The pig and its cousin the wild boar have much in common with humans. They are world travelers. They’re adaptable, invasive and often damage their own habitat. They are world travelers. They’re adaptable, invasive and often damage their own habitat. They are world travelers. They’re adaptable, invasive and often damage their own habitat.

In lunchtime remarks, Ilesanmi Adesida, the provost and vice chancellor for academic affairs, challenged faculty members to improve current teaching methods by making a faculty-style course as a MOOC. He said conversations should be framed by the notion that offering education to the masses is part of the UI’s land-grant mission.

“Phyllis M. Wise said all debate should be astounding,” said Daphne Koller, Coursera’s co-CEO and co-founder, who gave the summit’s keynote address. (See story on page 6.)

Since it began a year ago, Coursera has attracted 6 million users, adding students at a rate of 70,000 per week from far-flung locales around the world. The UI’s courses have drawn 160,000 users to date.

Koller said MOOCs represent a strong step toward delivering education for everyone. “Changes are taking place day by day if not minute by minute,” said Phyllis M. Wise, president of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. “(The numbers) really speak to the importance of the topic. I find it terribly exciting.”

But a new foray into online education also is fraught with uncertainty, something the chancellor said can be overcome only through informed debate and diligent planning. To that end, the chancellor has created a faculty-led course-review committee and an implementation committee that will make policy recommendations to the Urbana Academic Senate.

Wise said all debate should be framed by the notion that offering education to the masses is part of the UI’s land-grant mission.

“IT’S so much a part of what we’re all about,” she said of the potential of MOOCs to meet that calling.

In addition to Koller’s presentation, the summit featured two panel discussions and ample opportunity for faculty members to ask questions and debate the pros and cons of expanding the university’s MOOC presence.

In luncheon remarks, Ilesanmi Adesida, the provost and vice chancellor for academic affairs, challenged faculty members to investigate and discover ground-breaking ways to utilize MOOCs and other technology-based tools.

“As we adapt, we must incorporate new teaching models and new teaching modes,” he said. “We must innovate in the classroom and we must reach out beyond the borders of our campus.”

“I think we should be about the process of innovation. That is the DNA of Illinois.”

Adesida said one of the unsolved problems is in finding a business model that would provide some form of monetary return to cover the amount of resources needed to develop MOOCs. It’s estimated to cost between $50,000 and $100,000 to repackagle a lecture-style course as a MOOC.

He said conversations should also include ways to share the courses with high schools in Illinois and that results should also improve current teaching methods generally across campus.
UI trustees OK solar farm, hospital upgrades

By Mike Holenthal
Assistant Editor

The UI Board of Trustees met in Springfield on Nov. 8 and approved a 20.5-acre solar farm that its planners project will produce more than 2 percent of the electricity used on the Urbana campus by 2015.

The farm, which will be located near the intersection of First Street and Windsor Road in Champaign, will add the university to the growing number of institutions that have adopted solar power in the 2010 Illinois Climate Action Plan.

The plan’s goal was that 5 percent of campus electricity will come from renewable sources by 2015.

“The solar farm is another important step for the university’s commitment to sustainability,” said Jack Dempsey, the executive director of Facilities and Services, after the meeting. “Exploring renewable energy sources such as solar energy is critical in the pursuit of carbon neutrality for our campus.”

The university will enter into a public-private partnership for a 10-year power-purchasing agreement with a company that will design, build, operate and maintain the solar farm.

“The partner will be responsible for delivery and installation of photovoltaic panels/collectors, site access and connection to the university’s electrical grid in return for a land lease agreement of 31 years,” Dempsey said.

Substantial completion of the solar farm is anticipated in fall 2013. The UI will work with a solar farm developer to find the best location for the farm.

The proposal was approved after trustees heard an update from Senate Executive Committee Chairman Matthew Wheeler, a professor of animal sciences, on changes being made to reduce regulatory burdens on campus researchers.

The proposals would request chancellors to include more student-tracking information in their quarterly dashboard indicators reports.

“Deaths

Lois M. Brownfield, 86, died Nov. 10 at the Champaign Urbana Regional Rehab Center, Savoy. Brownfield worked at the UI for 31 years, retiring in 1994 as a secretary for the UI Human Resources, on the implementation of state laws making all university employees subject to state laws making all university employees mandatory reporters of sexual abuse, “an overwhelming” university policy was necessary.

“I believe that these policies will provide

“Exploring renewable energy sources such as solar energy is critical in the pursuit of carbon neutrality for our campus.”

– Jack Dempsey

ON THE WEB

http://go.illinois.edu/UHR_minors

for a comprehensive program that protects minors on our campuses as well as increases the safety of our students, employees and visitors,” she said.

Policies reviewed include those covering the protection of minors and the prevention of sexual discrimination, harassment and misconduct, and mandatory training programs preferred to employees beginning this spring.

Parks said the policy expands background checks for camps and other events that involve children and includes protections for whistleblowers.

“We will be available to consult with campus units and other offices when the time is right,” she said.

For more information, go to http://go.illinois.edu/UHR_minors.

Trustees heard an update from Senate Executive Committee Chairman Matthew Wheeler, a professor of animal sciences, on changes being made to reduce regulatory burdens on campus researchers.

Wheeler has reported on some of those regulatory problems in the past. “I don’t think there’s any one thing I could do at any time I can put in on the research,” he told trustees. “Our systems have put a lid on our ability to react, but they’re beginning to be addressed.”

He said regulatory issues continue to affect research time, recent administrative moves have led to some improvement.

“Things are changing,” he said. “We will be working on a universitywide on-line training system that offers researchers training and tools for navigating the grant-funding process.”

Wheeler said the work on streamlining campus paperwork is a “long-term process. It still continues to be a concern for faculty.”

Correction

A page 9 of the Oct. 18, 2012, issue of Inside Illinois, part of the caption for University Hall is incorrect. The section that reads, “Construction of University Hall was already under way when the Morrill Act was signed in 1862,” actually refers to Old Main. University Hall, which was originally being built as the Champaign and Urbana Institute Building, ended up being the first building at the Illinois Industrial University, constructed on a site near where the Beckman Institute stands today. Often referred to as “the Elephant,” it was torn down in 1880 after being seriously damaged by storms the previous year.

University Hall, which was constructed in 1871 as the New University Building, was built near where the Illini Union stands today and was the highest building to be constructed after the university was established in 1867. It was torn down in 1938 after it was condemned.

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On the Urbana campus have helped, he said, as have the recent addition of two administration research positions. There also is work being done on a universitywide on-line training system that offers researchers training and tools for navigating the grant-funding process.

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University Hall, which was constructed in 1871 as the New University Building, was built near where the Illini Union stands today and was the highest building to be constructed after the university was established in 1867. It was torn down in 1938 after it was condemned.
Zong-qi Cai, a professor of East Asian Languages and Cultures at the UI, has created a unique scholarly journal in partnership with Peking University in Beijing and Duke University Press. Titled the Journal of Chinese Literature and Culture, it is the first instance of a Chinese university becoming directly involved with English-language scholarship outside of China. As co-founder and co-editor-in-chief, Cai said the journal will present a balanced blend of research across all literary genres, with about half the articles originating from scholars in East Asia and half from scholars in East Asia and the Western world. In addition to reviewing articles written by and for academic professionals, Cai plans to include feature essays geared toward a broader audience — perhaps upper-level undergraduate students — interested in Chinese literature and culture.

He has even found a way to manage the most formidable challenge — translating scholarly papers into English — by having young scholars receiving one- to three-month residencies at Peking University translate and revise the papers for co-authorship credit. That will really help young people along in their careers," he said.

"We have lots of formal dinners and events like the Eberfest Opening Night Gala, "Cai said. "The Easters always stay overnight when a university guest is staying here. They’ve been terrific to work for because they have a great attitude and they’re a lot of fun." Shroyer is in charge of developing and following a cleaning maintenance schedule designed to cover every aspect of keeping the house in such good condition. Dusting is prescribed in certain rooms at regular intervals, while more-detailed work like silver cleaning comes up on the schedule less often.

"In an organizer, so that part of the job goes well with my personality," she said. One of the biggest challenges, she said, is the house doesn’t have an elevator, which is the house doesn’t have an elevator, which turned out to be easier than he imagined. But finding partners and funding when I got a crazy idea," Cai said. "In modern Chinese culture, the notion of collecting the necessary resources seemingly daunting. “This started when I got a crazy idea,” Cai said. But finding partners and funding turned out to be easier than he imagined.

"In December 2011, he traveled to China and presented his proposal to two top schools, both of which featured four floors that include a large kitchen and cooking area, sleeping areas, a solarium and a recreation room. Historical dignitaries have included Amelia Earhart and Eleanor Roosevelt and a bevy of other well-known guests.

"We’re like family here — we’re really close," she said of fellow employ- ees. "It really takes a village to keep this house so beautiful." That village, she said, includes extremely responsive maintenance assistance from Facil- ities and campus safety employee and impressive catering presentations by the university’s food services.

"There’s a lot of traffic that goes through this house," Shroyer said, de- spite the fact the current president, Bob Easter, doesn’t live in the residence.

"It’s estimated that 4,500 guests a year stay or attend events at the house, which features four floors that include a large kitchen and cooking area, sleeping areas, a solarium and a recreation room. Historical dignitaries have included Amelia Earhart and Eleanor Roosevelt and a bevy of other well-known guests.

If the pre-modern era encom- passes everything from "time immemorial" to the fall of dynastic China in 1911, Cai said. In China, this immense quantity of literature is studied and analyzed just as thoroughly as English and American literature are studied in the United States, but only a fraction of the Chinese research has been presented in English-language journals. Cai said he is looking into the job it had just become a dream job, a job she'd had for a wonderful quality and all they brought something different to the house," she said. "It’s very interesting meeting the people who come through here, they’re all different and they all have different- er interests."

She said the staff’s regular day-to-day tasks are often affected by guest arrivals or special events. She estimates about 80 percent of her daily work revolves around cleaning.

"After everything is over, that’s when things have to be moved back around to where they were," she said. Shroyer said she enjoys being inside the house, which is filled with historically sig- nificant or specially designed furniture, ac- courements added by past presidents and academic professionals, Cai plans to include feature essays geared toward a broader audience — perhaps upper-level undergraduate students — interested in Chinese literature and culture.

To further encourage research, the journal will host symposiums organized around specific themes to solicit papers for designated special issues, and Duke University Press will publish the special is- sues in book form. "In this way, we can introduce the topic of research we deem most important to the ad- vancement of the field," said.

Cai has been a professor of East Asian Languages and Cultures at the UI, has created a unique scholarly journal in partnership with Peking University and Duke University Press. It’s the only journal wholly dedicated to the study of pre-modern Chinese culture, and the first instance of a Chinese university becoming directly involved with English-language scholarship outside of China, Cai said.

"Our goal is to introduce the finest scholarship in this country. My idea is what they call the scholarship all over the world is one family. One world, one family — that’s the concept."
Illinois ROTC offers unique benefits, traditions for students

By Madeline Lay

The Veteran’s Day ceremony, conducted Sunday at the Armory by Illinois ROTC program, is an annual reminder of the university’s historical connection with the military. That connection is long on tradition, dating back to 1868 when classes first began at Illinois.

Back then, the 75 male students at the university enrolled in mandatory military courses to learn basic tactics and drill. The Morrill Land-Grant Colleges Act of 1862, which provided the funds to establish the UI as well as 60 other public universities, stipulated that the universities train students specifically in military sciences, agriculture and engineering.

Illinois maintained a strong relationship with its military foundation. Eventually, the corps at Illinois was known as the “West Point of the West,” which speaks to its commitment to military excellence.

In 1914, the Armory building was built on the Illinois campus—the first building specifically designed for military use at Illinois. Prior to World War I, the Armory building housed the largest unsupported roof in the world, meaning that columns were not put in place to support the weight of the roof. Today, the building maintains its exterior appearance as it was in 1926, when it was renovated.

The ROTC program began nationally in 1914 as a result of the National Defense Act. Passed as a reaction to the then-escalating crisis of World War I, this act provided funding for the development of military training programs, especially at college campuses. In 1919, the ROTC program began at Illinois, and it was compulsory for all male students. In 1945, Illinois began admitting women. In 1964, Illinois became the first program to commission a female cadet, Capt. Kurt Bauer, of the Air Force ROTC program at Illinois. “Our cadets are provided with a real-world opportunity to express those tools while leading other cadets,” said Capt. Katherine Galvin, an associate provost, who was hopeful that approving the statement was merely a formality and that ongoing negotiations soon would lead to a fair resolution.

In 1964, participation in the ROTC program began at Illinois. “The amount of time and the level of dedication they pour into their ROTC detachment is amazing. Much of the training here is done by the upper class—they pass on the ideals and core values we learned to the cadets here at Illinois,” said Capt. Kurt Bauer, of the Air Force ROTC program at Illinois.

As it stands now, the campus retains decision-making authority regarding which support positions will be civil service and which will be academic professional. “We support a diversity of world views, experiences and cultural knowledge across a range of social groups including race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation abilities, economic class, religion and their intersections. We aspire to create a truly pluralistic environment free of barriers associated with identity, in our pursuit of academic and scholarly excellence.”

Senate reaffirms GEO rights, urges contract resolution

By Mike Holenthal

The Urbana Academic Senate on Nov. 5 approved a carefully worded resolution reaffirming the legal rights of members of the Graduate Employees Organization. The statement calls for a “timely and fair resolution” in current contract negotiations with university administration and reminds campus departments to withhold “retribution” or “retaliation”—practices already prevented by law—against GEO members participating in any called strike.

Student senator Monte Beary told senators the resolution was crafted carefully to ensure the senate was not advocating for either side in contract negotiations. The student senate resolution was approved unanimously.

“We have mandated experience. This resolution does not do is pick sides,” he said.

http://afrotc.illinois.edu
http://rotc.navy.illinois.edu

ON THE WEB

ON THE WEB

As it stands now, the campus retains decision-making authority regarding which support positions will be civil service and which will be academic professional.

As it stands now, the campus retains decision-making authority regarding which support positions will be civil service and which will be academic professional. "We support a diversity of world views, which officials deemed "disappointing." Of the 200 campus positions reviewed, according to CAP information, 122 were recommended for reclassification.

Senators also endorsed a statement re-committing the university to an environment of inclusion in a resolution recommended by the Equal Opportunity and Inclusion Committee.

Intended to support the chancellor’s diversity initiative, the statement reads: "We support a diversity of world views, histories and cultural knowledge across a range of social groups including race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation abilities, economic class, religion and their intersections. We aspire to create a truly pluralistic environment free of barriers associated with identity, in our pursuit of academic and scholarly excellence."

ON THE WEB
Among the newcomers to the Urbana campus are faculty members whose appointments began this summer or fall. Inside Illinois continues its tradition of introducing some of the new faculty members on campus and will feature at least two new colleagues in each fall issue.

**NEW faces 2012**

**Alison R. Fout**

*an assistant professor of chemistry*

**Education:** Ph.D. (chemistry), Indiana University; M.S. (chemistry), University of North Carolina at Charlotte; B.S. (chemistry), Gannon University

**Courses Teaching:** CHEM 512, Advanced Inorganic Chemistry

**Research Interests:** Synthetic inorganic and organometallic chemistry. Her group is interested in the synthesis of transition metal complexes that can mediate the activation of small molecules such as carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide, water and nitrogen gas. Her efforts may directly affect important environmental, biological and energy concerns.

"Alison Fout is a very promising young scientist whom we identified after an extensive national search," said Steven C. Zimmerman, the former head of chemistry. "Her career trajectory was truly impressive ... rising to become one of the most accomplished young scholars emerging from the department of chemistry at Harvard University. We were particularly impressed by her innovative program using structural inorganic chemistry to develop new catalysts with applications in green and environmental chemistry."

**Why Illinois?** "The UI's department of chemistry is highly ranked nationally, meaning I would be able to work with not only the best and brightest students, but also with world-renowned colleagues," Fout said. "Couple that with the exceptional facilities, department collegiality and knowledgeable staff and it was an easy choice to make."

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**Pawan Takhar**

*an associate professor of food engineering*

**Education:** Ph.D. (food engineering), Purdue University; M.Eng. (post-harvest and food production engineering), Asian Institute of Technology, Thailand; B.Tech. (agricultural engineering), Punjab Agricultural University, India

**Courses Teaching:** FSHN 461 and 462, Food Processing I and II (required courses for undergraduate students in the food science major). He also will teach a graduate course related to his research area.

**Research Interests:** Takhar applies predictive mathematical modeling to areas such as food engineering, pharmacology, meat science, nutrition and food microbiology. His group has developed a new NMR pulse sequence to image moisture in foods existing in different thermodynamic states.

"Dr. Takhar has a history of very productive collaborations across disciplines in applying mathematical modeling to areas as diverse as food engineering, pharmacology, meat science, nutrition and food microbiology," said Faye Dong, the head of food science and human nutrition. "His expertise in the area of mathematical modeling and its application to food materials and biopolymers will enrich and support the scholarship, application and impact of research in food science and human nutrition that we do now and in the future."

**Why Illinois?** "I chose Illinois for its reputation in conducting high-quality research and teaching," Takhar said. "Illinois is home to many great faculty members with whom I can collaborate. I also heard that people here are friendly and humble even with their accomplishments."

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Photo by L. Brian Stauffer
Coursera co-founder says educational revolution is here

By Mike Helenthal
Assistant Editor

Stanford University, was effusive in her praise of the platform that massive open online courses have the potential to change the balance of power from a traditional university model—where students and universities such as the UI have an obligation to lead the way.

It’s a real revolution in higher education,” she said, noting the incredible rate at which students have formed some 1,500 course-models. ‘Students can learn at their own pace, they can choose which courses they want to take, and they can receive a certificate or a diploma when they have completed the course.’

Koller said the analytics function of Coursera has been a gold mine of student-behavior data—information that will be used to further refine courses and delivery options.

For example, a professor can track which questions students are struggling most with and which in-system sources (such as student assistance) they used to find the correct answer. The system also filters out redifficultiation of targeted courses, making it easier to cut through the clutter and assist more students.

Koller said the number of course model options is practically limitless.

“I think this is going to be a return to teaching the way it should have been,” she said, adding it also takes the pressure off students who want to explore varying course-topic options.

Panelist Allen H. Renear, the interim dean of the College of Education’s Ubiquitous Education, arts and Sciences and the Graduate School of Library and Information Science, credited the College of Education’s Ubiquitous Education with partner universities.

Faye Lecht, the interim director of the UI’s Office of Online and Continuing Education, said the summit’s planning committee was pleased with the turnout and depth of discussion at the event, and that having Koller there in person added layers to the discussion.

“I was an important opportunity for members of the campus community to explore together MOOCs, Coursera and ways this phenomenon can meaningfully contribute to the teaching/learning process,” she said. “The fact that Dr. Koller was able to attend in person and both present and field questions from participants contributed to the event’s success.”

Lecht said the university is uniquely positioned to capitalize on any benefits from the online education revolution now taking place.

“Illinois has been engaged in online education for many years and that strong foundation enabled campus to respond quickly to join Coursera and become the first land-grant institution to do so,” she said.

Panelist Rob Rutenbar, a professor of computer science, said whatever the outcome, educators will be wise to reconsider how they deliver content and consider a technological landscape that is changing so quickly.

“I don’t discount this is going to upset some business models,” he said. “How do you take a step back and deliver (content) to 30,000 or 40,000 people?”

Moderator Nicholas Burbules, a professor of education policy, organization and leadership, said it was obvious from the forum that many questions still need to be answered before MOOCs are fully embraced on campus.

But he said the summit discussions had gone a long way to start the conversation about the role of MOOCs—which may turn out to be part of a set of options than can be fine-tuned to serve all learning levels. “One of the greatest myths... is there’s one model that works for everyone,” he said. “The MOOC model is already evolving into something else. There are a lot of models out there that are still being developed.”

He challenged faculty members to “think out of the box” and find ways to further revitalize the online education movement, which includes developing a sustainable business model.

“Funding is a core existential question for this university,” he said. “I don’t think the current model is sustainable as it is and there will never be enough financial aid. We need to be asking these critical questions.”

The summit was sponsored by the Provost’s office and the Office of Online and Continuing Education. Co-organizers included the College of Education’s Ubiquitous Learning Institute, the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and the Graduate School of Library and Information Science.
Study examines well-being of rural Latino immigrant families

By Sharita Forrest
News Bureau Intern

Scientists have identified a group of small molecules that interfere with the activity of a compound that initiates multiple steps in blood clotting, including those that lead to the obstruction of veins or arteries, a condition known as thrombosis. These molecules have the potential to inhibit the ability to induce blood clots, humans who lack these proteins of this pathway are more likely to develop a bleeding problem. If any of the proteins in this pathway are missing, a bleeding problem will develop. In contrast, the contact pathway is activated when blood comes into contact with some artificial substances. Although this pathway can cause pathological blood clots, humans who lack proteins in this pathway do not have bleeding problems. These two pathways eventually converge to form a common pathway. In 2006, the researchers found that compounds called polyphosphates can be released from cells. If these compounds called platelets, activate the contact pathway, said UI biochemistry professor James H. Morrissey, who led that study and the new analysis.

Preventing blood clots Researchers have discovered new compounds that inhibit polyphosphate, a molecule important for blood clotting. The group included, from left, Julie Collins, a research specialist in health sciences; Richard Trouwram, a biochemistry graduate student; James H. Morrissey, a professor of biochemistry; and Sharon Cho, a predoctoral fellow in biochemistry. Morrissey led the study and the new analysis.

By Chelsea Coombs
News Bureau Intern

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The study team also investigated the potential of these inhibitors in mice that were afflicted with venous and arterial thrombosis or inflammation, and found that these compounds prevented or reduced these negative effects. Morrissey said, “This shows that you could potentially inhibit polyphosphate in the blood clotting system by decreasing thrombosis risk, but probably not increasing (a person’s) bleeding risk.”

Although the compounds identified would not be a cure, they could be good drug candidates, Morrissey said, the new study offers clues for developing more suitable drugs to target polyphosphates. “I think that the work of this effort would help us to identify compounds that would be better drug candidates,” he said.

The research team also included researchers from the Medical College of Wisconsin, the University of Illinois at Chicago, the American Heart Association and Brown University.

Photo by L. Brian Stauffer
Criminal cases

Loser-pays-all rule could work for wealthy defendants

By Phil Ciciora
Business and Law Editor

Adopting a loser-pays-all rule for criminal litigation would likely be feasible only if the rule applied to defendants who are wealthy, says a study from a UI law professor. Nuno Garoupa, the H. Ross and Helen Workman Scholar in the College of Law, says a loser-pays-all rule could deter some crime when it’s applied to either a corporation or an individual with deep pockets. But when defendants are not wealthy, such cost-shifting would be “wholly inappropriately,” he says.

For the defendant’s side, the problem is that a significant percentage of the accused in the U.S. are poor, and they might not have the financial resources to repay the prosecutor’s costs, should they be found guilty,” Garoupa said. “So that might explain why this is not an issue we hear about too often in criminal cases. One reason is that we have more significant issues in criminal cases that are worthy of discussion in criminal litigation. And one way or the other would get into this division of views that already exists.”

Another example of an unintended consequence of implementing such a rule is that if a prosecutor goes after a client with deep pockets and loses, would taxpayers be on the hook for the (presumably) exorbitant legal defense fees?

“That’s one possibility, but you could also argue that prosecutors might also be more careful,” Garoupa says. “The other aspect is that the prosecutors wouldn’t pay this out of their own money. Many foreign countries have passed laws regarding the extra-contractual liabilities of prosecutors and judges. This is essentially where legal systems allow you to sue prosecutors or judges because they think you were negligently representing your client.”

A sense of control eliminates emotional distortions of time

By Diana Yates
Life Sciences Editor

We humans have a fairly erratic sense of time. We tend to misjudge the duration of events, particularly when they are emotional in nature. Disturbingly negative experiences, for example, seem to last much longer than they actually do. And highly positive experiences seem to pass much quicker than they actually do.

But when the researchers induced a high sense of control over experimental events (the viewing of mostly negative or positive images), they observed that the images appeared on a computer monitor, flash images of spiders no longer slowed time,” Buetti said. “All of a sudden, they’re looking more quickly as they appeared,” he said. “What is novel in our study is that participants are for the first time being given a sense that they can control the emotional content that they are witnessing in the lab.”

In a series of experiments, the researchers asked participants to press keys on a keyboard to try to increase the frequency of positive images. “Across experiments, we found that the more strongly a participant preferred a particular emotional content, the less effective their attempts to control the emotional content of the images,” said Buetti.

As in previous studies, when participants experienced low levels of control over experimental events, they tended to overestimate the amount of time they perceived they were experiencing, but the more they had a sense of control over the images, the researchers manipulated the ratio of positive to negative images and showed the participants that they could control the emotional reactions to images of spiders.

“Across experiments, we found that the more strongly a participant preferred a particular emotional content, the less effective their attempts to control the emotional content of the images,” said Buetti. “Across experiments, we found that the more strongly a participant preferred a particular emotional content, the less effective their attempts to control the emotional content of the images,” said Buetti.

As in previous studies, when participants experienced low levels of control over experimental events, they tended to overestimate the amount of time they perceived they were experiencing, but the more they had a sense of control over the images, the more they perceived the images lasting longer than they actually did.

A new finding has implications for future studies, the researchers said. “We now know that experiments on emotion processing can lead to dramatically different outcomes depending on whether participants are offered a sense of control over experimental events or not,” Buetti said. •
A new book from a UI business professor aims to help those new to the working world avoid the common (and mostly predictable) workplace pitfalls that can often derail promising careers.

In “The Young Professional’s Survival Guide: From Cab Fares to Moral Snare,” C.K. Gunsalus, a professor emeritus of business administration and a nationally recognized expert on professional ethics, shares advice for young professionals to help keep them on track.

“Perhaps it was their ability to eat stuff that is unpalatable to us humans, for example, somewhat impaired,” Gunsalus said. “And while pigs can smell a world of things humans and many other animals can’t – think truffles – their sense of taste is somewhat impaired.”

“Pigs have a high tolerance for eating things that have a lot of salt or that we would find repulsive,” said Schook, who is also director of the National Center for Professional and Research Ethics at the Coordinated Science Laboratory.

“Perhaps it was their ability to see a sharp contrast of things clearly that are important for them and not important for us,” Gunsalus said. “But just because you make a mistake doesn’t mean it’s a death sentence for your career.”

“New book helps young professionals avoid workplace pitfalls” she said. “So many of the situations that young people get into are because they don’t just flat out say: ‘I re- ally goofed. Could we please start over again?’ A sincere apology goes a long way in most situations. Very few people are so perfect that they haven’t made a mistake and they should still give you a second chance. Now, some things you can’t repair, and you just have to learn from it and go on.”

If Gunsalus had to distill the advice in the book, she says it comes down to the dual mandates of Socrates and the Boy Scouts: “Know thyself” and “Be prepared.”

“[If you think about that a little bit, that means asking yourself:] Who am I? What do I stand for? What can I do? What do I want my reputation to be?”

“So this concept of knowing yourself and knowing what matters to you – you need the tools to accomplish this.”

The book will be released Nov. 20.
Job autonomy, trust key to improvement initiatives

By Phf Clicora
Business Law Editor

Frontline employees will commit to improving their organization if they perceive a high degree of autonomy in their jobs and trust their leaders, says research from UI business professors.

According to a soon-to-be-published study by Gopesh Anand and Dilip Chhajed, professors of business administration at Illinois, a flexible work environment plays a significant role in increasing employee commitment to continuous improvement initiatives.

“Continuous improvement initiatives are typically bundled with employee empowerment techniques,” Anand said. “We always hear, ‘If you empower employees, they will take ownership and be more committed.’ It turns out that there is a catch – it happens repeatedly that is this employee empowerment is management-driven, and it doesn’t work.”

“Is a paradox – employee empowerment being forced upon employees by management,” said Chhajed, who also is the director of the technology management program in the College of Business. “What usually ends up happening is that employees feel that they are being forced into doing something that they may not even see as being very useful.”

The research, co-written with Luis Deliso, a former graduate student, advances three arguments on how employees’ commitment to continuous improvement in the workplace can be enhanced:

1. Three arguments on how employees’ commitment to continuous improvement initiatives can be increased:

   a. Work, trust in leadership is critical. Making changes to the very practices that are important to employees can help improve buy-in.

   b. Management shouldn’t be the sole driver of implementation. Empowerment is management-driven, and it usually ends up happening is that employees are not even aware of what that means for their job.

   c. Employees can’t think of it as, ‘This is something that I have to do, it becomes extra work that they’re not comfortable with for effort and job satisfaction.’

   d. Trust is huge, because you don’t want the perception that management is co-enforcing employees to do this.

   e. Employee commitment to improving their organization if they perceive a high degree of autonomy in their jobs and trust their leaders.

   f. Team commitment to improving their organization if they perceive a high degree of autonomy in their jobs and trust their leaders.

A higher degree of trust in leadership makes it possible to proactively influence by frontline employees, encouraging them to use the autonomy in their day-to-day jobs to work on systemic improvements to work practices.

The researchers tested their hypotheses on data collected from individual employees working in the healthcare industry. The study, funded by the American Society of Healthcare Management, found that employees who worked in teams and were committed to working together had the highest level of trust in leadership. The study also found that employees who were empowered to make decisions and were given the autonomy to do so were more likely to commit to continuous improvement initiatives.

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“Employee commitment is a top-down mandate. It’s like building a bridge from both sides,” Deliso said. “Upper management has the vision, but at the same time, they’re not the experts on how things get done on the ground. So you need to have frontline employees who have the freedom to get things done.”

Project seeks to improve access to education for Greek Roma

By Sharifa Forrest
News Editor

A Greece struggles to rebuild its shattered economy, humanitarian agencies worry about the continued fear and the plight of the Roma (also known as Romanis, gypsies and travelers), many of whom live in extreme poverty on society’s fringes.

Bill Cope and Mary Kalantzis, education professors at the UI, are members of a project team working to improve access to education and promote social inclusion for Roma children and families in Greece.

Funded by the European Commission, the European Union’s executive and policy-making body, the Education and Lifelong Learning Program, the Lifelong Learning Project is one component of the commission’s far-reaching strategy for promoting the welfare of Roma children, youth and adults.

According to an upcoming project report, the European Union’s educational, cultural and social barriers to Roma are extensive. Full-time education for Roma children is unusual, is it takes the principals and the teachers into these communities to get to know the humanity of the Roma people,” Kalantzis said. "On common ground, it becomes a very different kind of relationship. They put a social worker/psychologist and an educator in every one of the Roma communities, and together with the community leaders organize transport of the children to school. They also give a lot of assistance to the families, especially the women, to help them gain some basic formal education and support the children in attending school." "Social workers, in conjunction with the teachers, monitor children’s progress and address obstacles that might impede their school attendance, such as transportation. Getting children to school is a significant problem for many families since Roma often live in isolated settlements, and Greece lacks both public transit and school bus systems.

The project is addressing issues of discrimination and stigmatization through cultural diversity training and professional development opportunities for teachers and school officials, including workshops on sociocultural issues, classroom management and teaching Greek as a second language. Adult Literacy Ceters have been opened to help Roma youth and adults earn school certificates and tackle barriers to employment.

Cope and Kalantzis, who are married as well as research partners, became involved early on and collaborated on the project framework. This summer, they conducted site visits at three disparate Roma communities to evaluate Greek Roma, page 15
Difficult-to-read font reduces political polarity, study finds

By Diana Yates
Life Sciences Editor

Abstract thinking can make you more politically moderate

By Diana Yates
Life Sciences Editor

Online video

Let’s (Not) Be Clear: Study shows how hard-to-read text can overcome bias

Capital punishment

The study is the first to use difficult-to-read materials to disrupt what researchers call the “confirmation bias” – the tendency to selectively see only arguments that support what you already believe. Psychology professor Jesse Preston said.

http://go.illinois.edu/Video_TextAndBias
Writer profiles alienated youth on the U.S./Mexico border

By Chelesy Coombs
News Bureau Intern

Many make their living by crawling through the sewers beneath the border cities of Nogales, Mexico, and Nogales, Ariz., and mugging migrants seeking new lives in the United States. Some of these young men and women, who call themselves Barrio Libre ("Free Hood"), traffic in drugs in the desolate deserts where more than 5,000 people trying to enter the U.S. have died.

"Prior to the North American Free Trade Agreement, prior to the vast militarization of the border, these young people would have just been street people, on the streets of Nogales, asking for money," says UI anthropology and Latina/Latino studies professor Gilberto Rosas, the author of "Barrio Libre: Criminalizing States and Delinquent Refusals of the New Frontier," published by Duke University Press.

Barrio Libre members are "written off by both the Mexican state and the U.S. state," Rosas said. "They're disposable, basically. And that sense of being so alienated returns in a way when they act out their own lives.

"They become criminals, they become delinquents, they become the delinquent refusal of the new frontier," Rosas' book examines how the elimination of obstructions to trade and free markets has contributed to the genesis of this delinquent group. After the North American Free Trade Agreement among the U.S., Canada and Mexico went into effect in 1994, factories in border cities were able to import and export goods without tariffs being imposed on them. The increase in the flow of goods led to a militarization of the border, Rosas said.

"Given the depths of poverty that certain economies of the contemporary world produce, it creates the conditions for these kinds of ways of life to emerge," Rosas said. "That is amplified by the police power that heretofore had never been used before at the border."

The author's firsthand accounts of the lives and beliefs of the members of Barrio Libre who choose not to "face imminent death as nightmarish human waste at the new frontier" shows the humanity of the group that outsiders see only as delinquents or gangsters.

"In writing about a population who becomes delinquent, who becomes criminals, I'm trying to avoid demonizing them," Rosas said. "I'm really trying to capture them. In other words, what I'm trying to say is that criminals are made socially."

Collection of plays focuses on Korean diasporic experience

By Madeline Ley
News Bureau Intern

"Drama, in my opinion, is the best way to crystalize how we see ourselves, and the plays in the collection include "be longing, assimilation, family ... and ethnic identity," Lee said, which are all important concepts in understanding the history of the Korean diaspora in the Americas.

"The book is the only collection of plays that focus on the Korean diasporic experience, and all of the playwrights featured in it are recognized as major writers in the Americas," she said.

Lee was inspired to create her compilation because she wanted to highlight the work of contemporary Korean-American playwrights who discussed themes of the Korean diaspora.

"After finishing my first book, 'A History of Asian American Theatre,' I began to notice a number of Korean-American playwrights getting their plays produced in major venues," Lee said. "I was also impressed with the quality and diversity of their plays. I wanted to feature them in a collection of plays."

Lee believes that experiencing plays can provide new and diverse insights to audiences of all backgrounds.

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Wilma Liebman
UI expert talks about labor issues

Editor’s note: Wilma Liebman is a visiting professor in the College of Law and the School of Labor and Employment Relations at Illinois. In an interview with News Bureau business area editor Phil Ciciora, Liebman, who served on the National Labor Relations Board under presidents Clinton and George W. Bush and as chair of the labor relations board under President Obama, spoke about labor issues in the news.

It has received comparably little fanfare or media attention, but Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker’s highly controversial anti-union legislation recently was ruled unconstitutional by a federal judge. Is there anything that can be done to help the parties is, of course, essential. It has received comparably little fanfare or media attention, but Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker’s highly controversial anti-union legislation recently was ruled unconstitutional by a federal judge. Is there anything that can be done to help the parties?

Of course. The collective bargaining process has the built-in flexibility to accommodate the need for reducing or restructuring labor costs. If you unleash the creative potential of collective bargaining it can solve problems because it allows the parties to fashion solutions of their own making. Developing basic trust between the parties is, of course, essential.

In Wisconsin, the unions were willing to meet the governor’s monetary demands and yet the governor was intent on pushing beyond that, to curb significant aspects of the public employees’ collective bargaining rights. The dispute was about far more than budgetary issues.

Unions represent less than 7 percent of the private sector workforce, and yet organized labor is often scorned and invoked as a bogeyman by politicians. Why?

That is indeed a paradox. I think the reasons are complex. There is a long history of anti-unionism in this country. Some people have never accepted the legitimacy of trade unions. For some, the notion of collective activity — which unionization is, by definition — is threatening or “un-American.” Some politicians are reflecting the views of business, which may strenuously oppose unions because of the loss of total autonomy that comes with the duty to bargain with a union and because they view the wage premium, traditionally associated with unionization, as anti-competitive. A popular refrain is that unions are “job killers.”

I also think that the opposition has successfully created cleavage between working people themselves. To me it seems that instead of some people resenting unionized workers, the more natural reaction would be, “We, too, should form a union to try to improve our conditions.”

The Wagner Act of 1935 guarantees the right of workers to organize and collectively bargain. Do we need to amend the law to fit today’s complex economy and labor market?

The last major revision to the Wagner Act was in 1947. Needless to say, our economy and the workplace have changed dramatically since then. The law was written for an industrial economy; it clearly had a factory model and that form of employment in mind. But the labor market has become far more complex. Increasingly, people no longer work in traditional employment arrangements. They don’t stay at one place for a lifetime. Many employers, in their quest for flexibility and competitiveness, are using contingent and temporary employment arrangements, and persons classified as independent contractors. Many of these workers are excluded from union representation. The statute is not written to cover these forms of work in large part. Some commentators have criticized the basic model of the statute whereby the only form of workplace representation that employers can enjoy is exclusive union representation based on majority rule, in a decentralized bargaining unit. Other forms of representation are not permitted under this law, which makes this a unique system. The labor laws everywhere else in the world — except for the U.S. and Canada — allow for different forms of workplace representation, including non-exclusive union representation. For example, European countries have “works councils,” which are something separate from unionization. Under some labor law systems, if five people in the workplace wanted some sort of representation, they could band together, even if the majority did not join. Changing the existing model in the U.S. would be controversial.

All this said, the chances at present for significant federal labor law reform do not seem great. While many would agree that this Industrial-era law warrants updating, there is no political consensus about how to fix it. At the moment, the only apparent activity on labor law is going on at the state level.

What if anything can be done to elevate the public discourse surrounding organized labor and collective bargaining?

There is obviously a deep national divide over issues of organized labor, collective bargaining and the role of government in protecting the rights of workers. In the current political environment, it seems to be virtually impossible to have a serious political dialogue. Political and economic discourse on these subjects is degraded and the rhetoric overheated. I would like to hope that serious discussions could begin outside of the political arena, with labor and business ultimately coming to realize that we are in an impossible stalemate and change of direction is needed. Issues of worker rights and income inequality should all be part of a broader discussion of how to create a sustainable market economy that works for all Americans.

LITIGATION, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

In the way they performed their job. So rather than relying on the system we have in the U.S. of impeaching judges or firing prosecutors, it allows you to directly file a lawsuit against them. And this is a big deal, because if they lose, it’s not the taxpayers’ money that is on the line, but the personal fortune of the prosecutor or judge.

Garoupa says the paper is not a mere thought experiment, since such a rule could have significant implications for anti-rack-etering prosecutions and the financing of law enforcement activities.

“The policy implications are clear. There is probably a good idea as to why this would be less popular in criminal litigation than in civil litigation, and why this could be a good idea in the criminal litigation of a corporate or wealthy defendants,” he said. “But we would have to think how to minimize the harm to the wealth-constrained, which is something that policymakers haven’t been too worried about. You also have to think about how this would affect the strategy of the prosecution and the defendants.”

“When you take into account all of the complexities, it’s unclear if that’s a good or bad idea. We argue in the paper that people tend to see the positive side, and that they’re not looking at the other side, which is that it would likely make criminal litigation more expensive, and it would also probably force prosecutors to spend more money on litigation.”

The paper, co-written by Luciana Echa- zu, of Clarkson University, will appear in the International Review of Law and Economics.
brief notes

Office of Public Engagement
Award nominations due Dec. 7

Nominations are being accepted for the 2012-2013 Campus Award for Excellence in Public Engagement. These awards recognize those faculty members, academic professionals and students who engage the public to address critical societal issues. Awards are given in individual and team categories. Nomination forms and nomination letters are due in the Office of Public Engagement by 5 p.m. Dec. 7. For more information and to download the full nomination guidelines for individual and team awards, visit: http://go.illinois.edu/CAEPE2012.

Association of American University Presses
University Press Week under way

As one of the founding members of the Association of American University Presses, the UI Press is participating in University Press Week, which continues through Nov. 17. The Illini Union Bookstore has a variety of university press books on display, and the scope of AAUP influence is further demonstrated through a series of Web pages at www.universitypressweek.org.

The “Fine Print” online gallery features a collection of key university press publications. The “Map of Influence” project provides a snapshot of the reach of each university press, and the University Press Week blog tour highlights the blogs maintained by each university press. The UI Press post is written by Stephen Wade, whose book, “The Beautiful Music All Around Us,” was published in August and will be released in print in November. Wade’s book exemplifies the press’s niche specialties: music, especially American music, in all styles; American history, especially labor history, African-American history, women’s history, immigration and Abraham Lincoln; and studies of Illinois, Chicago and the Midwest.

National Endowment for the Humanities
Apply now for 2013 translation institute

The National Endowment for the Humanities recently awarded the UI’s Center for Translation Studies a grant to conduct a three-week institute for college and university teachers in July 2013. Elizabeth Lowe, a professor and the director of the center, and Christopher Higgins, a professor of education policy, organization and leadership affiliated with the center, will co-direct the institute, “The Central Role of Translation to the Humanities: New Interdisciplinary Scholarship,” highlighting the role of translation as a creative and scholarly means of bridging times and cultures.

Twenty-five participants will have the opportunity to use UI libraries and other resources to build their own case studies, examining how a particular translation influenced the reception of a text, while learning about the case studies presented by notable scholars. Gregory Rabassa, a recipient of the National Medal of Arts, the PEN Translation Prize and the National Book Award for translation, will lead the discussion of theboom in Latin American translated works. David Rosenberg, best-selling author, biblical scholar and translator, and Valerie Hotchkiss, the director of UI’s Rare Book and Manuscript Library, will lead an examination of the Hebrew and King James bibles. Adam Phillips, a psychoanalyst, literary critic and author currently overseeing Penguin Books a re-translation of Sigmund Freud’s prose, will lead a discussion on how Freud’s everyday text was turned into scientific work through translation. William Gass, an author, critic and former philosophy professor, and Rainer Schulte, co-founder of the American Literary Translators Association and editor of Translation Review, will lead a discussion of translations of Rainer Maria Rilke’s poetry.

Visit www.translation.illinois.edu/translate for information on applying to the institute.

252 Faculty members, academic professionals retire

Between Aug. 16, 2011, and Aug. 15, 2012, 252 faculty members and academic professionals retired from the UI, according to the Office of Academic Human Resources. Those who retired during that time were honored last spring at the campus’s Academic Service Recognition Luncheon. Also honored were employees celebrating an employment milestone (10, 20, 30, 40 or 50 years) during that time.

To view job postings, apply for civil service or academic jobs at Illinois, or to update your application information: jobs.illinois.edu

Retirees, long-serving staff members recognized

Recently retired and long-serving staff employees will be honored at the 2012 Staff Service Recognition Program Nov. 19 at Assembly Hall. The program will honor 321 employees who retired between Sept. 1, 2011, and Aug. 31, 2012. In addition, employees will be honored for service completed during that time: 96 employees who completed 25 years, 38 who completed 30 years, seven who completed 35 years and one who completed 40 years. A website for the recognition program is accessible through the Staff Human Resources home page. Retirees and service honorees are listed alphabetically by name, department or number of years served. For questions about this year’s program, call 217-333-3101.

ON THE WEB
www.shr.illinois.edu/service

ON THE WEB
http://go.illinois.edu/academicretirees12

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Margaret Rosso Grossman, the Bock Chair in Agricultural Law Emerita in the department of agricultural economics, received the Excellence in Agricultural Law Award from the American Agricultural Law Association at its annual conference in October. The award recognized Grossman’s contributions as an “accomplished scholar, respected teacher, high-performing contributor to issues of public policy, ambassador to the international agricultural law community, pillar in the American Agricultural Law Association and pioneeer of her field.”

**ENGINEERING**

Predrag S. Hrnjak, a professor of mechanical science and engineering, has been elected a fellow of the Society of Automotive Engineers. His work applies to aerospace, automotive or commercial vehicle research.

Laxmikant (Sanjay) Kale, a professor of mechanical science and engineering, has been named a fellow of the Materials Research Society for “pioneering contributions in the design of viscoelastic inks composed of colloidal, polymeric and organometallic materials science and engineering, mechanical, materials and architectural properties.” In the past 10 years, Lewis, an MRS Fellow and the first woman to receive a MRS Medal, has made major contributions in the areas of direct-write assembly of soft functional materials and the design of complex fluids with tunable phase behavior, structures and interfaces. Rashid Bashir, a professor of electrical and computer engineering and of bioengineering, has been recognized with the 2012 Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers’ Technical Achievement Award “for significant contributions to the development of microfluidic devices and microfabrication processes.” Bashir directs the Micro and Nanotechnology Laboratory and is affiliated with the Beckman Institute, the Institute for Genomic Biology and the Frederick Seitz Materials Research Lab.

Joseph W. Lyding, a professor of electrical and electronic engineers, has been recognized with the 2012 Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers’ Pioneer in Controls Award. Lyding’s research covers a large swathe of nanoelectronics, from developing an ultra-stable scanning tunneling microscope to more recent work on the cutting edge of promising carbon structures such as nanotubes and graphene.

Steve and Thorpe, Mats Selin and Tim Stelzer, professors of physics, have been awarded the 2013 Excellence in Physics Education Award from the American Physical Society “for the creative application of physics education research results with components of modern technology to create a new pedagogical framework called the physics curriculum that substantially changes the roles of the instructors and students, and, as measured through research, students learn physics concepts quantitatively recognized learning benefits.”

About five years ago, Gladding, Selen and Stelzer developed a new learning environment for the first year of introductory calculus-based physics (Physics 211 and Physics 212). And when the foundational subject matter of the introductory courses remains primarily the same, the way this content is introduced and explored with students has resulted in a new learning experience.

John H. Walter, a professor of mechanical science and engineering, has been recognized with the ASM Engineering Society “for the creative application of physics education research results with components of modern technology to create a new learning environment for the first year of introductory calculus-based physics (Physics 211 and Physics 212).”

The society is a global body of scientists, engineers and practitioners whose work applies to aerospace, automotive or commercial vehicle research.

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

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**GREEK ROMA**

**CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10**

uate the initiative’s effectiveness midway through the program, gather stakeholders’ perspectives and provide critical feedback.

“The Roma men said that this project mattered to their community, and then they’d explain why in these economic terms,” Kalantzis said. “For the men it was this economic imperative – their survival in a Greece that’s now in financial collapse.”

One of the researchers’ recommendations – and their emphasis during the next project phase – will be helping teachers learn how to use multimedia tools to achieve their instructional goals, reach students who may be unable or unwilling to attend schools and offer new learning strategies.

“New technology allows you an opportunity to reach people in a way you couldn’t before,” Kalantzis said. “You’re surprised at how many of them were able to access a computer or had a mobile phone. And if they’re not going to go to a regular school because of the prejudice and the difficulties, the new technology offers the possibility of taking learning to them and taking community to them. And funding a bunch of computers in a community resource center is a lot cheaper than building a school.”

Telling stories using video, music or other new media can strengthen children’s literacy skills by integrating their existing knowledge and life experiences in ways that seem “more dynamic, exciting and relevant” than conventional literacy activities, Cope said.

The researchers plan to return to northern Greece for site visits at other Roma communities, although a date has not been set.

“For us, as educators, every one of these sites matters,” Kalantzis added. “How do you get engagement? Teach language? Deal with prejudices? These are things that we as educators deal with all the time in different contexts. These are just the hardest of contexts, which test your expertise and can be very heartbreaking.

“We’ve been doing this work now for over 25 years. We’re committed to making a difference in the most difficult communities because if you don’t do that, it’s a blight on everybody’s aspirations.”

Cope is a faculty member in the department of education policy, organization and leadership, which is a unit in the College of Education at Illinois. Kalantzis is a faculty member in the department of curriculum and instruction as well as dean of the college.

The couple recently released both a Web-based multimedia environment for literacy activities called Scholar and a new book, titled “Literacies” (Cambridge University Press, 2012), which explores the use of new media in literacy instruction.
LGBTQ youth more likely to be truant or consider suicide

“Bullying does explain a substantial portion of the disparities between LGBTQ and straight students, suggesting that we need to have anti-bullying policies in schools, and that those policies should cover sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression.”

~Joseph P. Robinson

In May, the Illinois Senate narrowly voted down a bill approved by the Illinois House of Representatives that would have required school districts to implement aggressive and detailed anti-bullying policies. Conservative groups opposed the legislation out of concerns that the mandated programs would promote homosexuality and violate students’ and parents’ religious beliefs.

“Suicide isn’t a trivial thing,” Robinson said. “Our findings suggest that, even beyond bullying-prevention policies, schools should have additional policies that support safe learning environments for all students and help address the remaining risk disparities that bullying alone does not account for.”

The study appeared in the November issue of the journal Educational Researcher.

By Sharita Forrest

News Editor

Eshian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth and those questioning their sexuality are at significantly greater risk of truancy and of considering and attempting suicide than their heterosexual classmates – even when bullying isn’t involved, according to a new study of more than 11,000 middle and high school students.

Although bullying does account for a portion of the risk disparities, significant differences remain after taking bullying into account, said the authors, Joseph P. Robinson and Dorothy Espelage, educational psychologists at the UI.

Prior studies have indicated that LGBTQ youth are at greater risk for considering and attempting suicide and for unexcused absences. In the current study, which as- sumed seventh through 12th graders across 30 schools, the researchers sought to deter- mine if bullying explained LGBTQ youth’s higher risks for these behaviors.

“Bullying does explain a substantial portion of the disparities between LGBTQ and straight students, suggesting that we need to have anti-bullying policies in schools, and that those policies should cover sexual ori- entation, gender identity and gender expres- sion,” Robinson said. “However, bullying is not the entire story.”

Using a propensity-score-matching technique, the researchers matched hetero- sexual and LGBTQ students with similar demographic characteristics and victimization profiles to examine how straight youths’ risk levels were compared to LG- BTQ youth when straight youth were bul- lied at the same rates as LGBTQ youth, and vice versa.

The researchers found that, in the matched samples, LGBTQ youth were still more than three times as likely as their heterosexual peers to consider suicide. This pattern was found in both matched samples – that is, regardless of whether the researchers matched LGBTQ youth to simi- lar heterosexual youth or vice versa.

The researchers noted that the striking similar- ity in findings across both matched samples suggests that LGBTQ youth are at higher risk regardless of whether we look at dif- ferences among youth who are victimized more often or less often.

Robinson and Espelage then conducted supplemental analyses on a broader range of victimization variables, such as childhood sexual abuse, dating violence and pa- rental physical abuse to determine if these variables explained the disparities in risk levels that remained after bullying was tak- en out of the equation. Even with these fac- tors taken into account, LGBTQ students remained at significantly higher risk than their heterosexual peers.

Bisexual and questioning youth in par- ticular appeared to be at significantly higher risk, but the researchers could only specu- late why. Perhaps these groups are exposed to greater intolerance and stress than youth who identify as lesbian or gay. Or perhaps they are the targets of “biphobia” – expe- riencing social rejection and discrimination from both heterosexual and lesbian/gay stu- dents, the researchers theorized.

Another possible factor that might ex- plain the persistent differences between straight and LGBTQ youth could be stigmatizing messages about sexual minorities in children’s immediate environments as well as broader society that exacerbate LG- BTQ youths’ feelings of depression, rejec- tion and isolation, Robinson and Espelage suggested.

Prior studies have indicated that LGBTQ youth are at significantly greater risk of suicidal thoughts and attempts, regardless of whether they are bullied by their peers, suggests a new study by Dorothy Espelage, left, and Joseph P. Robinson, faculty members in the College of Education.