer mentoring is to create a community, with the older kids being responsible for the younger kids, and it gives the kids someone cool to look up to because we adults don’t tend to be very cool,” Fiesta said.

Instructors become certified in the program’s safety curricula by attending a three-day course. Potential instructors are subject to a background check.

More instructors are needed to help expand the local program, and Fiesta encourages interested people interested in becoming instructors to contact her by e-mail at jmfiesta@illinois.edu or call 333-1216.

Handy information
Children attending the radKIDS® program learn techniques for protecting themselves against abduction from instructors Rob Murphy, who is a detective, and Joan Fiesta, who is a sergeant with the UI police. Parents who bring their children to the five-day training program for 5- to 12-year-olds are encouraged to participate in the classes so that they learn the techniques along with their children.

Larry Dean Allen, 69, died July 23 in Champaign. Allen worked for the UI Police Department for 27 years, retiring in 1995 as a police officer III. After retirement, he worked in the Division of Intercollegiate Athletics as Extra Help. Memorial: Frater nal Order of Police (Illinois Lodge 17) for the benefit of ILFOP Lodge 17, 4341 Acer Grove, Suite B, Springfield, IL 62711 or the American Cancer Society.

Gary Cain, 71, died July 17 at Provence Covenant Medical Center, Urbana. Cain was an auto mechanic at the UI for 26 years in the Division of Operation and Maintenance (now Facilities and Services), retiring in 1993.

Ralph R. Franklin, 80, died July 13 at his home in Urbana. Franklin worked for Printing Services for 31 years, retiring in 1979 as a bindery worker foreman. After retirement, he continued to work for Printing Services as Extra Help. Memorials: Carle Hospice, 611 W. Park St., Urbana, IL 61801-9977.

Doris Green, 89, died July 21 at Champaign County Nursing Home in Urbana. Green worked at the Illini Union. Memorials: Provena Hospice, 1503 Interstate Drive, Suite C, Champaign, IL 61822.


Joan Elizabeth Klein, 57, died July 17 at her Urbana home. Klein had worked at the UI for nine years as a building service worker for Facilities and Services. Memorials: The University of Illinois Cares, Carle Foundation Hospital, Urbana. Klein worked at the UI for about 26 years, retiring in 1992 as a secretary IV in the sociology department. Memorials: St. Matthew Catholic Church, 1303 Lincolnshire Drive, Champaign, IL 61821, or to the American Heart Association.

Benjamin Arthur Rasmussen, 82, died July 13. Rasmussen was a professor emeritus of animal genetics at the UI. He worked at the university for 25 years, retiring in 1983. Alma E. White, 90, died Aug. 1 at Clark-Lindsey Village, Urbana. White worked at the UI for 33 years, retiring in 1979 as a stenographic secretary in the animal sciences department. Memorials: Champaign County Humane Society, 111 E. Main St., Urbana, IL 61801.
Researchers: Body movements can influence problem solving

By Diana Yates
Life Sciences Editor

Swinging their arms helped participants in a new study solve a problem whose solution involved swinging strings, researchers report, demonstrating that the brain can use bodily cues to help understand and solve complex problems.

The study, which appeared in an issue of the journal Psychonomic Bulletin & Review, is the first to show that a person’s ability to solve a problem can be influenced by how he or she moves.

“Our manipulation is changing the way people think,” said UI psychology professor Alejandro Lleras, who conducted the study with Vanderbilt University postdoctoral researcher Laura Thomas, his former graduate student.

“In other words, by directing the way people move their bodies, we are — unbeknownst to them — directing the way they think about the problem.”

Even after successfully solving the problem, almost none of the study subjects became consciously aware of any connection between the physical activity they engaged in and the solution they found.

“The results are interesting both because body motion can affect higher order thought, the complex thinking needed to solve complicated problems, and because this effect occurs even when someone else is directing the movements of the person trying to solve the problem,” Lleras said.

The new findings offer new insight into what researchers call “embodied cognition,” which describes the link between body and mind, Lleras said.

“People tend to think that their mind lives in their brain, dealing in conceptual abstractions, very much disconnected from the body,” he said. “This emerging research is fascinating because it is demonstrating how your body is a part of your mind in a powerful way. The way you think is affected by your body and, in fact, we can use our bodies to help us think.”

In the study, the researchers asked study subjects to tie the ends of two strings together. The strings dangled from ceiling rafters and were so far apart that a person grasping one could not reach the other. A few tools were also available: a paperback book, a wrench, two small dumbbells and a plate. Subjects were given a total of eight, two-minute sessions to solve the problem, with 100 seconds devoted to finding a solution, interrupted by 20 seconds of exercise.

“Our cover story was that we were interested in the effects of exercise on problem-solving,” Lleras said.

Some subjects were told to swing their arms forward and backward during the exercise sessions, while others were directed to alternately stretch one arm, and then the other, a side. To prevent them from consciously connecting these activities to the problem of the strings, the researchers had them count back 15 overs by threes while exercising. The subjects in the arm-swinging group were more likely than those in the stretch group to solve the problem, which required attaching an object to one of the strings and swinging it so that it could be grasped while also holding the other string. By the end of the 16-minute deadline, participants in the arm-swinging group were 40 percent more likely than those in the stretch group to solve the problem.

“By making you swing your arms in a particular way, we’re activating a part of your brain that deals with swinging motions,” Lleras said. “That sort of activity in your brain then unconsciously leads you to think about that type of motion when you’re trying to solve the problem.”

Previous studies of embodied cognition have demonstrated that physical movements can aid in learning and memory or can change a person’s perceptions or attitudes toward information, Lleras said.

Other studies by Lleras and his colleagues have shown that directing a person’s eye movements or attention in specific patterns can also aid in solving complex problems, but this is the first study to show that directed movements of the body can, outside of conscious awareness, guide higher-order cognitive processing, he said.

“We view this as a really important new window into understanding the complexity of human thought,” he said. “I guess another take-home message is this: If you are stuck trying to solve a problem, take a break. Go do something else. This will ensure that the next time you think about that problem you will literally approach it with a different mind. And that may help!”

Mind-body connection UI psychology professor Alejandro Lleras led research that demonstrated that physical movements, such as eye movements or arm swinging, can aid in problem solving.
Dump and Run garage sale
Donations accepted through Aug. 15

The University YMCA will continue to take donations for its annual Dump and Run garage sale through Aug. 15. Collections will be accepted at the UI Stock Pavilion from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Aug. 12-14, and 9 a.m. to noon Aug. 15. Items that will be accepted include furniture, working electronics, bicycles, jewelry, kitchen items, CDs, books, artwork, toys, sports equipment, non-perishable food items, small household appliances. Clothing will not be accepted, although clothing will be available at the sale.

The sale will be at the Stock Pavilion from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Aug. 22 (with $2 admission fee), 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Aug. 23 (free admission and featuring a $3 bag sale and half-price furniture). From 4:30-6 p.m., items will be free.

For more information, go to www.universityymca.org or call 337-1500.

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

agricultural, consumer and environmental sciences
Mike Hutjens, a professor of animal sciences and an Extension Dairy Specialist, received the 2009 American Dairy Science Association’s Award of Honor for contributions to the association. The award was presented at the national meeting July 14 in Montreal.

fine and applied arts
Mir Ali, a professor of architecture, has been named a fellow of the Council on Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat in recognition of his contributions to the council. The award will be presented during an award ceremony in Chicago on Oct. 22.

library
Barbara J. Ford, director of the Mortenson Center for International Library Programs and the Mortenson Distinguished Professor, will receive the Chinese American Librarians Association’s 2009 President’s Recognition Award. The award recognizes Ford for her significant contributions to the library profession, not only through her library work, but also through her outstanding and prolific professional services and scholarly contributions. The association honors Ford for her engagement and support of library and librarians’ activities and exchanges on an international scale.

William H. Mischo, engineering librarian and head of the Grainger Engineering Library Information Center, has won the 2009 Frederick G. Kilgour Award for Research in Library and Information Technology. The award is given for research relevant to the development of information technologies, especially work that shows promise of having a positive and substantive impact on any aspect(s) of the publication, storage, retrieval and dissemination of information, or the processes by which information and data are manipulated and managed. The Library and Information Technology Association praised Mischo for his more than 30 years of work on the design of user-centered information retrieval tools and services.

Public comment sought as part of evaluation process
By Sharita Forrest

Members of the public are invited to submit comments regarding the quality of the UI and its academic programs as part of a comprehensive evaluation that Illinois will undergo by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. A team representing the commission will visit the Urbana campus Oct. 12-14 as part of the evaluation process.

Accreditation is a voluntary process of critical self-analysis and internal and external quality review that Illinois undergoes every 10 years. Institutional accreditation evaluates an entire institution and accredits it as a whole.

One of six accrediting agencies in the U.S. that provide institutional accreditation on a regional basis, the commission is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education and accredits about 1,100 institutions of higher education in a 19-state region. Other agencies accredit specific programs within institutions.

Illinois has been accredited by the commission since 1913.

Since the fall of 2007, five working teams, comprising about 70 faculty and staff members, have been engaged in a comprehensive self-study, examining the units, activities, policies and procedures associated with each of the five goals in the campus Strategic Plan as a framework for showing how the university meets or exceeds the commission’s five criteria and requirements for accreditation. The evaluation team will be visiting the campus to determine that the self-study is thorough and accurate.

The team will make a recommendation about Illinois’ status after the visit.

Following a review process, the commission will decide whether to extend Illinois’ accreditation.

The public is invited to submit comments about Illinois to:

Public Comment on UI
The Higher Learning Commission
30 N. LaSalle St., Suite 2400
Chicago, IL 60602

Comments must be received by Sept. 12, 2009, and must address substantive matters related to the quality of Illinois or its academic programs. Comments will not be treated as confidential and should include the name, address and telephone number of the person providing them. Comments submitted after the due date may not be considered.

The Higher Learning Commission does not settle disputes between individuals and institutions. Complaints will not be considered third-party comment. Individuals who have disputes or grievances should request a copy of the policy on complaints from the commission’s office.

jobs at Illinois
To view job postings, apply for civil service or academic jobs at Illinois, or to update your application information: jobs.illinois.edu
UI expert: Community colleges undervalued, underfunded

BY Phil Ciciora
News Editor

Popular culture may have an uncharitable attitude toward community colleges, but a UI expert in education says they are an underfunded community asset and an invaluable resource for first-generation college students, low-skilled adult workers and immigrants aspiring to enter college, and downsized workers and mid-career changers transitioning to a recession-proof career.

According to Debra Bragg, a professor of higher education and the director of the Forum on the Future of Public Education at Illinois, community colleges are cost-efficient ports of entry to higher education when compared with just about any other type of college, especially private colleges or for-profit technical institutions.

“First-generation college students and adults who have a high school diploma often have very little information about college and what higher education is about,” Bragg said. “There are more choices in education than ever before, but some of those choices are very costly. It’s very difficult to make good decisions about the cost and benefits of higher education, particularly for adults who have limited experience with college. Community colleges can be a gateway to an associate’s or a bachelor’s degree, at a fraction of the cost of entering a public four-year college and just about any other type of college, especially private colleges or for-profit technical institutions.

Besides community colleges, there aren’t many alternatives for preparing students and adult learners that are affordable and have a successful track record, Bragg said. “If community colleges didn’t exist, many students wouldn’t have options. They would probably go to private colleges, where they could incur a large debt and possibly not receive a quality education,” she said. “That’s why community colleges are such a valuable public resource.”

A year’s tuition and fees can cost anywhere from $10,000 to more than $40,000 for full-time study at private institutions.

“Those same classes would cost about $3,000 at a community college in Illinois,” she said. “The difference is huge. To my mind, it’s an incredibly worthwhile value.”

But because of what Bragg terms their “diverse missions” and the transitory nature of the student body, community colleges’ reputations have suffered for trying to be too many things to too many people.

“Community colleges are caught in the middle because they have so many missions and they’re trying to do so many things, it spreads their resources very thin,” she said. “They’re a vocational school, a terminal degree-granting institution, a port of entry for the bachelor’s degree, a workforce training institute for business, and a place where the community convenes. So their function is a lot broader than most people would think.”

The effect of having so many different functions is that it “raises legitimate questions about what community colleges can do to achieve some of these larger, more grandiose goals that they sometimes set for themselves,” Bragg said.

“They’re trying to accomplish what no other educational institution has proven that they can accomplish. They are doing the things that high schools have failed to do, she providing basic foundational preparation so people can go on to college.”

With the impending exodus of the baby boomer generation from the workforce, Bragg said the brain drain will be felt because both the number and the qualifications of people who need to be trained and moved into the workforce will be insufficient.

“Even if we reform our K-12 curriculum to a point beyond our wildest hopes for primary education, and transition more youth into the workforce, it’s a drop in the bucket compared to the number of people we’ll need when the baby boomers eventually retire,” she said. “It’s imperative for our economy that we do a better job of preparing and re-training adults. And that’s why community colleges are invaluable, because they’re able to prepare diverse learners, including low-skilled adults who have limited academic and employment skills, and to re-train downsized workers and transition them into jobs that are in demand.”

In higher education, lack of funding from state and federal governments is a familiar refrain. But in the current economy, increasing financial aid to non-traditional, minority and low-income adults is imperative, Bragg said.

“There are unique difficulties that adult learners have in getting financial aid and other needed services to return to community college because they’re part-time students,” she said. “They’re the lowest-income, most highly diverse and most marginalized population, and yet, because they’re working part- or full-time, it’s very difficult for them to secure the financial aid that they need.”

Educational tax credits and loans, according to Bragg, are an inadequate solution to the problem.

“Many of these adults are in low-wage jobs, so we’re talking about a minimal benefit for tax credits, and an inability to secure loans or an unwillingness to incur debt,” she said.

To increase financial aid to students, Bragg believes the federal government is going to have to foot more of the bill. This imperative has never been so clear as it is now, during the nation’s economic recession.

“Community colleges get very little fed-