F&S crews battle winter storms

By Mike Helenthal
Assistant Editor

I f you think keeping your driveway clear of snow this winter has been a battle, you should try a campus mile in the gasholes of UI Facilities and Services employees.

This winter of 2010-11 has dropped more than 39 inches of snow on the area – the third-highest accumulation total in history – and left F & S workers in an almost daily battle to keep university passages passable.

To make matters worse, the snow hasn’t fallen in just a few large events – it has kept coming all year.

According to the UI-based Midwest Regional Climate Center, at least an inch of snow has been on the ground for a total of 58 days.

“We’ve had more snow than in an average year,” said Karl Wegel, director of maintenance at Facilities and Services. “And the cold temperatures have kept it from melting. But we were prepared.”

F&S is responsible for keeping 23 miles of roadway, 85 miles of sidewalks and bike paths, and 130 parking lots safe to traverse.

So far, more than 480 tons of rock salt, 3,000 gallons of brine (used to aid the salt’s melting power), 4 tons of sand, more than a ton of magnesium chloride ice-melt solution, and a half-ton of bentonite/silica (oil-dry cat-litter) have been spread across campus.

A storm that started in late afternoon on Jan. 31 caused classes to be canceled Feb. 2, but F&S workers went into winter overdrive.

“We had people in basically from 7 a.m. Tuesday through 5 p.m. Wednesday and then back at 4 a.m. Thursday to the 5 p.m. on Friday,” said grounds superintendent Ryan Welch. The 40-member grounds crew put in nearly 2,500 hours that week.

Transportation department drivers and garage crews worked 16-hour shifts for several days and custodial services employees logged more than 2,500 hours in 24-hour shifts.

The majority of the hours occurred while the rest of the campus slept, with more than 700 hours for the early evening shift and more than 1,600 hours during the deep night shift.

And then came the Feb. 5-6 weekend “surprise” snow, further compounding the efforts of those charged with moving it from underneath the boots of the rest of us.

Crews were just catching up with work from the previous week’s ice and snow beautiful Although most would agree that majestic snow scenes such as the historic round barns blanketed in snow are beautiful, that same snow can cause a lot of problems for those working to keep the campus open.

Classes were canceled Feb. 2, but the campus remained open and UI employees stepped up to continue to provide essential services. “You feel our students, you tended to animals, made sure buildings were clean and warm, and the roads cleared,” said Bob Easter, vice president and chancellor, in an e-mail to the campus thanking employees for their efforts.

Heavy snowfall brings joy to winter’s No. 1 fan

By Mike Helenthal
Assistant Editor

Steve Hilberg has a deep-seeded addiction he can’t shake.


To Hilberg, who works at the Illinois State Water Survey and directs the campus-based Midwestern Regional Climate Center, it doesn’t matter what you call it or what form it takes.

He’s not even fazed at the havoc it wreaks on those around him.

“I like winter, but people don’t really want to hear that,” Hilberg said from his office in the southern hinterlands of the UI Research Park. “Everybody gives me grief because they can’t partake in the joy.”

Hilberg has gotten his fair share of joy from the winter of 2010-11.

According to a winter index Hilberg has developed, using records kept for Urbana since 1888, only two other winters have surpassed this one in terms of snow and cold. The two top-ranked winters were both in the 1970s, when there was 27 consecutive days of snow on the ground.

Hilberg admits his index, based on the official winter period of Dec. 1 through Feb. 28, is not perfect and he continues to play with new ideas that might more accurately measure a winter’s punch.

He said ice totals are particularly hard to measure and cause much more damage than a normal “one-half-inch precipitation” notation listed in the record. Wind is another element that’s hard to factor.

“All of these figures fall into how people perceive winter,” he said. “It’s something that’s very hard to quantify. It’s not published research or anything, it’s just something I enjoy keeping track of.”

Hilberg developed his interest in weather at an early age and by 10 years old had convinced his parents of his need of a backyard weather station. He immediately started keeping daily records.

“I was always interested in how it affected people’s moods and why it affected them,” he said.

He said he still remembers the record 23 inches of snowfall Jan 26-27, 1967, when he saw SNOW. PAGE 4

Reducing energy use

Renovations underway at the College of Veterinary Medicine will reduce energy use by nearly 40 percent.

Page 4

Avian specialist

A board-certified avian medicine veterinarian has joined the exotic animal department at the Veterinary Medicine Teaching Hospital.

Page 8

On the Web

www.news.illinois.edu/ii
OPINION

The administrative realignment heralds a new era at UCB

Interim VPs named in audience restructuring

By Mike Heinelt
Assistant Editor

Interim VPs named in audience restructuring

By Mike Heinelt
Assistant Editor

I n January, UI President Michael J. Hogan shared with members of the Senate Executive Committee his vision of how the new Urbana chancellor will fit into the future administrative hierarchy. And at the Feb. 1 board meeting, SEC chair Joyce Tolliver shared her vision.

Tolliver released a statement countering some of Hogan's assertions - claims, she noted, that the widely reported ethical lapses of leadership over the past few years were in fact a rallying cry for structural administrative change.

Tolliver went as far as to call that argument a "fallacy," noting the university's structural strength and the potential for the two prominent programs, Medicine and the Beckman Institute, to serve as a "cohesive, unified voice that is essential for the creation of opportunities for the advancement of our world-class scholars from the university's..."

"In this remarkably challenging period, we have shown the capacity to take necessary steps to protect and advance our institution."

E arlier this month, UI President Michael J. Hogan appointed Raymond Schook and Joyce Tolliver to serve as interim vice president for research and educational programs. The appointments are subject to trustees' approval at the March 23 board meeting and will be entered into the minutes of the SEC meeting, was an expression of her individual vision as a faculty member and the SEC statement on behalf of the committee. At the end of the meeting, however, the committee discussed and approved a draft statement - posted on the senate website - with the following:

"Shared governance ... that the message we should be sending as we seek a new chancellor is that the nation's leading (everyone) proud to be associated with it.

"To settle for anything less, or to enable a leader to tell the nation's pre-eminent worthy of a staff member than a true leader, would indeed represent a threat to the structures that have allowed (this campus) to grow and prosper as it is today.

"We must not go in that direction.

The statement was followed by applause from the other committee members. In other business, Mike Andrechak, provost and vice chancellor for academic affairs and associate provost for budgets and resource planning, provided SEC members a PowerPoint presentation on the state of the three-campus university and the work being done to set the stage for the future. Andrechak said the revelations of future funding realities over the last 18 months marks a point of "critical change" for the university. But, he added, "there's a lot of momentum in this place and it's heading in the right direction."

He said the state's massive budget shortfall - fueled by increased rates and fees to trim excess expense and get the most return from current assets. He said new sources - including the Legislature - including tax increases - would lead to an annual reduction of backlogged payments.

"We've had years and years of bad news," a said. "The state was falling off a ledge and it's not doing that now. While it will take weeks to fully sort out implications, the tax increase has already increased significantly and deficits were reduced by 23 percent."

"Our permanent and cash set-asides, held by college and campus, will allow us to move forward in a deliberate manner," Andrechak said.

Andrechak also noted at all three campuses has improved budget oversight and financial accountability. He said the Stewarding Excellence (Illinois) process has saved production of $5 million in savings for the fiscal year. Other efforts, including being put on improving the return for patient and intellectual property. He said the financial processes that have left the university through incentives, saving an estimated $17 million, and another $8 million has been realized in energy savings.

"In just the past year, he said, cash balances held by academic units increased by more than $62 million, overall balances increased significantly and deficits were reduced by 23 percent."

"Our permanent and cash set-asides, held by college and campus, will allow us to move forward in a deliberate manner," Andrechak said.

Andrechak said the savings would allow the university to increase undergraduate student access and would be used to bolster quality of life and retention efforts.

He said the university also is moving to capture value on accessing international and out-of-state students, which includes offering self-supporting master's programs and enhanced Web-based class offerings during the summer.

"We're doing all of this in a deliberate manner that can protect quality," he said. "We've learned a lot over the last year and a half. As an institution, we are learning new skills and changing our culture. That takes time."

"In this remarkably challenging period, we have shown the capacity to take necessary steps to protect and advance our institution."

Several of the administrative changes recommended by the president's Administrative Review and Restructuring Group, have produced more than $5 million in savings.

The office of the vice president for research and educational programs was established by re-titling the vice president for technology and economic development and expanding into that post. The office will be responsible for the university's largest single revenue stream, called the Technology Transfer Fund. The office will manage the funds and act as a central point of contact for UI research.

"I look forward to working with President Hogan on establishing synergies between and among the university's seven health science colleges in Chicago and across the state to create the University of Illinois Health Science Center and Health System," Schook said. "The president and I have a common vision to improve the quality of life and retention efforts."

Andrechak was named a division leader for the administration, better connecting the clinical mission to the university's operating budget, is housed at UIC, it extends throughout the university and helps to guide the university's operating budget, is housed at UIC, it extends throughout the university and helps to guide the university's operating budget.
John A. Rogers elected to National Academy of Engineering

By Liz Ahlberg
Physical Sciences Editor

John A. Rogers, the Lee J. Flory-Founder Chair in Engineering at the UI, is among the 68 new members elected to the National Academy of Engineering.

Election to the NAE is one of the highest professional honors an engineer can garner. The 2,290 members and 202 foreign associates are an elite group distinguished by their outstanding contributions to the fields of technology and engineering.

Rogers, a professor of materials science and engineering, was cited for his novel electronic and optoelectronic devices and systems. Renowned for his pioneering work in flexible electronics, Rogers combines soft, stretchable materials with micro- and nanoscale electronic components to create classes of devices with a wide range of practical applications. His most recent work has produced devices from biocompatible sensor arrays to implantable LEDs to eye-inspired cameras to stretchable integrated circuits.

“This is a significant recognition and prestigious honor for one of our distinguished faculty,” said Besamni Adesida, the dean of the College of Engineering and member of the NAE. “This is yet another indication of the impact our college and this university has on the world.”

Rogers earned his doctorate from MIT in 1985. He joined the UI faculty in January 2003. He has written more than 300 published papers and holds more than 80 patents. Among his many honors, he has been awarded a MacArthur fellowship and has been elected a fellow of the Institute for Electrical and Electronics Engineers, the American Physical Society, the Materials Research Society, and the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

On the Job Phillip Hayden

The UI’s Institute of Aviation has 28 Piper and two Cessna airplanes housed at Willard Airport. The aircraft are used by more than 160 students and instructors for flight-training courses each semester. Phillip Hayden, the aircraft maintenance manager and a technician with 30 years of experience, ensures the airplanes are safe.

What’s changed at the airport since you started working here?

When I first came here there was a mechanics school. I started out as a mechanic on the floor. What we do here hasn’t really changed that much, except there’s a lot more regulations and paperwork.

Have the students changed?

The students haven’t really changed. I’ve just gotten older. It wasn’t unusual to see students playing Frisbee around here when the weather was nice. Back when I started, I was closer to the students’ ages and we could go out and talk over a beer after work. I still have some of those friends from the early years, but now the students feel like my kids and I’m looking out for them.

What is your role as manager?

My job is to make sure all of these airplanes are safe. We don’t see it as taking care of aircraft; we see it as taking care of those students and flight instructors. Inspection is a big part of what we do. Every 100 hours we have to perform an inspection, and every 50 hours we change the oil. There’s also an annual inspection and lots of things to do in between, just like you have to do on a car.

What is it about the aviation profession that drew you to it?

There’s just something that’s always been attractive about it to me. There was no particular event or reason. It goes all the way back to high school. I was the kid on the block who fixed everybody’s stuff. I had a bicycle shop out on our front porch and my brothers and I would tear things apart all the time. Of course, we didn’t usually know how to put them back together.

How did you prepare for your career?

I went to Rock Valley College in Rockford and graduated from air frame and power plant school in 1981. I’ve also taken classes at the UI and Parkland. The mechanical part was not a problem for me. I found it to be easy because I was interested. I’m pretty good with anything that involves numbers. I’m not so good when it comes to things involving English or writing.

Do you ever lose sleep worrying you’ve missed something?

All of us have at one time or another, but I think over the years I’ve gotten used to it. I have a good staff here and they do a really great job. We know we’re all in it together. The standards here are very high here because I’ve got parents and the university counting on me to do the job right. I’m the one they take it to when something doesn’t go right.

What happens if you realize you have missed something?

I will ground the whole fleet if I have to. We’ll stop everything to get a situation fixed or stopped. We have a system in place for it and we don’t hesitate to call that up. We have a manual that points out the checks and balances, but despite all that, there are times if I’m uneasy I’ll want to just take a look at it myself. We double-check each other all the time.

It’s redundant, but necessary in this business.

Do you also have a pilot’s license?

I never have gotten one. I never had the means when I was younger and now that I’m older, I’ve never wanted to take the time. I just fix them and go home. I don’t even like airplanes flying over my house. Some of the mechanics here fly and some don’t.

Tell me a little about your family.

I have one daughter, Tara, who recently graduated from Illinois State University with a degree in graphic design. My son, Jared, also is attending ISU and pursing studies in alternative energy. My wife, Amy, is a teacher and a principal at Unit 4 (in Champaign). Education is very important to all of us.

My father was on a squad after World War II to check bombs to see if they were live.

What would you miss most about working in aviation?

I can’t say what I would do if I was not in aviation. This is one of the few places that really does aircraft maintenance right; that’s one of the reasons I’ve stayed as long as I have.

I like working here. It’s one of the few places I’ve seen that does it the way it’s supposed to be done and doesn’t cut corners.

Do you have a saying or credo you try to live by?

Safety is first and cannot be challenged.

– Interview by Mike Helenthal, assistant editor
Energy-saving project under way at Vet Med

By Mike Holenthal
Assistant Editor

Joe Kunkel doesn’t like to use the phrase “energy hog” because of the connotation.

But after working with the managers of animals at the College of Veterinary Medicine complex, where he’s been facilities director for almost five years, it’s a moniker he finds difficult to shelve.

“I probably shouldn’t use that because it’s not by our own behaviors that we use a lot of energy out here,” he said. “It’s the buildings we have that are the energy hogs.”

Kunkel is convinced he won’t be throwing around the “H-word” much longer.

That’s because over the next 18 months the Vet Med complex, among the top 10 energy users on campus, will undergo a series of transformations designed to reduce energy use by nearly 40 percent.

“There is this new consciousness of going green,” he said, “and it’s been the direction I’ve been getting from my leadership. They’re really putting an emphasis on it.”

Kunkel said “green” had been on the minds of veterinary managers for some time, but limited funding had held up any comprehensive fixes.

“We recognized some of these wasteful designs,” he said. “We have some tired, worn-out systems, but they weren’t things we could do on our own. You can only put so many Band-Aids on it.”

That changed last year after the UI partnered with Energy Systems Group, an energy service company (or ESCO), that finances utility upgrades with the long-term savings the project is expected to generate.

In Vet Med’s case, the project costs about $22 million and will take less than 18 years to recapture costs from energy savings. All around the “H-word” much longer.

Energy savings from 2004 to 2010 will add up to $2.5 million, with the ESCO project being financed, about $2 million is coming from an approved student-fee contribution, and another $575,000 is coming from F&S utilities and energy services and nearly $250,000 is being added by Vet Med.

Over the course of the 18-year payback, carbon emissions will have been cut by 17 million pounds – the equivalent of 1,400 vehicles being taken off the highway annually.

“It’s going to position us well for the next 30 years,” he said.

But before that happens, there’s a lot of work to be done.

The work is complicated further by the fact that the Vet Med complex has so many different uses, including medical, research and academic space, and must meet separate requirements for each.

Andy Blacker, Facilities and Services customer relations and communications employee, said the there are hopes the ESCO program can expand to all three campuses.

“We are being closely watched by the other campuses,” he said. “It’s a great way to get some of this long-overdue work completed, improve efficiency and save money at the same time. We couldn’t have asked for a better first project.”

Whitson said one of the joys of the ESCO project is that savings are guaranteed or they’ll fix the deficiency should there be a shortfall in the guaranteed amount,” he said.

“We’re pretty confident the numbers will bear out because they have extensive experience dealing with these types of projects.”

Kunkel, meanwhile, is welcoming the upgrades but is worried about the construction zone that will be the Vet Med complex over the next 18 months.

“It will be very disruptive during the construction phase,” he said, “and right now I’m trying to prepare everyone for it. But the changes in behavior and how (Vet Med educators and researchers) will do their work when it’s finished is minimal.”

The work is complicated further by the fact that the Vet Med complex has so many different uses, including medical, research and academic space, and must meet separate requirements for each.

Andy Blacker, Facilities and Services customer relations and communications employee, said the there are hopes the ESCO program can expand to all three campuses.

“We are being closely watched by the other campuses,” he said. “It’s a great way to get some of this long-overdue work completed, improve efficiency and save money at the same time. We couldn’t have asked for a better first project.”

Whitson said one of the joys of the ESCO project is that savings are guaranteed or they’ll fix the deficiency should there be a shortfall in the guaranteed amount,” he said.

“We’re pretty confident the numbers will bear out because they have extensive experience dealing with these types of projects.”

Kunkel, meanwhile, is welcoming the upgrades but is worried about the construction zone that will be the Vet Med complex over the next 18 months.

“It will be very disruptive during the construction phase,” he said, “and right now I’m trying to prepare everyone for it. But the changes in behavior and how (Vet Med educators and researchers) will do their work when it’s finished is minimal.”

The work is complicated further by the fact that the Vet Med complex has so many different uses, including medical, research and academic space, and must meet separate requirements for each.

Andy Blacker, Facilities and Services customer relations and communications employee, said the there are hopes the ESCO program can expand to all three campuses.

“We are being closely watched by the other campuses,” he said. “It’s a great way to get some of this long-overdue work completed, improve efficiency and save money at the same time. We couldn’t have asked for a better first project.”

Whitson said one of the joys of the ESCO project is that savings are guaranteed or they’ll fix the deficiency should there be a shortfall in the guaranteed amount,” he said.

“We’re pretty confident the numbers will bear out because they have extensive experience dealing with these types of projects.”

Kunkel, meanwhile, is welcoming the upgrades but is worried about the construction zone that will be the Vet Med complex over the next 18 months.
Chicago’s choice for mayor

A Minute With …™

historian James Barrett

Editor’s note: Machine politics. Strong mayors. Racial and ethnic segregation. All are part of the history of Chicago, where voters will go to the polls Feb. 22 to choose the city’s next leader after 22 years of Richard M. Daley. How does that history influence the election and the vote? Historian James Barrett specializes in U.S. urban, labor and ethnic history, with a focus on his native Chicago. He is author of the upcoming “Americanization From the Bottom, Up: Irish Americans and the Making of the Multi-Ethnic City” and is working on a racial and ethnic history of Chicago. Barrett was interviewed by News Bureau social sciences editor Craig Chamberlain.

Given your knowledge of the city’s history, what’s your greatest concern regarding this election and the job ahead for the next mayor? Historically, voting in Chicago has been heavily based on race and ethnicity. The worst outcome would be seeing a repeat of what followed the 1982 election, when the city elected Harold Washington, its first African American mayor. Washington’s opponents mobilized their white base on racial grounds and the electorate and city council were bitterly divided along racial lines, making the city difficult for Washington to govern. Race and ethnicity remain important influences on voting behavior, and I think you can see that in the range of candidates and the jockeying that has taken place to represent the city’s various large ethnic communities. Whoever wins will need to carefully cultivate these communities.

But a Chicago Tribune poll suggests that this sort of outcome is much less likely now. Chicago remains a very segregated city and its neighborhoods continue to reflect these divisions, but the last census showed greater integration than at any time in the recent past and this is reflected, I think, in voting preferences. Many voters from various ethnic communities seem far more prepared to vote for candidates on the basis of their positions on issues like education, the economy, and crime rather than simply on the basis of ethnic background. We often hear that “all politics is local”: you say that’s nowhere more true than in Chicago. What do you mean?

Throughout much of the 20th century, Chicago functioned through a series of machines – voting coalitions that had their roots deep in the neighborhoods. Ward committeemen and precinct captains turned out the vote, in return representing the interests of constituents and doling out patronage jobs and favors.

A strong focus on neighborhoods enhances voters’ concerns with local issues like crime, transportation and schools. National attention has focused on Rahm Emanuel’s connections with the Obama administration, for example, but most Chicagoans couldn’t care less about that. They want to be sure their kids can walk safely in the city’s neighborhoods. Change is needed here, but Emanuel’s connections with the administration are a distraction.

A Minute With …™ Archives

Recent interviews with UI experts

• Agricultural economist Scott Irwin: “How long can the U.S. afford ethanol subsidies?”
  Feb. 7, 2011

• Agricultural commodities expert Darrell Good: “Will 2011 be the year of the global food crisis?”
  Jan. 26, 2011

A Minute With …™ is provided by the UI News Bureau. To view archived interviews, go to illinois.edu/goto/a-minute-with.
UI project examining applied baccalaureate degree programs

By Sharita Forrest
Education/Social Work Editor

P resident Barack Obama, in his 2011 State of the Union address, said that postsecondary education is critical to the U.S. economic recovery, and reiterated his goal that 55 percent of 25-34 year-old Americans hold associate degrees or higher degrees by 2025. But for many community college graduates, especially those in technical fields, their aspirations of earning baccalaureate degrees are stymied by a lack of curricular and transfer pathways between associate degree and baccalaureate programs.

The Office of Community College Research and Leadership, a unit in the College of Education at the UI, has begun a four-year project examining applied baccalaureate degree programs, which build upon historically terminal associate degrees, providing the upper-level course work and classes that help students progress through the baccalaureate level.

Funded in part by a $1.2 million grant from the National Science Foundation’s Advanced Technological Education program, the research project is being led by Debra Bragg, director of the OCCL, and a professor of education policy, organization and leadership in the College of Education.

Bragg has been studying AB degrees for the Lumina Foundation for Education since 2007, and in a recent study reported that at least one higher education institution in 39 of the 50 states offered ABs as of 2008.

About a dozen states – including Florida, Nevada, Oklahoma and Texas – allow institutions such as community colleges and technical colleges that predominantly award associate degrees to award ABs. Hence, ABs are sometimes called community college baccalaureate degrees.

The remaining states, including Illinois, award ABs only through traditional baccalaureate-degree-granting institutions.

“An AB really has to be created in partnership between community colleges and traditional baccalaureate-awarding institutions, whether the community colleges are institutions that now surpass the U.S. in college degree attainment and in science, technology, engineering and mathematics education.

In a three-phase project, Bragg’s team plans to examine AB programs and related transfer degree programs in science, technology, engineering and math fields that are funded by the NSF-ATE. Using online surveys, they plan to document the programs’ basic characteristics and curriculum models, the extent and ways in which partnerships between community colleges and baccalaureate-granting institutions are engaged. They also will profile the student populations served, especially minority, female and adult students, who are underserved in science, technology, engineering and math-related disciplines, and examine student outcomes, such as post-graduation employment and wages, and how the programs compare to workforce needs.

An advisory committee of regional and national experts on educational policy, NSF-ATE programs and AB programs has been assembled to guide the research.

“Community college technical programs have become more rigorous and STEM based, moving these programs to a different level that deserves a re-evaluation of whether they can be baccalaureate level programs,” Bragg said. “That’s a curricular challenge: examining on a deeper level what students are learning and if it’s comparable to what students learn in a baccalaureate program.”

Students often enroll in technical programs at community colleges because they’re uncertain about their career goals but know that they need job skills. Bragg said. Later, they find themselves in a Catch-22: Their professional advancement is hampered by their lack of a baccalaureate degree – but their ability to get a degree is hindered by factors such as course credits that won’t transfer, family responsibilities and tuition costs.

Many AB students receive tuition subsidies from their employers, who don’t care whether their employees earn a traditional baccalaureate or an AB degree. Bragg said. “What they’re interested in is whether their employee has the skills and knowledge to do their job. Many times, they’ve already identified that person as someone they want to promote – but can’t without a baccalaureate degree.”

“If you ask me, ‘What is the real value of these degrees?’ I’d say, ‘They’re an opportunity to provide more access for students who have been under-served by the higher education system.’” Bragg said. “Most AB students are working adults, who are often low income and have never had an opportunity to go beyond community college because they can’t afford it and can’t give up their family responsibilities.”

Traditional baccalaureate-awarding institutions and for-profit colleges view ABs as opportunities for reaching adult learners. Likewise, states that want to increase college-degree attainment among adults and respond to employers’ needs for workers with baccalaureate degrees are turning to AB programs.

While critics of ABs say that the degrees reflect a trend of vocationalism that could degrade the value of baccalaureate degrees, “preparation for employment has been a major focus of higher education for a long time,” and disciplines such as business, engineering, health care and teaching that traditionally award bachelor’s degrees clearly prepare graduates for the workplace, Bragg said.

“To me, the issue isn’t so much about vocationalism as elitism – it’s about who gets access to a bachelor’s degree and who does not,” Bragg said. “The AB degree attempts to provide access for learners that many higher education institutions have overlooked or forgotten.”
Restructuring to foster research, teaching, more

By Sharita Forrest
Education/Social Work Editor

The College of Education at the UI recently announced a restructuring that is expected to better support collaborative research and teaching by merging three departments. The merger also is expected to help the college maximize resources, be more competitive in obtaining external funding and address high-impact research and policy initiatives on the state and national levels. The restructuring, which took effect Jan. 1, created a department -- called Education Policy, Organization and Leadership -- from the former departments of educational policy studies, educational organization and leadership, and human resource education.

EPOL comprises 30 faculty members, 380 on-campus graduate students and nine online programs. James D. Anderson, the head of the former department of educational policy studies who also holds appointments in the department of history and the African Studies Program, heads the new unit.

According to Mary Kalantzis, the dean of the college, combining the departments into one “powerhouse department” is about “synergy” and not about cutting costs, even though the merger will enable units to share resources as well as eliminate some structural impediments to interdepartmental teaching and research.

“The world needs a much more multidisciplinary approach to the variety of problems than what we had addressed separately under the previous configuration,” Kalantzis said.

“And we need to address diversity issues much more powerfully across all scholarly domains. Most of our specialist expertise in issues of diversity was located in one department. Now that is available to all the students and scholars in this new entity.”

The College of Education started exploring new synergies and how to best configure the resources during the fall 2008 semester, when Kalantzis asked an interdepartmental faculty task force to explore options that would help the college more effectively meet students’ needs, community expectations and faculty members’ aspirations. The task force recommended reconfiguring the three departments, which have faculty members with intersecting curricula and research interests. A merger would strengthen faculty capacity in shared specializations, enrich students’ educational experience and create an infrastructure that would foster collaborative work on funded research and state and national educational policy and practice, the task force suggested.

“I am delighted they’ve chosen to come together in this way,” Kalantzis said. “It gives them a very powerful base for solving the kinds of problems that seem to endure in education contexts.”

All program areas within the College of Education are regularly ranked among the top 20 programs in the nation by U.S. News & World Report, and the college has numerous faculty members who are nationally recognized in their disciplines. The new department brings together in one unit prominent senior scholars such as Anderson, Debra Bragg, Stanley Ikenberry and William Trent, and talented young scholars such as Lorenzo Baber, Tim Cain and Jennifer Delaney, who are experts in higher education and access issues. EPOL
Board-certified avian-medicine veterinarian joins UI staff

By Sharita Forrest
News Editor

A

nuk didn’t want to sit on her perch, preferring instead to stand on the bottom of her cage. A recurring infection on Anuk’s right foot had the gregarious and mischievous Moluccan cockatoo and her concerned owners, the Hess family – daughter Iiae and parents Patrick and Violeta – from their home in Lincoln, Ill., to see veterinarian Ken Welle at the Small Animal Clinic at the UI.

Welle joined the exotic animal department at the UI Teaching Hospital last month after 22 years in private practice. The exotic animal service cares for a wide variety of species and comprises specialists with expertise in fish and reptiles, wildlife medicine and zoological medicine, in addition to Welle, who specializes in avian medicine and behavior.

The only veterinarian in Illinois who is board-certified in avian medicine by the American Board of Veterinary Practitioners, Welle is among more than 40 board-certified veterinarians at the UI Teaching Hospital. Board certification indicates that veterinarians have undergone three to four additional years of training in a specialty area and passed a national examination. Vets are board-certified in their specialty area – obtaining their doctor of veterinary medicine degree.

“There are more than 8,000 bird species overall, and the amount of data that we have is only on a small fraction of them,” said Welle, in explaining why he chose to specialize in avian medicine.

“There’s a lot less literature about birds than other animals, such as the etiology of diseases, the validity of diagnostic tests and drug dosages,” Welle said.

Each bird species also has its own particular disorders, Welle said.

Welle’s avian clientele in his private practice comprised falconers, backyard pouleheurs, pigeon racers, and a nearby zoo, with its flamin-goes, pelicans, raptors and other exotic birds. Many rescued wild birds also were referred to Welle for rehabilitation.

Welle recently consulted with wildlife veterinarian Julia Whittington about a 16-year-old blue-and-gold macaw that had been seen by three different veterinarians in neighboring states before it was referred to the UI to determine why the bird was regurgitating his food.

“We are able to offer more diagnostic testing, including CT scans, not available in other places,” Whittington said. “Our secret weapon, though, is the breadth and depth of expertise of our faculty members.”

A CT scan on the macaw revealed a granuloma, a benign tumor that could be treated with anti-fungal medication, in the bird’s lower esophagus.

“Avians are very delicate and prone to stress than the typical veterinary patient,” Welle said.

No kidding Julia Whittington, right, a veterinarian specializing in exotic medicine, and former student Jessica Buchholz, enjoy vetertating with an unusual hybrid macaw called a Catalina macaw.

Avian expert The only veterinarian in Illinois who is board-certified in avian medicine, Ken Welle joined the faculty of the UI Veterinary Teaching Hospital in January.

Exotic patients Many pet owners from across the state bring their exotic pets to the Small Animal Clinic for care. HEDGEHOGS are just one unusual species that will be treated by Welle.


teen member, so they may never have seen an adult of their own species to learn normal social behavior. Behavioral problems — self-mutilation, aggression and attention-getting behaviors such as excessive vocalization — are common among birds, Welle said.

The wound on Anuk’s foot had nearly healed several times over the past year, only to deteriorate again. Patrick voiced suspicion that Anuk, enjoying the extra attention that the wound brought her, might be malingering by plucking at it with her beak.

Although Anuk may have been feeling too punk for her perch, in between physical examinations by veterinary students and Welle, she cossetingly cuddled with family members and strangers alike — her favorite trick: keeling over “dead” and repeatedly performed a favorite trick: keeling over “dead” and danging upside down from Iae’s finger when “shot at” with an imaginary gun.

With Anuk wrapped in a towel, Welle examined her foot and discussed treatment options. Welle recommended antibiotic treatment might be warranted, and could be administered by implanting bins of antibiotic-impregnated bone cement – the substance used in joint replacement surgeries – in the wound.

However, if a behavioral problem was indeed the cause of the recurring infection, healing it would be difficult, Welle told the Hess family, who had tried various treatments, including tranquillizers and a collar, in attempts to keep the cockatoo from picking at the wound. Welle discussed a particular antidepressant that might help.

That same day Welle also conducted wellness checks on guinea pigs and a rabbit and had a follow-up visit with Squirt, a tiny iguana barely as long as one of Welle’s fingers. The reptile had a blistering rash on its tail.

The antibiotic and water soaks prescribed at the previous appointment in November had healed most of the lesions, although a tail amputation might still be necessary, and the calcium supplements prescribed had strengthened her bones, Welle told the mother and adult son who owned the lizard.

Although Squirt had grown several millimeters and gained a few grams in weight since her prior appointment, the family was concerned that she remained considerably smaller than Kujo, their other iguana of similar age, which they’d brought along to illustrate the size disparity between the two lizards. After carefully plucking Kujo from his perch on the owner’s son’s thigh, Welle examined the lizard and explained the sex characteristics of mature iguanas.

See WELLE, PAGE 11

Ad removed for online version
By Diana Yates
Life Sciences Editor

Two new works, an anthropologist tackles a perplexing question relating to the enormously successful "Body Worlds" exhibits: How does society tolerate — and even celebrate — the public display of human corpses?

"Body Worlds — The Original Exhibition of Real Human Bodies" is the most widely attended exhibit in the world, said Jane Desmond, a UI professor of anthropology and author of a paper and book chapter on the subject. While the exhibition has generated some controversy, its promoters have succeeded in presenting it to more than 31 million visitors in Asia, Europe and North America since it opened in Japan in 1995.

Today, new exhibits are being developed for museums and galleries around the world, including the Museum of Science and Industry in Chicago, on March 18.

Gunther von Hagens, a German physician and anatomist, is the creator of "Body Worlds" and inventor of the "plastination" technique that makes it possible. Plastination infuses dead tissues with plastic polymers. The tissues are malleable at first, allowing technicians to manipulate them before they harden.

In a paper in the journal Configurations, Desmond, who wrote a social history of taxidermy, contrasted the treatment of specimens in "Body Worlds" to that of taxidermied animals. Unlike taxidermy, which focuses on the animal’s exterior, "Body Worlds" takes a closer look at the insides — the muscles, bones, nerves, organs and vascular systems — of the plastinated human bodies. Most traces of hair, skin and body fat are stripped from the specimens.

The lack of identifying features avoids offending viewers by drawing their attention away from the person whose body is on display and toward the body itself as an object of wonder or scientific curiosity, Desmond said.

"This process of subtraction that’s taken away all the social markers in a sense idealizes and universalizes these individuals so that symbolically they come to stand for the undifferentiated human, which allows us to look with impunity because we’re not really looking at a person or an individual," she said. "Von Hagens’ plastinates could never be displayed with their skins on."

"So there is the fencer, the chess player, the bicyclist, the archer, the figure skaters," she said. "And everyone looks like a marathon runner."

In the exhibition Desmond saw in London in 2002, the specimens were in pristine condition; in all cases but one (a pair of disembodied, cigarette-blackened lungs) they bore no signs of the actual or probable cause of death.

"In many ways, we don’t see graphic images of death," Desmond said. "We see fictionalized images of death."

The context in which the bodies are presented is meant to soothe the moral, ethical and legal concerns that some audience members might have about the display, Desmond said. The exhibits prominently assert in the museum halls and on their website that the individuals displayed voluntarily donated their bodies "for the qualification of physicians and the instruction of laypersons."

In a possible nod to religious viewers, one of the figures in the exhibit kneels in prayer, Desmond said. Nearby a sign expresses gratitude to the body donors.

The exhibitors also promote the display as an advancement in the age-old study of anatomy. Desmond wrote, in "Touring the Undifferentiated Human, which allows us to look with impunity because we’re not really looking at a person or an individual," she said. "Von Hagens’ plastinates could never be displayed with their skins on."

"In many ways, we don’t see graphic images of death," Desmond said. "We see fictionalized images of death."

The context in which the bodies are presented is meant to soothe the moral, ethical and legal concerns that some audience members might have about the display, Desmond said. The exhibitors prominently assert in the museum halls and on their website that the individuals displayed voluntarily donated their bodies "for the qualification of physicians and the instruction of laypersons."

In a possible nod to religious viewers, one of the figures in the exhibit kneels in prayer, Desmond said. Nearby a sign expresses gratitude to the body donors.

cause of the de-emotional screen of science through which the entire thing is constructed, because of the depersonalization and the universalization, all of that, I think, is so powerful that if it’s possible to forget that we’re in a room full of dead people," she said.

ON THE WEB
Body Worlds: The Original Exhibition of Real Human Bodies:
www.bodyworlds.com/en.html
Health care reform

A Minute With … ™ UI expert David Hyman

Editor’s note: A second federal judge has declared the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act unconstitutional, ruling that people can’t be required to buy health insurance. David A. Hyman, a professor of law and of medicine at Illinois, is one of the nation’s top health law scholars. He spoke with News Bureau reporter Phil Ciciora about the ongoing legal troubles facing President Obama’s signature piece of legislation, and what’s likely to happen next.

What does the latest court ruling mean for the health care reform law? In the interest of setting the constitutionality of the law once and for all, should the parties seek an expedited review by the Supreme Court?

As of right now, two district courts have upheld the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act in its entirety. One district court in Virginia has struck down just the individual mandate, and another in Florida has issued a declaratory judgment that the entire statute is unconstitutional. It concluded the individual mandate was unconstitutional, and not separable from the rest of the law.

Although it is possible that all of these cases will be conclusively resolved by the various intermediate courts of appeals, it now seems likely that the Supreme Court will have to sort out the issue.

As far as timing, the state of Virginia, which was the plaintiff in the case where the district court struck down just the individual mandate, has indicated that it wants immediate review, but so far the Department of Justice has opposed doing so. It is possible that the DOJ will seek a stay of (U.S. District) Judge (Roger) Vinson’s ruling in the Florida case, in order to keep implementation on track.

Critics of Vinson’s ruling have said that it was based more on a desire to restrain federal overreach than in commerce clause precedents. They also note that many of America’s landmark governing achievements – Social Security, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the federal minimum wage – were challenged in lower courts before being upheld by the Supreme Court. Are they right? If this case were to reach the Supreme Court, what do you foresee happening?

The Constitution limits the federal government to specific enumerated powers. Congress relied on the commerce clause, which allows the federal government to regulate commerce “among the several states.” Most law professors were confident that this challenge to the health care reform act would go absolutely nowhere, since federal courts had historically upheld legislation regulating economic activity under the commerce clause. But the plaintiffs creatively cast the act as regulating inactivity, it could regulate everything, which would be inconsistent with the limitation of the federal government to specific enumerated powers.

Everything about health reform has been unpredictable, so the safest thing is to predict more of the same. The betting right now is that it would be a 5-4 decision, with Associate Justice Anthony Kennedy casting the deciding vote. But Kennedy has been a swing justice, so it is hard to predict what he might do.

Ironically, if the act had been structured like Medicare, the constitutional challenge would be a non-starter, since there was clear precedent authorizing the use of the taxing power to enact such legislation. But there was never the political will or the votes to try to do anything like that.

In the two rulings that have declared the law unconstitutional, the linchpin of the ruling has been the constitutionality of the individual mandate. How is the constitutionality of the individual mandate any different from, say, the constitutionality of all drivers mandated to purchase some form of auto insurance?

Under the Constitution, the federal government is limited to specific enumerated powers, while the states have more sweeping authority. So, states can require people to do things that the federal government can’t. That’s why when states impose a mandate to purchase auto insurance – or when, for example, Massachusetts imposes a mandate to purchase health insurance – it doesn’t create any constitutional problems.

The auto insurance example raises some other interesting points. First, the auto insurance mandate requires drivers to purchase coverage. If you don’t drive, you don’t have to purchase coverage. You don’t have a similar option with the health insurance mandate, which applies to all citizens.

Second, the auto insurance mandate requires drivers to purchase liability cov-
also includes faculty experts in fields such as human resource development, education reform, ubiquitous learning and global studies in education.

Cain, who studies the history of higher education, said that the merger offers opportunities for Illinois faculty to explore the future of higher education. “Our department is going to be somewhat unique in, for example, the combination of approaches that we can bring to the study of higher education. “We are bringing together scholars from a variety of different disciplines and fields – including sociology, history, philosophy, policy – to ask important questions about where higher education should be focusing policy – including sociology, history, philosophy, policy – to ask important questions about where higher education should be focusing – particularly after the derailment of the Global Campus Initiative – is really important for the future,” Kalantzis said. “The college has shown that it is possible to do it and have really top-quality programs and very high quality outcomes. Scott and his team have been helping the colleges of liberal arts and sciences, engineering, and other colleges across the university who want to move into this area, and it will be really wonderful when we’re the smallest online unit and the others grow.”

The three departments shared the third floor of the Education Building on South Sixth Street in Champaign, but even before the departmental merger, staff members in the three departments had identified a need for structural change and voluntarily reorganized their workload and workspace to “offer a superior set of services to faculty,” Kalantzis said. “It’s remarkable the staff took the initiative first and modeled what was possible. The faculty followed, demonstrating the creativity that can emerge at the level of scholarship.”

The college spent about $30,000 remodeling the three departmental offices into a single main office, outfitting a workroom to provide support for its online programs and converting an office into a conference/meeting room.

The College of Education has nearly 41,000 alumni.

---

**ADM funds new postharvest institute**

A rcher Daniels Midland Co. announced a $10 million grant to establish the ADM Institute for the Prevention of Postharvest Loss at the UI. The global institute will work with farmers in the developing world to help preserve millions of metric tons of grains and oilseeds lost each year to pests, disease, mishandling and other factors.

“By the year 2050, global population is expected to reach 9.2 billion, and the demand for agricultural products is expected to double,” said Patricia A. Woertz, ADM chairman, CEO and president. “Clearly, preserving what is already grown is fundamental to feeding the world. This institute will help farmers around the world through training, tools and technologies that can help eliminate pests and disease, enable more efficient grain storage and handling, prevent spoilage, and improve crop quality overall.”

Steve Sonka, vice chancellor for public engagement, will serve as the global institute’s faculty director.

“ADM’s widely recognized expertise in crop storage, transportation and handling will no doubt prove valuable to our global institute as we work to advance the real-world applicability of promising research findings,” Sonka said.

Sonka will work with researchers in the College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences and in other colleges to develop research projects to solve postharvest problems.

The department of agricultural and biological engineering is one of the units in ACES and the College of Engineering that will work closely with the new institute. K.C. Ting, the head of the department, said: “We need to find the appropriate technologies for developing countries. Many of our solutions to these problems are technology and facility intensive, but in developing countries you have to provide solutions that match the local environment. The real challenge is to address and solve their problems in a way, and at a cost, that can be delivered to those producers within their infrastructure.”

The costs of feeding the world’s hungry will be addressed by researchers in the department of agricultural and consumer economics in ACES.

“Assessing the economic costs of quality and quantity losses along the relevant supply chains will be essential in developing low-cost sustainable solutions for improving handling, processing and storage,” said Paul Ellinger, a professor and the head of agricultural and consumer economics.

“Economic feasibility assessment of viable solutions combined with training materials for producers and handlers will also be essential to maintain sustainable outcomes.”

Funding for the new institute will be provided by ADM Cares, a corporate social-investment program.

---

**WELLE, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8**

To the family’s surprise, Welle observed that Kojo might not be a male as they had assumed: Kojo’s orange color could be indicative of surging female hormones and impending ovulation.

With instructions to soak Squirt in antibiotic baths and in tap water, the mother prepared for the drive home by wrapping the tiny lizard in her wool scarf and tucking it into the front of her winter coat, the same cozy spot where Squirt had nestled during the drive up from Charleston, Ill., and while the family shopped in Champaign prior to Squirt’s checkup.

Welle, who graduated from the College of Veterinary Medicine in 1988, has been a clinical assistant professor in the College of Veterinary Medicine since 1991, and has taught avian, exotic and wildlife medicine at Purdue University and at St. George’s University in Grenada as well as at the UI.

His private practice, All Creatures Animal Hospital in Urbana, continues under the direction of veterinarian Mary Welle with a focus on dogs and cats.
Lewin awarded 2011 Wolf Prize in Agriculture

By Diana Yates

Animal sciences professor Harris Lewin is a recipient of the 2011 Wolf Prize in Agriculture. He shares the prize with James R. Cook, of Washington State University.

The $100,000 Wolf Prizes are awarded each year, with recipients in agriculture, chemistry, physics, mathematics, medicine and the arts. The prize committee selected Lewin for his “highly significant discoveries” in the field of animal genetics and disease resistance, “through studies on genetics and genomic studies in cattle. Prof. Lewin has greatly expanded our understanding of immunogenetics and disease resistance,” the committee wrote in an announcement on the Wolf Prize website.

Lewin has directed the Institute for Genomic Biology since its founding in 2003. He was part of an international team that sequenced the cow genome in 2009, and is widely known for his research in comparative mammalian genomics and immunogenetics. He established the immunology program in the department of animal sciences to study genes associated with immune responses of cattle to infectious diseases, which led to the identification of genes conferring resistance to the bovine leukemia virus and to a patent on a method to detect animals that can pass resistance to the disease to their offspring. His research group pioneered technology for functional genomics in cattle, and he has made significant contributions to the understanding of mammalian chromosome evolution.

Lewin, a native New Yorker, earned his doctorate in immunology at the University of California at Davis in 1984. He has been at Illinois since then, and holds the Gutgsell Endowed Chair in the College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences. He is a member of the Royal Swedish Academy of Agriculture and Forestry, and is a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

Lewin announced earlier this year that he will leave Illinois this spring to become vice chancellor for research at his alma mater, UC Davis. Wolf Prize laureates receive their awards from the president of Israel. The presentation ceremony is held at the Knesset Building in Jerusalem. The date of the award ceremony has not yet been announced.

**Deaths**

Anne Caroline “Carol” Collins, 85, died Jan. 26 at Carle Foundation Hospital, Urbana. She worked as a word- and data-processing technician at the UI Animal Sciences Lab. Memorials: Champaign County Humane Society, 1911 E. Main St., Urbana, IL 61802; Meadowbrook Congregation of Jehovah’s Witnesses, 1407 Scovill St., Urbana, IL 61801.

Steven Maurice Huff, 55, died Jan. 29 at his home in Urbana. He worked at the UI for more than 30 years, retiring in 2010 as a painter with Facilities and Services.

**Ad removed for online version**
NCSA celebrates 25 years
Supercomputing discussed March 2

Since NCSA opened its doors in 1986 it has operated some of the world’s most powerful supercomputers, developed software to facilitate the use of these systems, and helped scientists drive scientific discovery. There have been some great success stories — from Mosaic, the first Web browser, to the coming Blue Waters supercomputer, the world’s first sustained petascale computer. Those successes have grown from the intellectual landscape and ongoing, intense commitment of the entire Illinois community. Faculty and staff members are invited to join NCSA staff members in celebrating NCSA’s 25th anniversary from 3-6:30 p.m. March 2 at the NCSA building.

A brief history of NCSA will be followed at 3:30 p.m. with a panel discussion on the importance of supercomputing in modern research. The panelists: UI faculty members Juan Ma, bioengineering; Shaowen Wang, geography; Brian Jewett, atmospheric sciences; Guy Garnett, Illinois Informatics Institute and eDream; and Kevin Hoiesterter, of Caterpillar Inc. A reception will follow at 4:30 p.m.

To assist the organizers, those planning to attend should indicate their attendance online at https://illinois.edu/fb/sec/7640904 by Feb. 22.

Human and community development
What is effect of war on small-town U.S.A.?

Miliary families expert Shelley MacDermid Wadsworth will speak about the impact of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan on small-town communities at 7 p.m. Feb. 24 in the Spurlock Museum auditorium.

“Families that have experienced separation, exposure to combat and other deployment-related events generally respond with great resilience, but there is much that friends, neighbors and communities can do to be supportive and helpful,” MacDermid Wadsworth said.

MacDermid Wadsworth is the director of the Center for Military Families at Purdue University. She is also director of the Military Family Research Institute. She is a co-author of “Risk and Resilience in U.S. Military Families,” and her research has been published in scientific journals including “Management Journal.

The talk is free and open to the public.

“We think attending will be a good way for people to learn about the stresses military families face, and Dr. MacDermid Wadsworth’s talk should motivate residents of communities to increase their support for these families in their hometowns,” said Robert Hughes Jr., the head of the department of human and community development.

Illinois Public Media
Film features teenage girl in prison

Cynotia Brown was an average teenager in an American town. But a series of bad decisions led the 16-year-old to life in a Tennessee prison. Her story is chronicled in the film “Me Facing Life: Cynotia’s Story.” A screening and discussion of the film takes place at 6:30 p.m. Feb. 24, in the Robeson A and B Rooms at the Champaign Public Library, 200 W. Green St. The film also will be broadcast on WILL-TV at 9 p.m. March 1 as part of the “Independent Lens” series.

Henry Radcliffe, community engagement producer for Illinois Public Media, said that during the discussion, participants will look at the situation for teens in our own community. “Could our youth fall through the cracks if no one is keeping an eye out for them?” he asks.

The event is the second in a series of Community Cinema events hosted by Illinois Public Media.

The event is free and open to the public.

From January through June, Illinois Public Media will join with the Independent Television Service to sponsor screenings of independent documentaries, followed by discussions facilitated by community groups with an interest in the topic.

Food science and human nutrition
Spice Box presents themed meals

Another season of themed meals prepared for the public by hospitality majors at the UI is under way at the Spice Box, located on the second floor of Bevier Hall.

“These meals give our students the unique opportunity to have a realistic, hands-on learning experience in all the aspects of managing a restaurant and working closely with industry professionals,” said Jill Craft, instructor of FSHN 443, “Management of Fine Dining.”

The Spice Box is a working laboratory for students majoring in hospitality management in the department of food science and human nutrition.

“Students are offering a broad spectrum of themes and menus that will allow diners to experience food and dining through all their senses,” Craft said.

Meals are featured on Wednesday and Friday evenings throughout the semester. Each dining event offers either a four-course meal, including salad, appetizer, featured entree and dessert, or a two-course salad and entre combination.

ON THE WEB
www.life.illinois.edu/entomology/egsa/ifff.html

BRIEFS
Scientists unleash killer wasps at film festival Feb. 26

Drawn by the aroma of grilling meat, an angry swarm of genetically modified killer yellow-jackets descends on a hamburger cook-off in a small Kansas town. Elsewhere, giant mutant wasps waddle across the African savannah seeking revenge for a cosmic science experiment gone bad. These and other wasp-related horrors will be on view at the annual Insect Fear Film Festival at the UI on Feb. 26.

The festival will commemorate its 28th year with two main features: “Swarmed,” a 2005 movie about genetically altered, pesticide-resistant killer yellow-jackets, and “Monster From Green Hell,” a 1958 horror flick about truck-sized mutant wasps. The night will begin with interactive demonstrations and displays, including an insect petting zoo and exhibits of live and preserved wasps.

The program of movies will include the two feature films and wasp-related animated shorts and will be accompanied by commentaries from entomology department head and festival founder May Berenbaum and from special guest Gordon Yang, the producer of “Swarmed,” which first appeared on Syfy and is licensed by Reel One Entertainment.

Doors will open at 6 p.m. at Foellinger Auditorium. Films and commentary begin at 7 p.m.

ON THE WEB
www.life.illinois.edu/entomology/egsa/ifff.html

BRIEFS
PAGE 14
By Dusty Rhodes

Art and Humanities Editor

Hobson to play tributes to Liszt

Hobson's love of Liszt is so “incredibly difficult and complicated,” Hobson says, that “at that time, nobody but Liszt could play them.”

The second half of the concert will feature those études, but not the version most popularly played. Liszt wrote a set of simple études in 1825, at the age of 14, but in 1839, while he was traveling the world as a performing pianist, Liszt reworked his old material into Douze Grandes Études (twelve great studies) – pieces that are so “incredibly difficult and complicated,” Hobson says, that “at that time, nobody but Liszt could play them.”

(A final and technically less-strenuous revision, in 1852, resulted in the widely known Transcendental Études.) Hobson will perform this seldom-heard second version. “I find them very powerful pieces, as a set. They are overly complicated and overly difficult to execute, but I find them very satisfying musically,” he says.

Hobson will devote the third concert, “Heroes,” on March 4, to the composers Liszt most admired. In the first half, Hobson will perform a set of études Liszt composed in an attempt to emulate the most virtuoso pieces Niccolò Paganini wrote for violin. However, instead of the version most often performed, Hobson will play Liszt’s original 1838 set, Études d’exécution transcendante d’après Paganini. This version differs from the later set most markedly in the third étude, known as “La Campanella.”

“It’s really Liszt being so besotted by Paganini’s virtuosity on the violin that he wanted to recreate that on the piano, and he does that in a remarkable way in this set of pieces,” Hobson says. He will conclude the third concert by performing Liszt’s transcription of Beethoven’s iconic Symphony No. 5 in C minor.

“But even though it’s so familiar to listeners,” said Hobson, “people have told me that they hear things (in the piano version) that they never heard in the orchestra. It’s a great testament to Liszt’s skill as a transcriber.”

Hobson has made such creative programming – along with technical wizardry – his hallmark as a concert pianist. He has made about 40 recordings as a solo artist, including most recently the complete works of Chopin (a 16-volume set). Hobson has performed with major orchestras including the Royal Philharmonic, London Philharmonic, and the symphony orchestras of Baltimore, Chicago, Houston, Indianapolis, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh and St. Louis. He conducts, from the piano or the podium, and is in the founder of Sinfonia da Camera. Hobson also is in demand as a jurist for international piano competitions, and will be on the jury of the Concours Maria Canals in Barcelona, Spain, next month.

ON THE WEB
Symposium focuses on music of Shostakovich

By Dusty Rhodes
Arts and Humanities Editor

What was Dmitri Shostakovich saying – or not saying – with his cycle of 15 string quartets? And why do we interpret his music as we do? Twenty scholars from fields ranging from musicology to Slavic, European and East Asian literatures and cultures to Russian and Soviet history will try to answer these questions during a two-day symposium at the UI. The Feb. 21-22 event will end with the Pacifica Quartet’s performance of quartets 11, 13, 14 and 15 by Shostakovich.

Shostakovich lived and composed under Soviet rule. His relationship with the Stalinist regime varied from rosy to rocky. The government gave Shostakovich the Stalin Prize five times, yet also publicly rebuked him on multiple occasions. The question of whether his music contained coded comments on Stalinism has occupied top minds in musicology and music history since shortly after the composer’s death in 1975.

The symposium, hosted by the university’s department of Slavic languages and literature, School of Music, the Russian, East European and Eurasian Center, and others, will take a broad interdisciplinary approach that goes beyond Shostakovich’s musical response to the political events of his day. The scholars will examine his quartets in the context of his complete body of work, his time and today.

Keynote addresses will be given by Richard Taruskin, Laurel Fay and Simon Morrison. Taruskin, a professor of musicology at the University of California at Berkeley, is the author of six books, including the six-volume “Oxford History of Western Music.” He also is a frequent contributor to The New York Times and to New Republic magazine.

In 2001, the BBC listed Taruskin among the 60 “most powerful” figures in music. Fay is the author of “Shostakovich – A Life” published by Oxford University Press, and described by Library Journal as an “important contribution to Shostakovich scholarship.” Fay is best known for her research disentangling fact from fiction in Solomon Volkov’s Shostakovich memoir, “Testimony.”

Morrison, a professor of music at Princeton University specializing in 20th-century works, has written books on Russian opera and the composer Sergei Prokofiev. Morrison is working on a book about Shostakovich. Morrison restored the score of the original version of Prokofiev’s “Romeo and Juliet” for the Mark Morris Dance Group, recently performed at Illinois. Morrison’s remarks will focus on the question of auto-citation in the Shostakovich quartets.

Members of the Grammy Award-winning Pacifica Quartet will participate in a discussion forum about the quartets. Pacifica, the faculty quartet in residence at the UI, recently was named quartet-in-residence at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. The quartet has performed the Shostakovich cycle in Chicago and New York City, and will take it to London’s Wigmore Hall. The forum will be moderated by Henry Fogel – a former president of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and the dean of Roosevelt University’s Chicago College of Performing Arts.

Other panel discussions will address the topics of cultural and musical climate that surrounded Shostakovich, the way his work was received in its time, his adaptations of other artists’ work and other artists’ adaptations of his work.

Most symposium events will take place at Krannert Center for the Performing Arts. Members of the Grammy Award-winning quartet also will participate in a discussion about the quartets.

Performance: A two-day symposium on Dmitri Shostakovich will end with the Pacifica Quartet performing the composer’s quartets 11, 13, 14 and 15 beginning at 7:30 p.m. at Krannert Center for the Performing Arts. Members of the Grammy Award-winning quartet also will participate in a discussion about the quartets.

F&S, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1
snowfall when the un-forecasted storm hit.

“When we got the 4-inch surprise over the weekend,” Wegel said, “we had to call in people who had already extended themselves for the benefit of the campus.”

While the snow is melting with this week’s warm-up, the winter work isn’t over yet. The roof- ing department is identifying and clearing dangerous ice and snow buildup on campus buildings to prevent any problems as the melt rate accelerates.

A few days after the snow, crews were still touching up curb cuts and icy walkways. “Things are pretty much back to normal following this event,” Wegel said this week. “Even when it’s extreme for campus, it’s routine for us.”

Even so, F&S and other campus units responsible for keeping the campus running received kudos from Bob Easter, vice president and interim chancellor, following the last storm.

“All across campus, you answered the call,” Easter said. “You took whatever steps were necessary to ensure that critical activities continued. Many of you had to make special arrangements for your own families, so you could serve the Illinois family.

“Thank you for your hard work. It’s a privilege to work with such dedicated colleagues,” he said.

UI has shut down the campus twice because of snow: one day in 1979 and two days in 2007.
Brief diversions vastly improve focus, researchers find

By Diana Yates
Life Sciences Editor

A new study in the journal Cognition overturns a decades-old theory about the nature of attention and demonstrates that even brief diversions from a task can dramatically improve one’s ability to focus on that task for prolonged periods.

The study zeroes in on a phenomenon known to anyone who’s ever had trouble doing the same task for a long time: After a while, you begin to lose your focus and your performance on the task declines.

Some researchers believe that this “vigilance decrement,” as they describe it, is the result of a drop in one’s “attentional resources,” said UI psychology professor Alejandro Lleras, who led the new study. “For 40 or 50 years, most papers published on the vigilance decrement treated attention as a limited resource that would get used up over time, and I believe that to be wrong. You start performing poorly on a task because you’ve stopped paying attention to it,” he said. “But you are always paying attention to something. Attention is not the problem.”

Lleras had noticed that a similar phenomenon occurs in sensory perception: The brain gradually stops registering a sight, sound or feeling if that stimulus remains constant over time. For example, most people are not aware of the sensation of clothing touching their skin. The body becomes “habituated” to the feeling and the stimulus no longer registers in any meaningful way in the brain.

In previous studies, Lleras explored the limits of visual perception over time, focusing on a phenomenon called Troxler Fading: when continual attention to a stationary object in one’s peripheral vision can lead to that object’s complete “disappearance” from view.

“Constant stimulation is registered by our brains as unimportant, to the point that the brain erases it from our awareness,” Lleras said. “So I thought, well, if there’s some kind of analogy about the ways the brain fundamentally processes information, things that are true for sensations ought to be true for thoughts. If sustained attention to a sensation makes that sensation vanish from our awareness, sustained attention to a thought should also lead to that thought’s disappearance from our mind!”

In the new study, Lleras and postdoctoral fellow Atsunori Ariga tested participants’ ability to focus on a repetitive computerized task for about an hour under various conditions. The 84 study subjects were divided into four groups:

• The control group performed the 50-minute task without breaks or diversions.

• The “switch” group and the “no-switch” group memorized four digits prior to performing the task, and were told to respond if they saw one of the digits on the screen during the task. Only the switch group was actually presented with the digits (twice) during the 50-minute experiment. Both groups were tested on their memory of the digits at the end of the task.

  • The “digit-ignored” group was shown the same digits presented to the switch group during the task, but was told to ignore them.

As expected, most participants’ performance declined significantly over the course of the task. But most critically, Lleras said, those in the switch group saw no drop in their performance over time. Simply having them take two brief breaks from their main task (to respond to the digits) allowed them to stay focused during the entire experiment.

“It was amazing that performance seemed to be unimpaired by time, while for the other groups performance was so clearly dropping off,” he said.

This study is consistent with the idea that the brain is built to detect and respond to change, Lleras said, and suggests that prolonged attention to a single task actually hinders performance.

“We propose that deactivating and reactivating your goals allows you to stay focused,” he said. “From a practical standpoint, our research suggests that, when faced with long tasks (such as studying before a final exam or doing your taxes), it is best to impose brief breaks on yourself. Brief mental breaks will actually help you stay focused on your task!”

Lleras is a researcher at the university’s Beckman Institute for Advanced Science and Technology.

Take a break A new study, led by UI psychology professor Alejandro Lleras, indicates that prolonged attention to a single task actually hinders performance.