Abbott moves from coal, UI renews energy commitment

By Mike Holenthal
Assistant Editor

For the second consecutive year the Abbott Power Plant will stop using coal as a fuel source during the summer—a practice that officials say is more than a passing trend.

Managers will throw the “switch” May 25, effectively turning the plant over to natural gas until peak activity resumes with the return of students in the fall.

“When there isn’t as much demand we are able to switch between the fuel sources,” said Andy Blacker, a Facilities and Services spokesman. “When we make the switch, we’ll go for as long as we can.”

Last year’s switch started in April and ended in August. Blacker said lower demand, attributed to new campus conservation measures, and lower natural gas prices contributed to the move. It’s starting a month later this year because of scheduled maintenance on the plant’s natural gas steam generator.

“We’ve been working hard over the last five years to reduce campus energy consumption, but there’s a lot of physical work that has to be done to be able to switch between the different (fuel) assets,” said Kent Reifsteck, director of the F&S Utilities and Energy Services Division. “All of them have a different start-up schedule and one between the different (fuel) assets,” said Kent Reifsteck, director of the F&S Utilities and Energy Services Division. “All of them will have a different start-up schedule and one that is to maintain reliability on campus, so we have to plan ahead.”

Abbott Power Plant, which mostly produces steam, the UI’s main heating source, will be converted from coal to natural gas over the next six months. The UI’s main heating source, is switching to a cleaner natural gas fuel source for the second consecutive summer, starting May 25. Officials hope to eventually bypass coal as a fuel source altogether by 2017 as part of the university’s Climate Action Plan.

It was built as a coal-only plant, though high-tech “scrubbers” were added about 20 years ago to reduce sulfur dioxide emissions. And it was retrofitted in the early 1970s and again in the 1980s in response to changes in the fuel market and regulations.

Gas, coal and oil are now used intermittently as fuel-market prices dictate and there are plans to seek approval from the UI Board of Trustees to replace a gas boiler next year.

“Even back then it was related to market prices and compliance issues,” Reifsteck said of Abbott’s retrofitting history.

But plans also are progressing to add another source — biomass fuel made from plants — following the recent decision by the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency to grant a test-fire permit this year.

The idea involves using a biomass material, made from wood or miscanthus grass for example, which then would be added to the coal. The mixture could contain anywhere from 10 to 20 percent biomass fuel, though the tests will determine the proper mixture and whether the process presents any dangers during the combustion process.

“We’re not sure if it’s going to be a viable solution at Abbott,” Reifsteck said, “but we’re interested to see the results of the test-firing.”

Reifsteck said several university-led conservation efforts have significantly reduced overall campus consumption, and that several other soon-to-be- implemented eco-friendly projects will bring it closer to the 2017 “no-cull” goal outlined in the campus Climate Action Plan.

The campus’s first energy service company (ESCO) is nearing completion at the College of Veterinary Medicine facilities (where it is estimated to have cut energy consumption by 40 percent) and a second will be online.

Too much, too little noise turns off consumers, creativity

By Phil Ciciora
Business and Law Editor

The sound of silence isn’t so golden for consumers, and both marketers and advertisers should take note, says new research from a UI expert in new product development and marketing.

According to published research by Ravi Mehta, a professor of business administration, ambient background noise turns out to be an important factor affecting creative cognition among consumers.

“We found that ambient noise is an important antecedent for creative cognition,” Mehta said. “A moderate level of noise not only enhances creative problem-solving but also leads to a greater adoption of innovative products in a consumption environment.”

In the article, Mehta and co-authors Rui (Juliet) Zhu, of the University of British Columbia, and Amar Cheema, of the University of Virginia, explore how a moderate level of ambient noise (about 70 decibels, equivalent to a passenger car traveling on a highway) enhances performance on creative tasks and increases the likelihood of consumers purchasing innovative products.

Similarly, the researchers also studied how a high level of noise (85 decibels, equivalent to traffic noise on a major road) hurts creativity by reducing information processing.

“We found that there’s an inverted-U relationship between noise level and creativity,” Mehta said. “It turns out that around 70 decibels is the sweet spot. If you go beyond that, it’s too loud, and the noise starts to negatively affect creativity. It’s the Goldilocks principle—the middle is just right.”

Using background noise commonly found in consumers’ lives, the researchers show that, as noise increases, so does one’s level of distraction.

“An increase in level of distraction makes you think ‘out-of-the-box’ — what we call abstract thinking or abstract processing, which is a hallmark of increased creativity,” Mehta said. “But when you start to go beyond that moderate level of noise, what happens is that distraction becomes so huge that it really starts affecting the thought process. You really can’t process information because the distraction is so pronounced.

And that is what inhibits creativity.

“So a moderate level of noise produces just enough distraction to lead to higher creativity, but a very high level of noise induces too much distraction, which actually reduces the amount of processing, thus leading to lower creativity.”

The research, which has important practical implications for inducing consumer behavior, should be useful for both advertisers and marketers, who typically strive to increase adoption rates of new and innovative products.

“Middle ground Ambient background noise turns out to be an important factor affecting creative cognition among consumers, according to research by Ravi Mehta, a professor of business administration at Illinois. It ‘turns out that around 70 decibels is the sweet spot. If you go beyond that, it’s too loud, and the noise starts to negatively affect creativity.’ Mehta said.

“We studied this in a consumer environment because previous research has only considered white noise or pink noise—a variant of white noise, which sounds like the static buzz of an off-air TV station—which you don’t really find in consumer environments,” Mehta said. “So in this case we used everyday multitalker noise to find out how it affects consumer behavior in a consumption environment. In order to encourage adoption of new and innovative products, marketers might consider equipping their showrooms with a moderate level of ambient noise.”

Mehta says the research is not only applicable to noise, Page 2
By Mike Helenthal
Assistant Editor

Ilesanmi “Ade” Adesida, the dean of the University of Illinois College of Engineering, has been named vice chancellor for academic affairs and provost of the Urbana campus, pending approval of the UI Board of Trustees at its May 31 meeting in Chicago. He will assume his new role Aug. 16. Adesida has served in various roles since becoming an assistant professor at Illinois in 1987. Named dean in 2006, he also has been a di- rector of the Center for NanoScience and Technology at U of I since 2001. He will be assuming the post held by Richard Wheeler on an interim basis since January 2010. Dean Adesida’s global experience, ex- pertise in innovation, and leadership in public and private partnerships has given him a solid foundation on which to build as he helps guide our campus forward,” said Phyllis M. Wise, the chancellor of the Urbana campus and a university vice president. 

In a year that includes a Presidential and doctoral degrees at the University of California at Berkeley. He served as a visiting assistant professor of electrical engineering at Cornell University in 1983, and was head of the electri- cal engineering depart- ment at Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University, Nigeria, from 1985-87. Adesida has supervised many graduate students in his re- search projects. He also is a member of the National Academy of Engineering, the chair of the National Science Foundation’s engineering advisory committee, and a former chair of the American Society for Engineering Education’s engineering deans’ public policy committee. He has served on numerous committees for the Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers, and in 2009 received the Outstanding Alumnus Award from the department of electrical en- gineering and computer science at the Uni-

Blacker said the push for a “more sus- tainable” community comes not just from students wishing to meet iCAP goals, but students, who regularly have voted in favor of fees to support campus sustainability. “Our students are so involved and so passionate about this, they have a really strong voice,” he said. “A few years ago there wasn’t a lot of success that I could speak to,” Blacker said. “But now we are making great progress. We’re curbing consumption and the campus has become much more conscious about sustainability.”

Penn State administrator named vice chancellor for research

Blacker said having several fuel sources that are interactive with the iCAP goals, “is to maintain our fuel flexibility,” he said. “We want to make sure and look at all of the options and consider all aspects of the decision process.”

Future conservation efforts will be better coordinated, Reifsteck said, through a utility master plan currently being created.

“That study is in process — it’s the first opportunity to have a master plan for utilities production and distribution that is interactive with the iCAP goals,” Reifsteck said. “That plan will help us meet the energy needs of campus and help de- termine what mix of energy sources we’ll use in the future.”

Reifsteck said finding several fuel sources which are just not is only an environmental exercise.

“There are financial risks in being de- pendent upon a single fuel and the mar-

PETER E. SCHIFFER, the associate vice president for research and direc- tor of strategic initiatives at Penn State, will become the vice chancellor for research at the UI, pending approval of the UI Board of Trustees at its May 31 meeting in Chicago.

Chancellor Phyllis M. Wise, who also is a university vice president, said Schiffer will fill a key role on the university’s leader- ship team.

“He’s an accomplished scientist with the administrative experience that will allow him to lead our efforts to increase our broad research and discovery mission, and to en- hance funding from the federal government and foundations,” Wise said.

“I know his guidance will benefit fac- ulty members across campus, as well as the many students who work with faculty mem- bers on their scholarship.”

Schiffer earned his doctorate in physics from Stanford University in 1993 and his Bachelor of Science (with distinction) at Yale University in 1988. He has been a professor of physics at Penn State since July 2003. He was named the university’s associate vice president for research and director of strategic initiatives April 2007.

Schiffer has led numerous committees and task forces and has achieved many honors, including a Presidential Early Career Award for Scien- tists and Engineers (1997), and an Alfred P. Sloan Research Fellow- ship (1998). He was named a fellow of the American Physical Society (2004) and won the Faculty Scholar Medal in the Physi- cal Sciences at Penn State (2006). He also received the Ruth and Joel Spira Award for Teaching Excellence at Penn State (2008).

Schiffer’s wife, Sharon Hammes-Schiffer, will be a faculty member in the UI department of chemistry. She is the Elyce J. Bylaska Professor of Biotechnology at Penn State. She earned her doctorate in chemistry at Stanford University in 1993.

By Mike Helenthal
Assistant Editor

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The goal of the site is to increase pub- lic awareness of campus energy use, allow building managers to adopt more-efficient practices, and pro- vide campus energy researchers raw data with which to work.

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L
ike many young boys, Bryan McMullan wanted to follow in his father’s footsteps. “I grew up in a construction family,” McMullan said. “That’s what my father and uncle did. I used to wear a hard hat when I visited my father’s worksites.” But instead of constructing buildings, McMullan maintains them. A 28-year UI employee, he has worked for University Housing’s maintenance department for most of that time. As maintenance supervisor, he oversees a diverse crew of carpenters, painters, plumbers, refrigeration workers, metal and temperature control workers all working together to assist as needed.

“We work holidays, weekends ... it doesn’t matter,” he said. “You name it, we do it — everything but welding. We aren’t plumbers, so we don’t do routine work to do. We check mechani-
cal rooms and public areas daily, as well as anything else that needs maintenance.” Every day, McMullan and his team face a different challenge.

“Like today with the rain, we have some leaks in some areas and there because of weather issues,” McMullan said. “You’ve also got to deal with cooling and heating, especially when we go from winter to summer. Some residents want to have air-conditioning and others want heat. We try to keep our people as comfortable as possible.”

McMullan’s penchant for service can be seen in his upbringing. Born and raised in Gary, Ind., he had always been active in his community. When he was 13, McMullan coached little league baseball teams. By 15, he was the youngest team manager in the city. At 17, he started working as a gas station attendant but was shot in the chest and neck during a robbery attempt.

“My mom put her foot down and told me I would not be going back to that job,” he said. “As you can imagine, that was the end of my gas station career.” He joined the Air Force when he was 19 and was stationed at Reese Air Force Base, near Lubbock. “It was great; I had a good time,” McMullan said. “I recommend it to folks all the time. If you’re not going to college, go in to the military. If you’re going into the military, choose the Air Force.”

At the end of his military career McMullan was stationed at Chanute Air Force Base in Rantoul, and he started looking locally for civilian work. He was hired by Service Master three days before discharge and ended up work-

ing for Service Master and at the UI for the next 12 years. “Typically worked two full- time jobs,” McMullan said. “I went to the university 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. and then I went to Service Master from 5:15 p.m until mid-
night as the night supervisor.”

His first position at the UI was in the do-

or records department with the UI Foun-
dation. He moved to UI Housing after six years, working as a maintenance inspector. He said the inspector job gave him the experience to become supervisor, a position he’s held for the past five years.

As maintenance supervisor, he oversees a team of 70, including his department’s diversity through the univer-
sity’s learner-trainer program and would also like to see more women apply. In his spare time, the Urbana resident likes to bowl and has played in commu-
nity leagues for 30 years. He also has roller-skated for more than 40 years.

Although he enjoys his job, he hopes to retire in the next few years. “I’m exploring several options when I retire,” McMullan said. “Travel is in the plans.” He and his wife, a son, who is now 28, and a daughter, age 26.

Richard L. Kaplan
on state-retiree health insurance

Editor’s note: UI law professor Richard L. Kap-

lan, an expert on taxation and retirement issues, spoke with News Bureau business and law editor Phil Ciciora about the controversial bill headed to the Senate. Pat Quinn’s desk that requires retired state of Illinois employees to begin paying premiums for their health insurance on July 1.

The new law might be challenged in court, but altering health benefits for re-
tirees is something the private sector has been doing for the past 20 years with im-
punity. An article I published in 2009 titled “Retirees at Risk: The Precarious Promise of Post-Employment Health Benefits” ex-
amined the results of those court cases. But the bottom line is that courts are unlikely to provide any relief on this issue. The new lawmandates that providing health insurance to retired state workers?

Not at all. Ninety-two per cent of states have some form of retiree health insurance for state workers. Some plans are more generous than others. What is unique about Illinois, however, is that the major change takes effect in less than six weeks, on July 1, 2012, and there are no real details avail-

able yet.

The law confers a lot of power on the Central Management Services, which will ultimately decide how premiums are cal-
brated. Will they be based on years of ser-
vice or income? May the state combine the plan?

We really don’t know. Most states that have differential contributions base those differentials on years of service. Virtually no one of them differentiate retiree health benefits according to a person’s income, but CMS has largely unfettered discretion under this legislation to design whatever arrangement it deems appropriate.

For example, CMS has indicated that it will stratify premiums by seven tiers of income, but CMS has not indicated how compressed those tiers will be. In any case, the new law does not require income tiers or provide what measure of income should be used in determining premiums.

Furthermore, there are no guarantees that any current unaffordable health insurance through the state-run health insurance exchanges created by the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act beginning in 2014, assuming that the Supreme Court doesn’t rule it unconsti-
tutional. In fact, some people might even qualify for a federal subsidy to buy health insurance through those exchanges.

A Minute With ...™ Archives
Recent interviews with UI experts


- Larry Di Girolamo, expert in remote sensing using satellites: “What happens if the U.S. does not have enough weather satellites?” May 9, 2012.

A Minute With ...™ is provided by the UI News Bureau. To view archived interviews, go to illinois.edu/goto/a

mнимеstwith.
Campus offers new app, better map

By Mike Helenthal
Assistant Editor

W hile the central Illinois landscape remains largely the same from day to day, that isn’t the case for the campus map of the University of Illinois. A major overhaul of the campus map has been in progress for the past 18 months, with the new version due to be rolled out this spring. In addition to providing the same information as before, the new version will feature a number of new features and capabilities.

The new map will be available to the entire university community, allowing anyone to access the information from their phone, tablet, or computer. The map can be accessed via a Web-based interface or a mobile application, which is available for both iOS and Android devices. The application also includes a feature that allows users to access the map while on the go, even without an internet connection.

The new map includes several new features, including an improved search function, interactive maps, and a more user-friendly interface. One of the most significant changes is the addition of a new, simplified design that makes it easier to navigate and use. The new design also includes a new color scheme that makes it easier to distinguish between different types of information.

The new map is designed to be more accessible and inclusive, with features such as enlarged fonts and larger icons. It also includes accessibility features such as voice commands and a text-to-speech option.

The new map is also designed to be more efficient and faster. It includes new algorithms that allow for faster data processing and faster loading times. It also includes a new system for managing and updating the data, which makes it easier to keep the map up-to-date and accurate.

The new map is also designed to be more secure. It includes new security features such as encryption and data protection, which make it more difficult for hackers to access and steal data.

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Getting news from the Internet not as divisive as many assume

By Craig Chamberlain
Social Sciences Editor

The Internet is changing the way people get their news, but there’s little proof that it is fragmenting or polarizing the news audience the way many assume, says professor David Tewksbury, the head of the UI department of communication.

“Many things that we thought were going to be really horrible have not yet happened,” Tewksbury said.

Five years ago he was very worried. He feared the wide-open choice the Internet provided would encourage people to put on “intellectual blinders.” They would personalize their news habits and pay attention only to what they cared about, ignoring other news, especially about government and public affairs, he thought. They would be shaped by highly segmented and opinionated news sources.

But that was before he reviewed the research to co-write “News on the Internet: Information and Citizenship in the 21st Century,” with former Illinois doctoral student Jason Rittenberg. The book was published recently by Oxford University Press.

The research does suggest that maybe half of online news consumers are very selective in what they follow, with more than half of those focused on sports, Tewksbury said. But the other half are seeking out a broad cross-section of news, which is better than what he and other researchers believed and feared, and in keeping with how people read newspapers.

“We don’t have a lot of evidence that public affairs knowledge is going down because of audience fragmentation,” Tewksbury said. “Many people know quite a bit about what’s going on. They are attending to news in a relatively uniform fashion. It’s not as if everyone has suddenly become more ignorant than they used to be.”

Many previous books have looked at how online journalism gets done, and others at how audiences consume online news, Tewksbury said, but he and Rittenberg tried to bring the two together and look at the larger picture.

“We’re trying to cover a large territory with this book,” Tewksbury said. “We integrate huge areas of research, where we’re trying to talk about content and audiences and how they fit together.”

The book also plays out a tension between the co-authors’ perspectives, Tewksbury said. Rittenberg, in his late 20s, was focused more on the possibilities of the technology, including its benefits for democracy. Tewksbury, in his late 40s, was more concerned with how people interact with the technology. He was worried about factors that might be segmenting, fragmenting and polarizing the news audience and society.

One of his goals in the book, in fact, was trying to describe how those factors and trends might interact, Tewksbury said.

Most researchers “are taking just a bite out of what is really a big picture,” rather than “nailing down all the parts of that picture,” he said. They are jumping to conclusions, for instance, about how news preferences connect with or influence news consumers’ views (that is, people who watch Fox News will believe A, and those who watch CNN will believe B).

Tewksbury instead sees it as a process.

“If you attend to a particular kind of content in a consistent fashion, you’ll learn different facts than others in that consistent fashion, and you’ll form opinions that are based on that difference in the facts,” he said.

The problem in connecting the dots, however, is that it’s usually not that clean and straightforward, Tewksbury said.

“The biggest problem here is that people choose, and the Internet is an environment that less people choose, actively and all the time,” he said. That makes determining how people might be polarized by their news choices a tough assignment.

Someone can watch a partisan news source and have opinions that match with its news, he said, “but we really have a hard time pinning down which came first. That is exactly where future research needs to go.” ♦

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ONLINE VIDEO
http://go.illinois.edu/Tewksbury_bio

ON THE WEB
http://global.oup.com
Openness trait may help those with disabilities keep jobs

By Shuffling Forrest

People with mild or moderate disabilities who are creative, intellec- 
tually curious and attentive to their feelings—those who score higher on the personality trait openness—may be significantly more likely to maintain employment, suggests a new study co-written by David Strauser, a professor of kinesiol- ogy and community health at the UI.

Personality traits were found to be significant- ly relevant to maintaining employment for people with disabilities who had only a high school education or less, according to a report on the study, which appeared recently in the journal Rehabilitation Counseling Bulletin.

"We've known for a while that people with disabilities don't lose or fail to get jobs because they lack skills, it's more because of social issues in the workplace," Strauser said. "Personality is not something that's typically analyzed in the areas of disabil- ity, special education and rehabilitation re- search. And for the majority of people, who have mild to moderate disabilities rather than severe disabilities, personality may be a more robust variable that contributes to employment." According to the five-factor model of personality development, five enduring traits—openness, conscientiousness, extro- version, agreeableness and neuroticism—form the framework of everyone's personality. The study examined the relationships among the five personality traits, work behavior self-efficacy and employment tenure for 56 people with mild to moderate disabilities.

All participants in the study had a diag- nosed physical, psychiatric or learning dis- ability and were receiving state vocational rehabilitation. Participants ranged from 19 years of age to 69 years in age and more than half were female (57 percent).

More than 28 percent reported that their longest spell of employment lasted a year or more, but more than 21 percent reported tenure of six months, 14 percent reported three months' tenure and about 17 percent had worked less than three months.

The personality traits of conscientious- ness, agreeableness and neuroticism are fusions. "Humans have selected for these traits," he said. "Strawberries, for example, are octoploids; they have eight chromosome sets. Sugarcane has eight sets, and it's bigger than its wild cousins."

Moose and his colleagues were surprised to find a high degree of similarity between the Miscanthus and sugarcane genomes. "I would say that for about 90 percent of the Miscanthus markers, their chromosomal order corresponds to what is known for sugarcane," he said.

The new findings and the eventual publi- cation of the Miscanthus genome will help scientists understand the evolution of grasses and the genetic mechanisms that give them their desirable traits, Moose said.

The BMC Genomics team also included researchers from the University of Califor- nia, Berkeley, the Polish Academy of Sci- ences; the department of plant biology at Illinois; the Department of Energy Joint Ge- nome Institute; and the National Institute of Horticultural and Herbal Science, in South Korea. Moose is an affiliate of the Institute for Genomic Biology at Illinois.

The Energy Biosciences Institute sup- ported this research.

Maps of miscanthus genome offer insight into grass evolution

By Diana Yates

Life Sciences Editor

Miscanthus grasses are used in gardens, burned for heat and energy, and converted into liquid fuels. They also belong to a prominent grass family that includes corn, sorghum and sugarcane. Two new, independently produced chromosome maps of Miscanthus sinensis (an ornamental that grows to target specific regions of the M. sinen- sis genome. Then they crossed two M. si- nensis plants and grew 221 offspring in a laboratory. By comparing how the genetic markers from each parent were sorted in the offspring, the team reconstructed 19 "link- age groups" corresponding to the 19 chromo- some of Miscanthus. This rough map of the chromosomes is a first step toward a Miscanthus genome, Moose said.

The researchers also used the sugurm genome as a comparative reference. Their analysis indicated that M. sinensis arose as a result of a duplication of the sugurm genome, with a later fusion of some chrome- some parts. "Some plants will duplicate their ge- nomes and then there's some sorting that goes on," Moose said. "Sometimes while chromosomes are lost and sometimes there are fusions." Once there are two copies of each chromosome in a base set, each will proceed along its own evolutionary tra- jectory. "Often what will happen is even though there are two versions of the same chromosome), one of them will start to degenerate over time," Moose said. "Some positions and some genes will win out over the others."

Genome duplications may undermine the viability of a plant or give it an ad- vantage. One immediate ad- vantage of doubling, trippling or otherwise duplicating the genome is that it increases the size of the plant, or of certain plant parts, Moose said.

"Humans have selected for these traits," he said. "Strawberries, for example, are octoploids; they have eight chromosome sets. Sugarcane has eight sets, and it's bigger than its wild cousins."

First step: UI crop sciences professor and Energy Biosciences Institute program leader Stephen Moose and his colleagues mapped the Miscanthus sinensis genome, a first step toward a full genome sequence.

PAGE 6  May 17, 2012
University Primary School

UPS offers June summer camp

University Primary School will offer summer camp Monday through Friday from 8:45 a.m. to 1 p.m. June 4 through 29. A garden camp will be offered for 3- to 7-year-olds and a science/art camp will be offered for 8- to 12-year-olds. Campers need not attend UPS during the regular school year and may sign up for one to four weeks of camp. For younger campers, weeks one and two are full and space is limited in weeks three and four. Older campers have space available for all four weeks.

Camps are lead by certified teachers and have support teachers for students with and without disabilities. Camp will be held in the UPS classrooms and playground space on campus at 51 Gerty Drive, Champaign.

Registration information is online at www.ed.illinois.edu/ups/. Campers may consider attending UPS camp in the morning and Spanish Language Academy camp in the afternoon (www.languageacademy.illinois.edu/summer_camps.html). For more information about summer camps: http://eengage.illinois.edu/filter/SummerCamps.

Smart Energy Design Assistance Center

The culture of conserving energy

Anthropologist Susan Mazur-Stembros, the director of behavior and human dimensions at the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy, will deliver the keynote address at the Implementing Behavior Change for Energy Efficiency conference May 22 at the I Hotel and Conference Center in Champaign.

Mazur-Stembros is a practicing anthropologist, the kind who uses their training to tackle real-world problems in areas such as health care and international development, typically performing research for corporations such as Intel and Microsoft, or utility companies such as Southern California Edison, rather than the academy.

The conference, designed for anyone involved in implementing energy-efficiency programs at institutions of higher education, will help participants understand how to create an energy-efficiency culture for college campus leadership, faculty and staff members, and students. It is co-hosted by the Illinois Green Economy Network and the Smart Energy Design Assistance Center, which is managed by the School of Architecture at the UI.

Mazur-Stembros worked in Silicon Valley from 1986 to 1996 and left to pursue graduate studies. She received a Fulbright grant for her doctoral research in cultural anthropology and started her own firm, Indicia Consulting, providing ethnographic research to retail and hospitality businesses. She has written about pop culture, consumption, media and women’s issues.

After the keynote address, Doug Widener, the executive director of the UI Council on Higher Education, will help participants understand how to implement energy-efficiency programs at institutions of higher education, will help participants understand how to implement energy-efficiency programs at institutions of higher education.

The conference, funded in part by the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, also includes tours of the Gable Home, a 2009 Solar Decathlon competition winner created by UI students, and a presentation describing the development of the Illini Energy Dashboard.

The conference fee is $75. For more information: www.igescc.org/behavior.change.

Kranert Art Museum

Volunteer docents needed for tours

Kranert Art Museum is seeking volunteer docents to lead guided tours for the museum’s tours for all ages. New docents will begin leading tours in spring 2013 and are expected to give a minimum of five tours per year for two years. For more information, call 217.244.6069.

Sustainable Student Farm

Farm stand returns to Quad this week

The Sustainable Student Farm, a joint project of the Student Sustainability Committee, Dining Services and the department of crop sciences, will sell produce on the Quad each Thursday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. beginning May 17.

The farmstand will be on the plaza south of the Illini Union. For more information: http://thefarm.illinois.edu.

How does your garden grow?

This summer, Inside Illinois would like to showcase faculty and staff members who enjoy gardening and would like to see their backyard vegetation featured. Or nominate a particularly committed worthy gardener.

Whether it’s vegetables or flowers, a 2-acre plot or patio containers, master gardener or beginning gardener – it doesn’t matter. If you’re good at getting things to sprout from the ground, we want to hear your story.

Send your seedling ideas to inside@illinois.edu.

Applications should submit a brief letter of interest explaining their interest in art and any experience with teaching art and public speaking to Anne Susanit at asusanit@illinois.edu no later than June 15. Candidates will be interviewed.

Each semester, docents must attend eight training sessions, scheduled on Mondays from 9:30 to 11 a.m. New docents will begin leading tours in spring 2013 and are expected to give a minimum of five tours per year for two years. For more information, call 217.244.6069.

BUSINESS

The College of Business recently honored faculty and staff members. The awards:

Kevin Jackson, a professor of accounting, received the 2012 Business Council Excellence in Education Award.

John Hedeman, the assistant dean of honors and undergraduate affairs, received the Outstanding Academic Professional Award. Carol Young, an office administrator in the college’s Office for Administrative Services received the Outstanding Staff Award.

The College of Business Alumni Association awarded its Excellence-in-Teaching Award for Graduate Teaching to Timothy C. Johnson, a professor of finance and a Robert and Karen May Faculty Fellow. The association honored Elisabeth Othotten, a professor of finance, with its Excellence-in-Teaching Award for Undergraduate Teaching.

ACS

More than 200 people gathered last month at the I Hotel and Conference Center in Champaign for the 41st Paul A. Funk Recognition Award Banquet, hosted by the UI College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences.

The Funk award is the College of ACS’s highest honor. It is presented annually to faculty members and academic professionals for outstanding achievement and major contributions to the betterment of agriculture, natural resources and human systems, said ACS Dean Robert Hijas.

Faculty and staff members honored:

The three recipients of the Funk award – H. Rex Gaskins and Matthew B. Wheeler, professors of animal sciences, and William G. Helfferich, a professor of food science and human nutrition – headlined this year’s awards.

Patrick J. Weatherhead, a professor of natural resources and environmental sciences, and Hao Feng, a professor of food science and human nutrition, received the Senior and College Faculty Award for Excellence in Research, respectively.

The Senior Faculty Award for Excellence in Extension went to Karen M. Chaplin, a professor of agricultural and biological engineering.

The Teaching Associate Teaching Award was awarded to Amy E. Fischer, a teaching associate in animal sciences.

The College of Business recently honored faculty and staff members. The awards:

Elisabeth Henderson, an office support specialist for UI Extension, ACES Advancement, was awarded the Marcella M. Nance Staff Award. The Service Recognition Award went to Adam S. Davis, a professor of crop sciences.

For more information and videos: http://awards.aces.illinois.edu.
There still is no end date to the university’s Benefit Choice period, which began May 1 because not all health contracts for FY2013 have been finalized.

But now, at least, there are some choices.

Jim Davito, the executive director of University Payroll and Benefits, said May 15 that four managed-care options are available for employees.

And more plans could be added as state officials continue to negotiate with providers, he said.

“[It is] still highly recommended that employees delay making health plan changes until all health plan contracts are finalized,” Davito said in a massmail to campus employees.

Plans now available include Quality Care Health Plan (Cigna), BlueAdvantage HMO, HMO Illinois, Coventry OAP (formerly PersonalCare OAP) and HealthLink OAP.

“At this time, (these) health plans are available for FY2013 and will be available in the same counties as they are in the current plan year,” he said.

Davito said that when more information becomes available, a complete list of health plans will be provided to employees, and that “employees will be given sufficient time to make their health plan decision and election.”

UI employees must use the online NESSIE Benefit Choice enrollment form.

ON THE WEB
Benefits news and updates:
https://nessie.uihr.uillinois.edu