Fair play in sport not easy to define in a high-tech age

By Craig Chamberlain
Social Sciences Editor

The technological edge can come in many forms in a sport – a revolutionary suit, in a cyclist’s specialized bike, in any athlete’s drug of choice – whether legal, untraceable or not yet banned.

“Why are we quick to judge only some of these as cheating? And why are sport governing bodies so slow to address the inequalities, and then often after the fact?”

One reason is that we’re stuck on a notion of “fair play” that is not what sport is about, says Rayvon Fouché, a UI historian of the astronomy department. “In sport, there’s little or no advantage you can. It’s not about fairness; it’s about inequalities,” he said. “Athletes themselves are motivated to exploit this inequality to a logical conclusion.”

And all the more so at the elite or Olympic level, Fouché said, where the difference between winning and losing, gold or silver or nothing at all, might depend on hundredths of a second, or the slightest edge.

“We as fans want desperately to have this fine line between the person who cheated and the person who did not cheat,” Fouché said, but that line is “very gray and murky,” especially regarding the use of drugs and other substances.

What’s more, the line is continually changing, he said. “You’re seen as cheating because you’re breaking the sets of rules and regulations that have been defined at one moment in time.”

Athletes, for instance, are prohibited from using certain types of banned substances, Fouché said, yet some sports allow for liberal use of over-the-counter painkillers and stimulants such as caffeine. A new type of equipment might be allowed one year, then banned the next.

“From my perspective, when you get to that elite level of sport, you know everyone’s doing something. It may be legal or illegal, but people are trying to find every advantage,” he said. That’s one reason we need to be more understanding with athletes pursuing a championship – that “it’s the motor, not the machine,” he said.

The new swimsuits used by some swimmers in the 2008 Olympics are but an example. Fouché said. The record books were rewritten by swimmers wearing the suits, and then the suits were banned two years later. “It’s doubtful that anyone will break those records ever again,” he said. 

In a different example from years earlier, a governing body for cycling rewrote the rules for equipment after years of technical improvements, then threw out the previous records set on bikes that did not meet the

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Less theft

New research has revealed that higher wages are associated with lower levels of employee theft.

Pest persistence

New research has revealed how the western corn rootworm – which dies on soybeans – can persist in fields with crop rotation.
Easter reviews retirement statistics, pensions and the budget

By Christy Levy

The UI has already seen a 50 percent increase in retirements so far this calendar year compared to last, President Bob Easter told told university trustees July 19.

Since January, more than 1,100 university employees retired this month, Easter said at the UI Board of Trustees meeting at UIC. By comparison, 726 employees retired during the entire calendar year of 2011, he added.

Retirements also increased significantly this month, Easter said. Ninety-one employees retired in July 2009; almost 550 faculty and staff retired in July 2012.

“Today was an important day for the university,” said Tienken after beginning their terms July 1. Tienken will have the student vote this year.

"Student perspective is critical as the board makes decisions that will affect their academic future and the generations of students that will follow them," Easter said. “I’m deeply grateful for their insights and their willingness to serve.”

Leakey and his colleagues at Illinois will lead field experiments on a variety of bioenergy crops, including corn, a grass that is closely related to Setaria. "Given the importance of C4 crops for fuel and food and the likelihood that droughts like those seen this year will occur more frequently, that’s an exciting prospect," Leakey said. "And anything scientists can do to enhance a plant’s ability to grow under stress is going to improve drought tolerance in bioenergy grasses.”

Researchers seek to improve drought resistance of biofuels grasses

By Diana Yates

The U.S. Department of Energy has awarded a five-year, $12.1 million grant to a multi-institutional effort to develop drought-resistant grasses for use in biofuels. The Donald Danforth Plant Science Center in St. Louis will lead the initiative with researchers from the Carnegie Institution for Science, the UI, the University of Minnesota and Washington State University.

Leakey and his colleagues at Illinois will lead field experiments on a variety of Setaria as plants to determine the genetic basis of drought tolerance in these and other closely related plants.

“DOE grant. U1 plant biology professor Andrew Leakey gets $12.1 million to improve drought tolerance in bioenergy grasses.”

Inside Illinois is an employee publication of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign campus, the University of Illinois at Chicago, and the University of Illinois at Springfield. It is published on the first and third Thursdays of each month by the News Bureau of the campus Office of Public Affairs, administered by the associate chancellor for public affairs. Distribution is by campus mail. News is solicited from all areas of the campus and should be sent to the editor at least 10 days before publication. All items may be sent to iunews@illinois.edu. The campus mail address is Inside Illinois, 507 E. Green St., Room 345, Champaign, Ill. 61820. The fax number is 217-333-0361.
Still, Gammie said, the observatory has a lot to offer campus. He said he has welcomed the involvement of Leake and the Friends group.

“We’re really excited that they’re doing this,” he said. “The observatory is already important for us for teaching, but it’s not as attractive and inviting of a place for us as it could be.”

He said he is inspired by some of the designs and plans offered by the architecture and design students (which included the addition of a 200-seat lecture hall that would replace the east wing), but that securing structural integrity has to be the first order of business.

“Expanding the use and adding classroom space in the middle of campus would be great from our point of view,” Gammie said. “But we’re also aware that the Friends group was able to raise enough for basic repairs. I can’t express enough enthusiasm for what they’ve done and for amateur astronomy club meetings.

While modern astronomical research is done in “high and dry” regions of the world, UI astronomy professor Leslie Looney said students gain much from using the old technology in lab work and can learn more about the history of astronomy by being at one of the original locations where it took place.

“It’s a great thing to watch them look through the telescope and say, ‘Wow, is that real?” he said. “Back in the time it was made, it was really a piece of art.”

Looney said he and others have tried their best to maximize the observatory’s historical value, initiating new night labs and starting with upper-level undergraduates to assist and answer questions.

“We are doing what we can with the space it’s limited,” he said. “For one thing, you can’t have labs during the day. I would love to find a way to make it even more educational. But that, of course, takes money.”

Outside of the value to astronomy students, Gammie said the observatory’s historical value is something the general campus should cherish as well.

“Self-determination learning helps some students reach goals

By Sharrla Forrest

Students with cognitive and learning disabilities who engaged in self-directed learning programs were more likely to access mainstream instruction and achieve their academic and other goals, suggests research by Karrie A. Shogren, a special education expert at the UI.

Shogren, a professor in the College of Education, examined the impact of the Self-Determined Learning Model of Instruction (SDLMI) on students’ achievement and access to mainstream education and instruction. The program, which focuses on setting goals and solving problems, aims to impart self-determination skills that will help students with disabilities be more successful when they transition to the workplace or college.

Studies have suggested that young adults with disabilities have greater self-determination – who are able to effectively make decisions, solve problems and advocate for their needs – are more likely to be employed, to attain postsecondary education, earn higher wages and have better quality of life.

“Self-determination is really that set of skills and attitudes that allow students to self-direct their lives – to be autonomous, to self-regulate their behavior and then feel empowered,” Shogren said. “We know from other research that self-determination is a very strong predictor of positive outcomes for adults with disabilities, so we want to provide instruction that impacts those characteristics. Students with disabilities don’t always have the best outcomes, especially when compared to students without disabilities, so we really need to teach some of these skills.”

More than 300 students with intellectual and learning disabilities who were receiving special education services participated in the study. The students, who ranged in age from 13-21, were recruited from 20 school districts in Kansas, Missouri and Texas.

The students were randomly assigned by campus to the control group or to the treatment group, which received instruction using SDLMI during the first year. Both groups of students engaged in SDLMI during the second year.

At the beginning of the first year of the study, all of the students had low levels of engagement in tasks that could be linked to general education standards, particularly the students with cognitive disabilities. After participating in the SDLMI instruction, students’ general education access scores increased significantly – by 1.5 points for students with learning disabilities and by more than 2 points for students with intellectual disabilities.

Students with intellectual disabilities who received SDLMI instruction were much more likely to achieve their transition-related goals, but not their academic goals. The opposite effect was found for students with learning disabilities.

“Our hypothesis is that teachers may be emphasizing different goal areas for different students,” Shogren said. “Academic goals may be emphasized more for students with learning disabilities than for students with cognitive disabilities, for example. We can’t say that conclusively because we didn’t directly study that, but we know that SDLMI impacts goal attainment.”

Although several teaching strategies that promote skills related to self-determination have been developed in recent years, teachers seldom use these instructional methods in the classroom because there’s been little evidence that they have the intended outcomes.

“In special education, historically, a lot of our instructional practices – even those aimed at fostering self-determination – have been very teacher-directed,” Shogren said. “Teachers are in charge of the learning, setting the goals and what students are working on. We’re really interested in making it more student-directed and having students be involved in the process of setting goals related to their learning, but not necessarily changing the content of what they learn. Students are often going to be more learning the same things.”

Susan Palmer and Michael Wehmeyer, faculty members at the Beach Center on Families and Disability at the University of Oklahoma, and Todd D. Little, of the University of Kansas, reported on the research were published recently in the journal Remedial and Special Education and the journal Exceptional Children.

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Star power

Friends of the UI Observatory, a group formed to renovate the aging campus landmark, is hoping to solicit donations from alumni by reminding the community of its historical value and the importance of maintaining it.

Leake said the telescope is in nearly impecable condition, and deferred maintenance caused by an era of budgetary austerity have made it difficult to properly maintain.

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Team discovers how rootworms resist crop rotation

By Diana Yates
Life Sciences Editor

A new study answers a question that has baffled researchers for more than 15 years: How does the western corn rootworm – an insect that thrives on corn but dies on soybeans – persist in fields that alternate between corn and soybeans? Until now, researchers say, has to do with enzyme production in the rootworm gut.

Their work was described in a paper in Ecology and Evolution.

Crop rotation declined in the middle of the 20th century as the use of insecticides and fertilizers expanded in the U.S. Then, in the 1950s and 60s, when some insecticides began to fail, growers again turned to crop rotation to kill off rootworms that fed on corn. The method was effective for decades, but by 1995 some growers started seeing rootworm damage even in rotated fields. Today rotation-resistant rootworms are widespread in the Midwest cornbelt, where corn and soybeans dominate the landscape.

Crop rotation in East Central Illinois imposed intense selection pressure on rootworms, leading to the emergence of resistant insects, said UI crop sciences professor Manfredo Seufferheld, who led the new study.

“In Champaign County, where you see a lot of rotation-resistant rootworms, 84 percent of the total land area is corn or soybeans,” he said. “But with crop rotation, we’re making special conditions that allow those crazy insects to survive.”

Previously, studies focused on how the rootworms, which are harmful to soybean fields, survive in the rotation and his colleagues focused instead on the rootworm gut.

Their focus was prompted by observations made by Jorge Zavala, a former postdoctoral student at Illinois and a co-author on the study. Zavala, now a visiting scholar at the University of Buenos Aires, knew from previous research that levels of protein-degrading enzymes in the insect gut, called proteinases, rise and fall in response to chemical defenses in soybean leaves. He saw that rotation-resistant rootworms survived longer on soybeans and inflicted more damage on soybean leaves than their non-resistant peers. He also detected differences in levels of proteinases in rotation-resistant and non-resistant (wild-type) rootworms.

The new study tested these results in a broad sample of western corn rootworms from Illinois, Iowa, Nebraska and Missouri.

“We indeed found that the rotation-resistant rootworms could eat more foliage than the wild type,” Seufferheld said. “They are also able to survive a little longer on the soybean than the wild-type rootworms.”

When insects feed on them, soybeans ramp up production of proteinase inhibitors to combat the insects’ ability to digest proteins in their leaves. The researchers hypothesized that the rotation-resistant rootworms had evolved the ability to compete a little longer in this chemical warfare with the soybeans.

Tests confirmed that rotation-resistant rootworms had higher levels of a special class of proteins than wild-type rootworms to begin with, and that they increased production of one of these proteinases, Cathepsin-L, in response to soybean defenses. The wild-type rootworms increased levels of another proteinase, Cathepsin-B, when feeding on soybeans, the researchers found. But this enzyme appears to be ineffective against the plant’s defenses.

This difference allows the rotation-resistant beetles to survive on soybeans for two or three days – just long enough, the researchers said, for some of them to lay their eggs in bean fields. In spring, when the same fields are planted in corn, the rootworm larvae emerge to feed on corn roots. Illinois insect behaviorist and co-author Joseph Spencer of the Illinois Natural History Survey, part of the UI Prairie Research Institute, said that before this study, researchers studying rotation resistance were looking at the insects and insect behavior in isolation, thus missing their interaction with plants as a potential clue to the problem.

“You have to include the soybean in the equation,” Spencer said. “It is not a passive player. The beetles have changed its behavior but what facilitates this change in behavior is the change in expression of these digestive proteases. That allows them to stay in the soybeans longer. We had ignored this aspect of the biology.”

The study team also included Matias Curzi, of the UI, who earned his master’s degree in Seufferheld’s laboratory and is now working at Pioneer Argentina. Funding for this work was provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s National Institute of Food and Agriculture.

Promotions, tenure announced

In July, the UI Board of Trustees approved faculty promotions in academic rank and changes in tenure status. The changes will be effective at the beginning of the 2012-13 appointment year.

Promotions granted for the Urbana-Champaign campus:

- Forty-seven promotions to professor without change in tenure; 27 to associate professor without change in tenure; and 65 to associate professor on indefinite tenure. In addition, one faculty member received tenure without change in rank.

- For a full listing (in PDF format), visit the list compiled for the July UI Board of Trustees meeting.

Kathleen Anstine, 67, died July 28 at Champaign-Urbana Regional Rehab Center, Savoy. She was a nurse at McKinley Health Center for 15 years, retiring in 1998. Memorials: Twin City Bible Church, 806 W. Michigan Ave., Urbana, IL 61801.

Don Eugene Estes, 59, died July 21 in Champaign. He had been a building service worker for Facilities and Services for 14 years.


Thomas H. Schleis, 62, died July 19 in Urbana. He had been a lecturer for 34 years, teaching music history and performance in the School of Music. A memorial Mass will be planned in Champaign in the fall. Memorials: Soul Miners, c/o Heidi Baker, 1914 Clover Lane, Champaign, IL 61821.

Claude A. “Wink” Winkelhake, 92, died July 21 at Sebring Assisted Care of Coventry Village, Madison, Wis. He was a professor of architecture and of urban and community planning at the UI for 30 years, retiring in 1990.
Researchers could have a new method to rebuild wetlands of the Louisiana delta, thanks to a chance finding while monitoring severe flooding of the Mississippi River. A team of civil engineers and geologists from the UI, in collaboration with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, published their findings in the journal Nature Geoscience.

In the spring and summer of 2011, high floodwaters on the Mississippi prompted the corps to open the Bonnet Carre spillway. The spillway had been built to divert water from urban New Orleans after flooding in 1927. The Illinois team saw in the spillway opening a chance to study how much sand flowed from the river into the spillway wetlands. “Whenever we have such natural disasters, it stresses the human system quite a bit,” said Praveen Kumar, a UI professor of civil and environmental engineering. “But it also offers an opportune time to look at some scientific questions that we might otherwise not be able to explore.” Armed with funds from the National Science Foundation, the researchers went to the spillway site to monitor the sand diverted from the river to the delta wetlands. They discovered a surprising dichotomy: a mere 10 to 15 percent of water from the top of the river sloshed into the spillway, but an estimated 36 to 41 percent of the river’s sand load deposited into the Bonnet Carre. “That was a completely unexpected finding in this particular study,” said postdoctoral researcher Jeffrey Nittrouer. “I think one of the real strong outcomes that came from this particular study is that we happened to be lucky about where the site was placed. Back when the structure was built, the Army Corps of Engineers just wanted to get water out of the river. But it turns out that where they decided to place the spillway was a fantastic location for getting sand out as well.” The findings were exciting to the team, because diverting river sediment has been a goal of research work to build up wetlands. Coastal wetlands act as a natural buffer against storm surges, protecting residential areas from the turbulent weather along the gulf. Under natural conditions, flooding periodically would inundate the wetlands, allowing sediment overflow to deposit incrementally over time to replace ground lost to erosion. However, since the urbanization of New Orleans, the extensively engineered levee system has cut off the river from the wetlands. “We’re essentially putting a straitjacket on the river itself, disconnecting the river from the surrounding environment and preventing these natural exchange processes,” Nittrouer said. “Because we build communities along these rivers, we build levee systems that corral all that water and sediment and take it straight to the Gulf of Mexico.” What caused such a large percentage of sand to divert to the spillway in such a small amount of water? The researchers believe that the local conditions at that point in the river hold the answer. The spillway is on the inside of a bend and adjacent to a sandbar. “That acts as a means of allowing for sustained high-concentration sandy water to be positioned very near the spillway itself, so that sediment-enriched water is now spilling into the floodway and that sediment is depositing out,” Nittrouer said.

Now, the researchers will further explore how local river conditions could favor the movement of sediment from the river into the neighboring wetland spillway. They plan to use modeling and lab studies to find optimal conditions that could shunt sediment out of the river, with the eventual goal of designing other spillways that could be opened strategically to rebuild lost wetlands without flooding residential areas.

Geology professor James Best, geology and civil and environmental engineering professor Gary Parker, graduate students Ronald Cash and Matthew Czapiga, and corps engineer Christopher Brantley were co-authors of the study.
Collection of essays addresses researchers’ challenges when changing field sites

By Madeline Ley
News Bureau Intern

T he daunting challenge of leaving an anthropological field site and mov- ing to another halfway across the globe may be a situation most famil- iar to anthropologists, but the intellectual and emotional challenges of uprooting one’s life for one’s field of study are something that many scholars can relate to, says Alma Gottlieb, a UI professor of anthropology.

Gottlieb and colleagues explore these ideas in “The Restless Anthropologist: New Futures, New Visions” (University of Chicago Press), a newly published collect- ion of essays, written by her and other top scholars in the anthropological field.

Gottlieb said she inspired to put this book together after leaving a field site in Ivory Coast to conduct fieldwork in Cape Verde. She “felt a lot of misgivings about leaving the site and the people who had become like family to her, even though there were practical, political and theoretical reasons why (she) could not return.”

Gottlieb gathered essays to present “the complex relationship between risk and reward.”

“The best successes are based on risk, and risk sometimes means failure,” Gottlieb said. “Failure doesn’t have to be the end point — it can be the beginning, or the challenge, to forge a new strategy.”

Additionally, the book ad- dresses the challenges scholar- s face when they wish to explore a new field. In an academic field, scholars can re- search a project that involves risks and are unable to unearth fresh insights. The book “discusses the challenges of switching research topics and keeping fresh as a scholar; any active scholar can find itB in any discipline.”

“Among the dilemmas and reasons (she) could not return.” Eager for advice on how to adapt to the situation, Gottlieb searched for articles about switch- ing research topics, but soon became frustrated to discover that very little had been written about the subject. She then began writing a talk for an upcoming anthropological confer- ence about the topic.

“Our book illuminates a common life lesson nearly everyone experiences at some point: the complex re- lationship between risk and reward.”

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“The Restless Anthropologist” includes essays by two other UI professors. Edward M. Bruner, a professor emeritus of anthropol- ogy, and Virginia R. Dominguez, the Edward William and Jane Marr Guttschl Professor of Anthropology, share stories of their own experiences in overcoming challenges in changing field sites. In part, Gottlieb’s col- laboration on the book inspired her to write the book.

“I looked at the careers of my colleagues, of these scholars who have been in- tellectually adventurous and who have taken risks in de- veloping novel medical and industrial applications.

Gottlieb hopes the book will, in turn, inspire anthropolo- gists and other researchers to take the risks she and other colleagues have taken.

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Gottlieb hopes the book will, in turn, inspire anthropolo- gists and other researchers to take the risks she and other colleagues have taken.

“The Restless Anthropologist” includes essays by two other UI professors. Edward M. Bruner, a professor emeritus of anthropol- ogy, and Virginia R. Dominguez, the Edward William and Jane Marr Guttschl Professor of Anthropology, share stories of their own experiences in overcoming challenges in changing field sites. In part, Gottlieb’s col- laboration on the book inspired her to write the book.

“I looked at the careers of my colleagues, of these scholars who have been in- tellectually adventurous and who have taken risks in de- velop...
**International competition**

**E-waste contest entries sought**

Registration for the International E-Waste Design Competition is free for current students and recent graduates and opens Sept. 1. The contest judges the best student-created products that use e-waste, such as used computers, printers, cellphones and similar materials that normally would end up in landfills.

Last year’s competition had entries from seven different countries, with cash prizes totaling $20,000. Cash prizes for this year’s event have not been announced. Students from any discipline may enter in one of two categories, for e-waste prevention or e-waste reuse.

The Sustainable Electronics Initiative and the Illinois Sustainable Technology Center coordinate the competition, which is in its third year as an international event.

Registration closes Nov. 1 and winners will be announced in early December at the finale of ISTC’s Sustainability Seminar series for fall 2012. That series will be focused on sustainable electronics. The awards presentation will be broadcast as a webinar.

For more information on entering the competition, incorporating it into courses, or being a sponsor, contact Joy Scrogum, SEI education coordinator, jscrogum@illinois.edu or at 217-333-8948. For videos from last year’s competition, see www.ewaste.illinois.edu/.

**2013 faculty field competition**

**Apply for SSRC development program**

The Social Science Research Council’s Dissertation Proposal Development Fellowship Program provides an opportunity for tenured faculty members in the humanities and social sciences to train the next generation of scholars within emerging areas of research.

Within the program’s structure, pairs of faculty members propose innovative research fields that will serve as themes for dissertation development training workshops. Recipients then lead training workshops for selected doctoral students in the spring and fall of the fellowship year.

Successful applicants of the DPDF Faculty Field Competition are awarded a $10,000 stipend. Each field also is provided with up to $3,000 to cover the costs of guest speakers and other activities to enhance workshop sessions.

Tickets for the game will go on sale Aug. 21 at 9 a.m. and may be purchased at the UI ticket office, online at www.fightingillini.com or by phone at 1-866-illini-1. Group tickets may be purchased by calling 217-333-5404.

The game is one of two being played on a neutral court outside of Chicago’s United Center. The other game is the final preseason game on Oct. 26 as they host the Indiana Pacers at Notre Dame’s Purcell Pavilion at the Joyce Center in South Bend. ♦
Higher retail wages correlate with less employee theft

By Phil Ciclora
Business and Law Editor

A study co-written by a UI business professor shows that higher wages are associated with lower levels of employee theft, shedding light on the impact that compensation practices may have on shaping employee honesty and ethical norms in organizations.

Using data sets from the convenience-store industry, Clara Xiaoling Chen, a professor of accountancy, and co-author Tatiana Sandino, of the University of Southern California, found that after controlling for each store’s employee characteristics, monitoring environment and socio-economic environment, relative wages—that is, wages relative to those received by other employees performing similar jobs in the same sector and region—were negatively associated with employee theft.

While previous studies have focused on the effect of higher wages on employee effort or turnover, Chen and Sandino documented the effect of higher wages on employee theft as measured by cash shortage and inventory shrinkage.

“There’s actually very little research on the effect of wages on employee theft,” Chen said. “A seminal study conducted in the field has examined what happens after a firm cuts workers’ pay. What’s different in our paper is that there’s no such shock as a pay cut, whose effect is typically short-lived and does not persist. The fact that we can document the relation in our study using cross-sectional data suggests that the effect of wages on employee theft can persist over time.”

The researchers argue that paying relatively higher wages may attract a higher proportion of honest workers.

There also is a “wage tipping point” for employers to consider, when the cost of paying more toward employee wages is greater than the cost of employee theft.

“An interesting result of our study is that the benefit of reducing the amount of employee theft accounted for by cash shortage and inventory shrinkage does not, by itself, outweigh the cost of paying a wage premium,” Chen said. “It accounts for about 39 percent of the cost of a wage increase. If you add other benefits like reduced turnover, reduced training costs and greater efforts, the benefits of paying a wage premium may outweigh the costs. So an employer may find it beneficial to raise employee wages if other benefits from wage increases translate into at least 61 percent of the cost of the wage increases.”

The researchers also found that relatively higher wages promote social norms so that co-workers were less likely to collude to steal inventory.

“We show that the effect of relative wages on employee theft is more pronounced if other benefits from wage increases translate into at least 61 percent of the cost of the wage increases.”

Although compensation practices can shape the social context of a work group, Chen cautions that the study does have some limitations.

“The measures we used to capture employee theft are not perfect because, for instance, inventory shrinkage could also be a result of customer shoplifting,” she said. “But it’s the best we could get, because it’s very difficult to get an exact measure of employee theft. That’s why there needs to be more research done in this area.”

The results of the study have important practical implications for managers, as employee theft accounts for $200 billion in losses for U.S. businesses annually.

“Our research provides systematic empirical evidence that wage premiums do play a role in reducing employee theft and fostering more ethical norms within an organization,” Chen said. “The takeaways from our study are likely to apply to other types of retailers, such as restaurants, department stores and drug stores, and to service or consumer products firms with similar monitoring environments, where the payoffs from stealing are not disproportionately high relative to potential wage premiums.”

If an employer can’t afford to pay higher wages, Chen says there are other ways to induce positive reciprocity among employees.

“You can show that you care about the workers, and you can find other ways outside of compensation to recognize their efforts,” she said. “Paying employees higher wages is not the only way to cultivate positive reciprocity, but it certainly is a good way to foster employee loyalty and honesty.”

The research will be published in a forthcoming issue of the Journal of Accounting Research.

Curbing employee theft Clara Xiaoling Chen, a professor of accountancy at Illinois, is the co-author of a study that found that wage premiums can play a role in reducing employee theft and fostering ethical norms within an organization.