A new bronze age  The Alma Mater sculpture, which has been undergoing restoration work in a Chicago-area studio since 2012, will return to campus April 9 with its original bronze finish intact. Work on the sculpture included replacing more than 1,000 damaged bolts and extensively cleaning its surface with a laser. The new look is far different from how the sculpture looked before it was taken from its pedestal at Green and Wright streets. Corrosion had left the statue with streaky, green-brown stains from head to toe (above right).

The reconstruction project cost about $360,000 and was paid for with alumni donations. “If we protect this sculpture from corrosion,” Lev said, “the conserved and stabilized Alma Mater sculpture will safely stand there for another 100 years welcoming the children and grandchildren of generations to come. We need to attempt to retain such images of campus because they are what bind one generation of Illinois to the next generation.”

Photos and videos of the conservation work and an extended video interview with the conservator are available online.

Restored Alma Mater sculpture to return to campus April 9

By Mike Helenthal Assistant Editor

The Alma Mater sculpture will make her long-await ed return to the Urbana campus April 9, where she will be parked on her pedestal to silently watch the next century of university progress.

“There are a lot of logistics that have to be in place to make this go smoothly,” said Jim Lev, an architect with Facilities and Services, which is coordinating the reinstallation project. “The most important thing is that we do this carefully and safely.”

The sculpture, unveiled by U. of I. artist Lorado Taft in 1929, was taken away Aug. 7, 2012, and sent to a conservator for restoration following years of water corrosion damage. It will return after having more than 1,000 bolts replaced, its exterior surface laser-cleaned and its original color restored to a natural bronze finish.

Lev said the reinstatement would require a lot of site preparation, including the positioning of a crane and blocking off an area to allow a flatbed truck adequate access. Planners also expect a bevy of onlookers welcoming back Alma, though a rededication ceremony isn’t scheduled until June 6. (Details will be announced soon.)

“We’ve really just been focused on finalizing the conservation efforts and getting the sculpture back on its base,” Lev said.

He said the statue might look familiar to those who have become accustomed to the corrosion-tinged, streaky iteration that had been at the southeast corner of Green and Wright streets in Urbana. The green patina, however, was an indication of corrosion that was taking place as the sculpture endured decades of unaddressed water damage.

“When you see the statue in its conserved state, you’ll see it re ally has a serene, peaceful, pretty face,” Lev said. “She has a face you can identify with. People are going to be as fond of the sculpture as they’ve ever been.”

To prevent similar damage from occurring in the future, Lev said the conservator, Andrey Da-jnowski, the director of the Conservation of Sculpture and Objects Studio, Forest Park, III., has recommended an ongoing maintenance program requiring the application of a wax compound every two years.

The reconstruction project cost about $360,000 and was paid for with alumni donations.

“If we protect this sculpture from corrosion,” Lev said, “the conserved and stabilized Alma Mater sculpture will safely stand there for another 100 years welcoming the children and grandchildren of generations to come. We need to attempt to retain such images of campus because they are what bind one generation of Illinois to the next generation.”

Photos and videos of the conservation work and an extended video interview with the conservator are available online.
Christopher Z. Mooney, expert on state politics

on the race for governor in Illinois

Editor’s note: Christopher Z. Mooney is the director of the Institute of Government and Public Affairs at the U. of I., and the W. Russell Arrington Professor of State Politics in the Springfield campus. He studies comparative U.S. state politics, with a special focus on state legislatures. He spoke with News Bureau news and law editor Phil Cicora about this fall’s race for governor of Illinois between Republican Bruce Rauner and the Democratic incumbent, Pat Quinn.

Some pundits have said that this fall’s election sets the course for the state of Illinois for decades to come. Do you agree?

Every gubernatorial election sets the course for the state for the foreseeable future, since the governor is by far the most important public figure in the state. In Illinois, the big question is whether to keep the current governorship, which makes it the pivotal position in our state government. It’s also the next gubernatorial election that can make a decision with the possible exception of the mayor of Chicago), which is not always true in every state. Sometimes a U.S. Senate seat is more attractive for a politician, however, that’s not generally the case in Illinois.

But this particular election is crucial because the issue on the ballot that the state is facing. We’ve got budget deficits that are projected to increase on the order of billions of dollars per year for the next decade. The Fiscal Futures Project at the IGPA projects that under current law, the state will be facing a $3 billion budget deficit in fiscal year 2015, and a $13 billion deficit by fiscal year 2025. Obviously, that’s an unsustainably situation. The policy-makers in the state are not going to set a decision very soon about whether to keep the 2011 temporary tax increase on personal and business income. But even if we do that, there’s nothing that the state can do about the heavy cuts or big cuts in services – probably both. So whoever is elected in the fall is going to have to make these budget choices. It’s not as if whoever is elected is going to be able to come in and build a bunch of state programs. The next governor is going to have to cause pain, and that’s all there is to it. These are going to be policy choices that will have a huge effect on people’s lives. And the election is very important in that regard.

With all the talk of Rauner’s personal weaknesses and Quinn’s weaknesses there’s only a possibility that Quinn is both as a governor and in the polls, this election season likely to be one of the ugliest in recent memory.

The other thing is that both candidates are going to have more money than they know what to do with. So we’re probably going to be subject to a long, bitter campaign for governor. Is Rauner’s plan for terms limits for all members of the Illinois Legislature constitutional? Is it even realistic? (In 1994, Pat Quinn, who was state treasurer at that time, led a similar campaign for governor. That’s not to say that either one, all legislators are grandiose in the way that Quinn was.) These two candidates also have a debt of effective positive things to say about the state in a campaign. Rauner points to his success in business, but that doesn’t translate to being chief executive of a state. Quinn, on the other hand, doesn’t have a great deal to show for his time in office, partly because of the fiscal condition of the state, some of which he inherited. He’s running on an image of effectiveness that he’s been able to translate into public support in the media. He’s against the other if he wants to.

There are parallels to this in Michigan – big states with professional legislatures that also adopted term limits. It’s pretty galling in the sense that people would more money than they would have a huge effect on people’s lives. And the election is very important in that regard.


Harold J. (Owen) Miller, 85, died March 26 at Carle Foundation Hospital, Urbana. Miller was a professor of architecture at the U. of I. for 39 years and served as dean of the College of Architecture from 1966 to 1980. Miller was involved in architectural work in Twin City Bible Church, 806 W. Michigan Ave., Urbana, IL 61801, www.tcb.cc; or Gideons International, gideons.org.


Frederick D. “Scotty” Scott, 80, died March 20 at Overland Medical Center, Summit, N.J. He was an electrician for the Division of Operations and Maintenance (now Facilities and Services) for 13 years, retiring in 1991. Memorials: First Presbyte- rian Church of Freehold, Property Memorial Fund, 118 W. Main St., Freehold, NJ 07728.


Suzanne Joanne Voegtlin, 68, died March 16 at her home in Dewitt, Ill. She was the chief financial officer of the Illinois Natural History Survey from 1971 to 1998. Memorials: Twin City Bible Church, 806 W. Michigan Ave., Urbana, IL 61801, www.tcb.cc; or Gideons International, gideons.org.

Michael E. Wassom, 60, died March 18. He had been a building service worker at the U. of I. for the past two years. 

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Research shows link between states’ personalities, politics

By Craig Chamberlain
Social Sciences Editor

On the Job

Michael Showerman

Assistant Editor
April 3, 2014

InsideIllinois
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Mike Helenthal

Ike the astronomically large ques-
tions asked of the U. of I.-based
Blue Waters supercomputer, Mi-
chael Showerman, a systems ad-
ministrator for the National Center for Su-
percomputing Applications, is difficult to pin
down.

Showerman, originally from Chicago’s west-
ern suburbs, started working at NCSA
in 1995 while he was a computer science
student at the U. of I.

He didn’t complete his degree, but he
liked the challenging nature of the job so
much he “just never left,” he said.

Showerman's job description is ever-
changing and somewhat open-ended, which
liked the challenging nature of the job so
much he “just never left,” he said.

Showerman said he met on campus and who worked as a
chemist at the U. of I. until deciding to stay
home to raise the kids -- well, she supports
him, too.

“I won the lottery,” he said. “We go flying, we go biking, we go riding in the
dirt.”

“Showerman is doing it yet.”

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A better way to grow motor neurons from stem cells

By Diana Yates
Life Sciences Editor

D i s c o v e r Y D I S C O V E R Y

Researchers report they can generate human motor neurons from stem cells much more quickly and efficiently than previous methods allowed. The finding, described in Nature Communications, will aid efforts to model human motor neuron development, and to understand and treat spinal cord injuries and motor neuron diseases such as amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS).

The new method involves adding critical signaling molecules to precursor cells a few days earlier than previous methods allowed. This increases the proportion of healthy motor neurons derived from stem cells (either embryonic stem cells or those “induced” to revert back to an embryo-like state) requires adding signaling molecules to the critical moments in their development.

Wang and other colleagues previously discovered a molecule (called compound C) that converts stem cells into “neural progenitor cells,” an early stage in the cell’s development into neurons. But further coaxing these cells to become motor neurons presented unusual challenges.

The new approach has immediate applications in the lab. Watching how stem cells (derived from ALS patients’ own skin cells, for example) develop into motor neurons will offer new insights into disease processes, and any method that improves the speed and efficiency of generating the motor neurons will aid scientists. The cells can also be used to screen for drugs to treat motor neuron diseases, and may one day be used therapeutically to restore lost function.

“To have a rapid, efficient way to generate motor neurons will undoubtedly be crucial to studying — and potentially also treating — spinal cord injuries and diseases like ALS,” Wang said.

Swing voters hold more sway on economic issues

By Phil Ciclora
Business and Law Editor

N ew research from two U. of I. political science professors who study election trends analyzes how polarization on social issues affects political candidates.

In the paper, co-authors Stefan Krasa and Mattias Polborn develop a theory of candidate competition that accounts for the influence of both economic and cultural issues on individual voting behavior.

“Many pundits and academics have argued that political polarization, particularly on social and cultural issues, has increased in the U.S.,” said Polborn, also a professor of political science at Illinois. “With this paper, we analyze how that polarization influences the political jockeying between candidates on economic and cultural issues.”

The researchers test their theory using what they term a “differentiated candidates framework” in which two office-motivated candidates differ in their ideological positions and choose a level of government spending and implied taxes to maximize their vote share.

“In competition models, the candidates compete for moderate voters in the middle that they both want to win over because, typically, whoever wins the most swing voters also wins the election,” Krasa said.

Vote-maximizing politicians have a clear incentive to cater to the interests of these “swing voters” — that is, voters who are virtually indifferent between the rival candidates — rather than the electorate in general, the authors say.

“Competing is really simple according to the standard ‘median voter theorem’ — candidates should propose the policy preferred by the voter with the median economic preferences,” Polborn said. “But in reality, voters care about both the cultural and economic positions of competing candidates, and the interaction between cultural polarization and economic policies is the main innovation of our model.”

In most previous studies, it was assumed that voters were one-dimensional blocs of economic conservatives and liberals. But in their analysis, Krasa and Polborn found that candidates are really competing not just for one type of swing voter, but rather for many different types.

“A swing voter might be someone who is socially conservative and economically liberal, or vice versa,” Polborn said. “Social conservatives who happen to be sufficiently keen on government spending may vote for the Democrat, and social liberals who are sufficiently opposed to high taxation may vote for the Republican. Or you could be moderate for one or both of the issues.”

In the paper, Krasa and Polborn also analyze changes in the parties’ cultural positions as well as in the distribution of cultural preferences that affect the candidates’ equilibrium economic policies.

They show that if the Democratic position on social issues becomes more extreme, then both Republicans and Democrats will adopt a more liberal economic policy. In contrast, if the voters’ average preferences for social issues become more liberal, both parties become more economically conservative.

Candidates will always fight tooth-and-nail to win over swing voters, but with a continuum of swing voters with different cultural and economic preferences, rather than a single, monolithic swing voter bloc, crafting a policy that appeals to them economically is a lot less straightforward, Kra- sa said.

“For example, a candidate who proposes a more expansive economic policy gains votes among economically liberal swing voters, but loses some economically conservative swing voters,” he said.

The paper was published in the journal American Economic Review.
Paper: Raise state minimum wage to stimulate state economy

By Phil Ciciora
Business and Law Editor

Raising the minimum wage in Illinois to $10 per hour would reduce income inequality, increase consumer demand and grow the state economy, according to a new study from a U. of I. labor expert.

Robert Bruno, a professor of labor and employment relations on the Urbana campus, says increasing the minimum wage from the current $8.25 per hour would have a substantial stimulative effect on the state economy but not much of an effect – positive or negative – on employment.

“We analyzed the impact that raising the minimum wage has on employment, hours and income, and concluded that it’s the best way to reduce wage inequality, grow the state economy and ensure that workers are paid a wage that’s commensurate with the cost of living,” said Bruno, also the director of the Labor Education Program in Chicago. “And most importantly, we found that raising the minimum wage would have no discernible negative effect on total employment.”

Bruno and study co-author Frank Manzo IV, the policy director of the Illinois Economic Policy Institute, also advocate for a host of other public policy recommendations, including:

■ A national expansion of The Fair Labor Standards Act to cover more workers.
■ A state minimum wage that is indexed to the chained Consumer Price Index.
■ An increase in the punitive damages for “wage theft.”

“While a minimum wage increase addresses income inequality, the effect is short-lived if additional actions are not taken,” Manzo said. “The minimum wage must be indexed to inflation, more workers must be covered under the law and violators must be penalized to ensure that the policy continues to help low-wage workers.”

The study also recommends setting the rate for workers under the age of 18 at $1 per hour below the new adult rate. Currently, young workers are allowed to be paid $0.50 less per hour than adult workers, putting their minimum wages at $7.75 per hour.

Under Bruno and Manzo’s recommendations, the wage floor for minors would be $9 per hour.

“We think that decreasing the youth wage-gap by $1 below the new adult minimum wage would still increase consumer demand in the economy while maintaining an incentive for employers to hire young workers,” Bruno said. “We also believe that a portion of the new tax revenues generated by the higher minimum wage should be set aside and dedicated to encouraging young workers who might be laid off due to the changes to earn a GED diploma or college credits.”

Bruno and Manzo also would like to see a higher minimum wage paired with an expansion of the state’s earned income tax credit.

“The earned income tax credit is one of the best programs we have to incentivize work among the low paid,” Bruno said. “It’s a proven poverty fighter. So to help offset any negative effects associated with a minimum wage increase, optimal labor market policy calls for bumping up the earned income tax credit in concert with raising the minimum wage.”

Business interests often argue against raising the minimum wage by claiming such a move would blunt job growth. But those fears are overblown, the researchers say.

“Raising the minimum wage in Illinois to $10 per hour for adults would cause either a small drop or a small gain in employment, and it would have virtually no impact or maybe a small impact on weekly hours worked,” Bruno said. “Either way, the benefits of the policy far exceed the costs.”

According to the paper, the proposed minimum wage increase would increase labor income by $1.87 billion for intended beneficiaries and by at least $5.39 billion total for the Illinois economy. The increase would persist in the years that follow, the researchers say.

Bruno and Manzo also conclude that the increase in the punitive damages for not paying the minimum wage would not have much of an effect – positive or negative – on employment, according to a new study co-written by Robert Bruno, a professor of labor and employment relations on the Urbana campus.

Minimum effort: Raising the minimum wage in Illinois to $10 per hour would stimulate the state economy but not have much of an effect – positive or negative – on employment, according to a new study co-written by Robert Bruno, a professor of labor and employment relations on the Urbana campus.

According to the paper, the proposed minimum wage increase would increase labor income by $1.87 billion for intended beneficiaries and by at least $5.39 billion total for the Illinois economy. The increase would persist in the years that follow, the researchers say.

Bruno and Manzo also conclude that the new rate would generate between $141.2 million and $192.2 million in new annual state income-tax revenue.

“And if sub-minimum wage earners are brought up to the $10 per hour minimum wage level, the increase in total labor income would be raised from $5.39 billion to between $5.41 billion and $5.43 billion,” Bruno said. “Over 10 years, total tax revenues would also increase by between $31.1 million and $63.0 million for Illinois’ state and local governments and by between $42.0 million and $89.2 million for the federal government.”

On the enforcement side, the researchers recommend three steps to ensure that workers are earning at least the minimum wage rate.

First, they recommend increasing the punitive damages for not paying the minimum wage to the annualized minimum wage amount per employee in addition to back pay.

“That translates into an initial deterrent of $20,800 per employee,” Bruno said.

Second, the authors recommend doubling the state income-tax credit.

SEE MINIMUM WAGE, PAGE 16
Most infant death rates won’t meet U.S. reduction goals

By Shanita Forrest

The infant mortality rate set forth as a national goal in the federal government’s Healthy People 2020 initiative is likely to be attained by only one demographic group – highly educated white mothers, the authors of a new study say.

Healthy People is an ongoing campaign to improve the health of all Americans by 2020, and an initiative of the Department of Health and Human Services. Healthy People’s objectives include decreasing the national mortality rate during the first year of life from the current 6.7 to fewer than 6.0 deaths per 1,000 live births. Although other demographic groups, especially those with a high school education or greater is likely to achieve the targeted rate, predict researchers Shondra Loggins and Flavia Cristina Drumond Andrade at the U. of I.

Loggins is a recent graduate of the doctoral program and Andrade is a professor, both in the department of kinesiology and community health.

Currently at about 4.1 deaths per 1,000 live births, the IMR for children of white women with high school educations or greater is expected to drop to 3.9 by 2020, according to the study. By contrast, the researchers indicate that the rate for black women with equivalent education will drop from the current rate of 9.4 to 8.3 deaths per live births – an improvement, but still more than double the rate for their white counterparts.

Likewise, by 2020, the overall IMR for black women is expected to be twice the rate for whites – 11.8 and 5.1 infant deaths per 1,000 births, respectively. “So looking to the future, what we would like to see is that white women, especially the more than six centuries of choral and instrumental in early music, for which the racial disparity persisted, even if the mother’s boy friend provided financial or emotional support during the delivery and afterward, if family members were around, if the mother was working or not and the number of hours she worked during the pregnancy, and if she had smoked or used drugs,” Loggins and Andrade predict that IMRs in the U.S. will continue on a downward trajectory through 2020, and they project that the national rate will drop to 5.4 deaths per 1,000 live births, well below the Healthy People 2020 target.

Resolving the racial disparities in IMRs, though, will require a multifaceted strategy that addresses various risk factors at the individual and societal levels, the researchers said.

Providing access to prenatal care will be vital, since IMRs are almost four times higher among women who do not receive any prenatal care.

“Making health care, including prenatal care, available to uninsured women under the Affordable Care Act and through the expansion of Medicaid is a step in the right direction,” said Loggins, who is a research data analyst for the Counseling Center on campus.

Loggins explored other data sets in her dissertation, from which the current study was drawn, and Loggins, who is a research data analyst for the Counseling Center on campus.

Making contraceptives available and affordable also could reduce the numbers of unplanned pregnancies, and, ultimately some infant deaths, Andrade said. “Also, we can continue investing in education,” Andrade said. “If we curb the dropout rates and make sure that minority students who access to higher education, we can close some of the gaps. And it’s clear, in other studies, that smoking is a very important risk factor, so public service campaigns aimed at limiting women’s use of cigarettes are crucial.”

The study, which appeared recently in the Journal of Community Health, is available online.◆

Noted conductor Andrew Megill to lead choral activities

By Dusty Rhodes

Andrew Megill, considered one of the leading choral conductors of his generation, will join the U. of I. as the fall as director of choral activities and as a professor of conducting. Megill leads three vocal ensembles: the Montreal Symphony Orchestra Chorus, the Carmel Bach Festival Chorale and Fuma Sacra, a chamber choir specializing in early music, for which he has served as artistic director since its founding in 1989. He previously served as music director of the Masterwork Chorus and Orchestra, as chorus master for the Spoleto Festival USA and as a professor at Westminster Choir College at Rider University.

Megill has frequently prepared choirs for performances with top orchestras, including the Cleveland Orchestra, Dresher Philharmonic, the National Symphony Orchestra and the New York Philharmonic. He has been a guest conductor for the Yale Institute of Sacred Music, TEMEN vocal ensemble, the Julliard Opera Center and Emmanuel Music (Boston). In December, he will make his debut conducting the Montreal Symphony Orchestra.

Jeffrey Magee, the director of the School of Music, said he’s happy to have found the right person to lead the U. of I. choral program. “Andrew Megill has all the right tools – extensive experience in professional and academic worlds, capacious knowledge of more than six centuries of choral music repertoire, impeccable rehearsing and conducting technique, and a gift for bringing out the best in the musicians with whom he works,” Magee said. “He is a perfect match for the School of Music’s choral program, which was the first in the country to offer the doctorate in choral conducting and whose alumni are in leadership positions all over the country.”

Megill said he’s looking forward to joining the U. of I. “I am thrilled to contribute to the university’s extraordinary legacy as one of the nation’s most important centers for the study of the choral art.” Megill replaces Fred Stoltzfus, who retired in 2013, and Kris-
U. of I. policy expert Rob Olshansky on mitigating the danger of landslides

Editor’s note: Rob Olshansky, a professor of urban and regional planning at the U. of I., has published extensively on planning and policy for unstable ground, dating back to his 1987 dissertation, “Landslide Hazard in the United States: Case Studies in Planning and Policy Development,” and including law review and legal newsletter articles emphasizing the need for local governments to address landslide hazards. In the aftermath of the deadly Oso, Wash., landslide on March 22, Olshansky discussed the role of urban planning in safeguarding citizens from these unpredictable and potentially fatal events with Dusty Rhodes, arts and humanities editor at the News Bureau.

How could this tragedy have been avoided?

The best way to avoid such tragedies is through the approval process for residential subdivisions. If such a subdivision – along a river, and close to a slope – were being proposed today, I would hope that the siting and design would be carefully evaluated. In California, for example, such a process would be governed by a local subdivision ordinance as well as by the California Environmental Quality Act. The county would also have a “safety element” in its general plan, as well as a hazard mitigation plan required by the federal government. The process would involve a geological assessment of the site and would be subject to public review. Given the history of sliding, it is likely that such a process would result in a denial of the subdivision application, unless the slope were to be stabilized. It would be possible to stabilize the slope, though probably too expensive for this rural subdivision.

The more difficult question is what to do with an existing subdivision once a slope instability hazard is discovered, as apparently happened in this case a few years ago. For this, there are no easy answers. A similar case is that of the La Conchita landslide in southern California, which killed 10 people in a 2005 event. This area, which also slid in 1995, has since been posted as unsafe, with no new development allowed, but residents continue to live there. All the possible solutions are costly to someone. Evict all the residents, buy out all the residents, relocate the residents from the most hazardous locations or reconstruct the slope. The current owner of the unstable slope has been exploring ways to stabilize it.

Was there any way this slope could have been reinforced? Or should the local government have prohibited building in its path?

Yes, the slope could probably be stabilized, by some combination of subsurface drainage, diversion structures and slope reconstruction. In such a location, local government can and should prohibit new development, unless the slope is made to be safe. This is now common practice in much of the U.S.

Are there laws or insurance regulations pertaining to landslide danger zones?

There is no landslide insurance available in the U.S., other than “mudslide” coverage under the National Flood Insurance Program. Unless owners are clever enough to obtain this latter coverage, standard property insurance explicitly excludes coverage for earth movement. This is why landslide cases always end up in court.

Owners lose their life investment, and have nowhere else to turn.

California has lots of policies that apply to such zones, including requirements to plan for natural hazards, subdivision regulations and procedures for evaluating new developments under the California Environmental Quality Act. California also maps selected landslide areas under the state’s Seismic Hazard Mapping Act, and the building code requires thorough geological review of such sites.

California also authorizes “geologic hazard abatement districts,” which are special taxing districts that allow property owners to collectively finance slope repairs. I’m not as familiar with Washington, but I know that the state has mapped landslide hazards, and local governments have the ability to strictly regulate new development threatened by possible landslides.

They do not, however, have an equivalent of California’s geologic hazard abatement districts.

How many such danger zones are there in the U.S.? Despite the fact that we have no mountains, are there any unstable places like this in Illinois?

The U.S. Geological Survey publishes maps of landslide-prone areas. Most states have some of these. Illinois has very few landslides; most occur on bluffs along the Mississippi River. The Illinois State Geological Survey, located on our campus, maintains an inventory of landslides in the state.

Could the Oso landslide have been predicted?

The hazard was certainly identified in their county hazard mitigation plan. But it also appears that the subdivision has existed for quite some time. So this is the same difficult situation as the La Conchita case: Once you discover that a hazard exists, what should you do about it? We know where landslides can potentially occur, but can’t predict when.

It’s difficult and costly to either repair a slope or move residents from a potentially hazardous location when you are not sure what the probability is. Would you do it if you thought there was a 50 percent chance of a slide in the next 30 years? What if it was 20 percent? 10 percent? 1 percent?

Most likely, you would consider the problem, talk to your neighbors, wait for additional studies, assume the local government is handling the problem appropriately, and hope that a slide doesn’t occur this year. In most years, you would be right.

The main lesson here is to be extremely careful when creating new subdivisions of property on or near potentially unstable slopes. Once a subdivision exists, it is very difficult to put the genie back into the bottle. No local government wants to have a landslide. At a minimum, it can be extremely costly to taxpayers; at its worst, a tragedy can occur.

A Minute With,™ is provided by the U. of I. News Bureau. To view archived interviews, visit go.illinois.edu/armw.
The U. of I. is releasing a new online portal for the Administration of Research and Training (START), a long-range initiative led by the vice chancellors for research of the Urbana and Chicago campuses – Peter Schiffer and Mitra Dutta, respectively – and Lynn Purdell, the Springfield campus vice chancellor for academic affairs and provost.

The myResearch portal is a tool that captures and displays sponsored project data directly for investigators. That information, including proposal submission data, award negotiation status, financial data and other information pertinent to a researcher’s project, was previously only available to select administrators or through paper reports.

“In the past, we’ve had all of these administrative tools built for each stage of the grant process, except the principal investigator,” said David Richardson, an associate vice chancellor for research who is the director of the Office of Sponsored Programs and Research Administration in Urbana. “Those tools have been for people working for them, not the people working for them. In the end, it means others had to ask multiple people in their department or central offices about the status of an application, now, if they want to know something right away, all they have to do is log in to the portal.”

While the myResearch portal is the first START tool, the ultimate aim of the project is to reduce the burden of administering sponsored projects, from application to closeout. A recent national study of the grant application process showed that researchers on average spend more than 40 percent of their time on grant administrative functions. That adds up for a premier research institution such as the U. of I., where annually more than 5,000 proposals for $700 million in grant funding are submitted.

“Of my priorities as vice chancellor for research is making sure that our researchers have the right support in place, administratively, to allow them to focus on their research problems,” Schiffer said. “Our office has been placing a special emphasis on providing better IT infrastructure – improving the systems that underlie research administration so researchers spend less time on administrative tasks – and the START myResearch project is a big step forward in our planned improvements and services.”

Several different research support themes will be rolled out through 2016, including tools to manage conflict of interest (which will be offered first), proposal submission and award negotiation, Institutional Review Board, and Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee.

The new systems will use open-source software to encourage collaboration and standardization across campuses where feasible, improve training for university support staff members and establish institutional best practices.

“Part of the problem at this point is we’ve brought on new layers (over time) and haven’t gotten rid of the old layers,” Matt Wheeler, a professor of animal sciences and the USC chair, said in a March 6 presentation to the board of trustees. “It means others in the Big Ten are able to respond more quickly to opportunities. (START) is going to improve our processes and provide us a pathway forward.”

The university will invest about $8 million over four years for the initiative. The myResearch portal will go online later this spring.
Six academic professionals honored for excellence

Six academic professionals will be honored with 2014 Chancellor’s Academic Professional Excellence awards at a reception April 8.

Now in its 26th year, the program honors the accomplishments and contributions of academic professionals, who perform a range of vital functions for the campus community. They provide critical support for administration, research laboratories and educational programs, and offer important outreach programs throughout the state.

Recipients are selected for work personal and professional contributions. Each award winner receives a $2,000 award, a $1,000 one-time budget increase for his or her department.

This year’s honorees:

Christa Deacy-Quinn, the collections manager at the Spurlock Museum in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, oversees the care, preservation, conservation, storage and securing of artifacts – from stone to wood to paper to feather. “This is a critical position at the Spurlock, whose extraordinary collection of nearly 50,000 artifacts comes from around the world,” wrote Wayne T. Pitard, the former director of the Spurlock Museum and a professor of religion, in nominating Deacy-Quinn. “The job requires an extensive knowledge of environmental conditions ranging from the dangers of humidity and mold to such problems as insect, chemical and even light.”

In addition, he noted that she also has been in charge of designing, building and installing the mounts and cases for the artifacts in both the permanent and temporary exhibits. “The value of having the collections manager also oversee the designing of the cases and mounts for them, is enormous,” Pitard wrote.

In addition, the 22-year U. of I. employee has taken on additional assignments, including supervising the packing of 40,000 artifacts that had to be safely transferred from the World Heritage Museum on the fourth floor of Lincoln Hall to the new Spurlock Museum across campus. She also helped design the museum’s security system, designed the high-density storage system at the Spurlock and worked with Douglas Breweer, the current director of the museum, to design the digital databases that track the artifacts.

In addition, she has become a public face of the museum in several ways, connecting with donors, visiting scholars and U. of I. faculty members who serve as guest curators. She also has given outreach programs ranging from the restoration of the Alma Mater sculpture.

Frank Ireland, a research animal scientist in the department of agricultural sciences in the College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences, is the manager of the Beef Cattle Research Unit at Dixon Springs Agricultural Research Center. “Located 250 miles south of Champaign, the center represents the major connection between the flagship Urbana campus and the southern third of the state,” wrote Vickie Jarrell, the director of the Agricultural Animal Care and Use Program, in nominating Ireland. “Frank Ireland is the face of the university in this agricultural region.”

Jarrell wrote that Ireland’s primary job is managing the production of about 1,100 cows and their calves and to direct the beef unit’s operations for applied research and teaching. During the past 23 years, he has increased the productivity of the beef cattle unit, demonstrating how better management practices can place dollars in the pockets of southern Illinois stakeholders, affecting the economic well-being of the region.

In addition to his public service work, Ireland has also studied the teaching and outreach missions of the U. of I. through hands-on workshops and learning labs for beef producers and students. He also teaches animal sciences laboratory sessions for area community colleges and Southern Illinois University. He is an excellent mentor to students and initiated a successful U. of I. internship program.

He recently remodeled an old unused pig barn into a facility to host workshops, extension events, teaching laboratories and research trials. He also installed several cameras so participants in remote locations can join training in real time. The video system has not only expanded the capacity for distance learning, but allows campus veterinarians to conduct live assessments of animal health.

“Frank is the single most influential connection to the university for beef producers south of Interstate 70,” said Neal R. Merchen, a professor of animal sciences and the associate dean for research in the College of ACES. “His knowledge of beef cattle management and of important challenges of the industry rivals that of anyone nationally.”

Hannes E. Leetaru, a senior petroleum geologist for the Illinois State Geological Survey in the Prairie Research Institute, has made extensive contributions through research, teaching and public service.

“While his primary responsibility at ISGS is applied research,” wrote Scott Fraley, a senior reservoir engineer at ISGS, “one of his true joys and passions is teaching, especially students and junior staff members. The majority of students are introduced to the oil and gas industry through his course and several have pursued careers in this area as a result of it.”

He has taught Geology 450 since 1996 when he proposed the course. Some of his students have said that it is the most important class they took, opening opportunities for graduate school and employment.

Leetaru’s research has been critical to the discovery of an oil field with about a half-million barrels of producible oil. His doctoral work helped explain the geology of one of three of the most important oil-producing geologic formations in the Illinois basin and he continued the work developing and researching ideas for improving the location of oil-producing areas of the basin. He is the principal investigator on a $128,829 million grant from the U.S. Department of Energy. His grants have been instrumental in making the ISGS a world leader in the area of geologic storage of CO2.

During his 24 years at the survey, he has been active in professional societies, including the American Association of Petroleum Geologists; he has served on the Urbana Academic Senate; and he was part of a steering committee for the National Science Foundation EarthCube governance.

“I would rank Dr. Leetaru as the foremost authority on the subsurface geology of the Illinois region,” said John H. McBride, a professor and the chair of the department of Geology. See Cape Winners.
Capes, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

has served as the point person for the $70 million renovation of the Natural History Building and several additional renovation projects. “It would have been reasonable to hire a full-time project manager to oversee this work,” Marshak wrote, “but Scott, without complaint, just added the duties to his already huge workload, and got the job done.”

Morris’ expertise in university business operations is widely recognized and is sought after by campus colleagues and nationally. An indicator of the high regard placed on him by his colleagues is that he is chair of both the Urbana Research Coordinators-Administrators Group and the Urbana Business Managers Group. Nationally, he is an active participant in the Society of Research Administrators, the National Council of University Research Administrators and the National Association of College and University Business Officers.

In addition, throughout his professional career, Morris has been involved in many campus and university committees for establishing, reviewing or revising university policies, procedures and electronic systems. He also has served his community, including four years as mayor of Pesotum.

Matthew Rosenstein, the associate director of the European Union Center in International Studies and Programs in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, has demonstrated exceptional leadership and management in his nearly four years in this position. Under his administration, the U.S. Department of Education and the European Commission have recognized the teaching, research and outreach accomplishments of the center, respectively designating it as a National Resource Center and a European Union Center of Excellence. It is one of only six in the nation to receive this dual designation.

Rosenstein oversees all fundraising efforts, manages the center’s daily activities and serves as the director of graduate studies. He successfully implemented the first European Union Studies Master’s Degree Program in the U.S. and has overseen the graduation of the first nine students.

“Matt’s extraordinary efforts were essential to the EUC’s many accomplishments and he continues to motivate center staff members and affiliated faculty members to reach new heights in scholarship, teaching and public engagement,” wrote Anna Stenport, the director of the EUC and a professor of Germanic languages and literatures, in her nomination letter.

“His proactive and deliberate approach to secure external funding and debt management of existing financial resources in a challenging budget environment is without comparison,” Stenport wrote. “His grant-writing efforts resulted in approximately $625,000 in new funding from diverse sources (a 25 percent increase in the budget).”

As director of graduate studies, with student recruiting responsibilities, he has overseen the MA program grow from five to 12 students, which has increased his advising duties. He works personally with each student – from initial admission to successful career placement, with students reporting 100 percent employment six months after graduation.

In addition, he served as the lead organizer for several regional events as part of the EUC’s public engagement mission, including the annual Regional Faculty Workshop in downtown Chicago, an EU Week at Illinois State University, activities with regional World Affairs Councils in Peoria, and, a weeklong tour of Europe for state legislators, journalists and K-12 educators.
‘Sourcing hub’ could help create more efficient supply chain

By Phil Ciciora
Business and Raw Editor

Firms can manage their sourcing better by developing relationships not only with their suppliers but also with their suppliers’ suppliers, according to two papers co-written by a U. of I. expert in supply chain management.

The lack of communication or collaboration between the big players at either end of the supply chain spectrum prevents companies from gaining efficiencies in costs, design and materials, says Anupam Agrawal, a professor of business administration at Illinois.

“There’s more power at the end of supply chains, and we found that not talking to the firm that provides your suppliers with their raw materials is not very helpful,” he said. “We think that there’s a lot of efficiency to be gained there.”

If you’re an automobile company, you’re buying parts that contain steel and aluminum from small suppliers, who, in turn, buy these raw materials from another firm. And these main suppliers of raw materials, whether it’s raw aluminum or raw steel, are fewer and as big, if not bigger, than the automotive firms – “as big as Ford or GM, but on the other side of the supply chain,” Agrawal said.

“But we find that most companies focused on producing cars and trucks don’t have open lines of communication with the firms that produce steel or aluminum,” he said. “They only talk to the middle men, the suppliers. The auto firms believe they should only focus on what they do best, and that’s in manufacturing. When they talk to the middle men, they’re talking about what you buy whereas a particular supplier is only talking to the aluminum supplier for that one component. As far as the supplier is concerned, they’re optimizing their discrete product.”

Therefore, choosing to use different grades of raw materials, or choosing to simplify your design or manufacturing processes, is far more effective and valuable than mere negotiation-based production and cost.

If a car manufacturer is a big purchaser of aluminum or steel in a country or in a market, the carmaker also can leverage that advantage with a volume-based discount from the raw material manufacturer and better lending rates from banks, Agrawal said. “Whether you’re a big firm or one of the hundreds of suppliers, you have to go to the bank to get money,” he said. “You can also go to shareholders and get money from the market. In general, though, because you’re a big company like Ford, GM or BMW, the cost of capital at which you will get money is lower than what your suppliers can get. Banks will charge them higher interest rates because they are smaller. So you’re only paying the bank a half-percent whereas your supplier would pay 2 percent for the same money. When you’re a big firm, you have more negotiating power for money, too.”

“Therefore, if you buy raw material using your money, you not only procure a volume-based discount, but also the money you’re using to buy it has been financed at a lesser rate of interest. This reduces costs.”

According to Agrawal, the sourcing hub is scalable to other industries that require a considerable amount of raw material to produce goods.

“It’s applicable to everything from aerospace and appliances to apparel and footwear,” he said. “And it’s not only about better cost. Firms will also receive better advice on what raw material to use.”

The research is relevant to business, but it’s also robust from an academic standpoint, Agrawal said.

“Based on what we have learned in over four years of studying this issue, the advantages are there for everybody,” he said. “No one loses in this. If you’re talking to firms at the back-end of the supply chain, it’s not that somebody’s purse is getting lighter. Everyone wins because the primary focus need not be on cost reduction. The primary focus is on simplification, complexity reduction and improvement of designs. That really moves out cost in the supply chain for everybody. And everyone benefits with stronger relationships.”

Agrawal co-wrote the research with Luk N. Van Wassenhove, of INSEAD, and Arnold De Meyer, of Singapore Management University.

The papers will appear in the California Management Review and the journal Manufacturing and Service Operations Management.
ENGINEERING

Michael Selig, a professor of aerospace engineering, has been named an associate fellow of the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics for his work in aerospace engineering and as a leader in aerospace engineering education. According to the institute, associate fellows must have accomplished or must have been in charge of important engineering or scientific work, or have done work of outstanding merit or have otherwise made outstanding contributions to the arts, sciences or technology of aeronautics or astronautics. Selig leads the U. of I. Applied Aerodynamics Group and publishes widely in the areas of low-speed aerodynamics, low Reynolds number aerodynamics, airfoil design, wind energy, wind tunnel testing and real-time flight simulation, including aircraft icing upset simulation and modeling.

William Gropp, the Thomas M. Siebel Chair in Computer Science, received the SIAM Activity Group on Supercomputing Career Prize at the Society for Industrial and Applied Mathematics’ Conference on Parallel Processing and Scientific Computing. This prize is awarded every two years to a senior researcher who has made broad, distinguished contributions to the field of algorithms research and development for parallel scientific and engineering computing. Gropp’s research interests include parallel computing, software for scientific computing and numerical methods for partial differential equations.

Imad L. Al-Qadi, a founder Professor of Engineering and the director of the Illinois Center for Transportation and the Advanced Transportation Research and Engineering Laboratory at Illinois, has been awarded the S. S. Steenbarg Award from the American Road and Transportation Builders Association. Named after the founding president of the association’s research and education division, the award recognizes people who make remarkable contributions to transportation education. Al-Qadi has established himself as a leader in the transportation profession by advancing transportation engineering through his effective leadership, exceptional scholarly contributions, and research innovations on pavement materials, analysis and design; pavement interlayer systems; pavement instrumentation, and ground penetrating radar.

FAA

Debra Richtmeyer, a professor of saxophone, was presented the Honorary Lifetime Member Award from the North American Saxophone Alliance at its national conference at the U. of I. last month. This is the only award given by the organization. Past winners include Frederick Hemke, Eugene Rousseau and Sonny Rollins. Richtmeyer is a past president of the organization.

IFS

Lian Ruan, the Illinois Fire Service Institute’s library director and head librarian, was named Member of the Week on March 31 by the Association of College and Research Libraries. Ruan has been a member of the association since 2000, which is a division of the American Library Association, a professional association of academic librarians and other interested people. ACRL is the largest division of the ALA.

LAS

Renee L. Baillargeon, a professor of psychology, was awarded the 2013 Fyssen Foundation International Prize. Given annually since 1980, the scientific award is given to a scientist who has conducted distinguished research in the areas supported by the foundation, which is based in France.

This year the theme was human cognitive development. The award ceremony will be in Paris in March. The foundation’s goal is to encourage “all forms of scientific inquiry in cognitive mechanisms, including thought and reasoning, which underlie animal and human behavior, their biological and cultural bases, and phylogenetic and ontogenetic development.”

LIGHT SHOW

An abstract image of a laser at the Institute for Genomic Research by U of I News Bureau photographer L. Brian Stauffer placed third in the science and research category in the monthly image competition of the University Photographers’ Association of America.

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MEDIA

Charles “Stretch” Ledford, a professor of journalism, has been elected to the national board of directors of the American Society of Media Photographers, the premier trade association for the world’s most respected photographers. The society is the leader in promoting photographers’ rights, providing education in better business practices, producing business publications for photographers and helping to connect clients with professional photographers. Founded in 1944, the organization has nearly 7,000 members and 39 chapters.

PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Two photographs by News Bureau photographer L. Brian Stauffer were honored by the University Photographers’ Association of America in its February monthly image competition. “Laser,” an abstract image of a laser at the Institute for Genomic Biology, placed third in the science and research category, and a portrait of a visiting videographer from Egypt placed third in the people and portraits category. The association is an international organization of college and university photographers concerned with the application and practice of photography as it relates to the higher education setting.

SEE ACHIEVEMENTS, PAGE 16
In honor of the Day of Sport on April 6, Campus Recreation will be open 7 a.m.-8 p.m., anyone with an i-card can use the recreation centers. In addition, an i-card holder can bring up to four guests during this time. The facilities are available: Activities include classes, races, races, and sports programs. The Carson Student Recreation Center East and the Ice Arena for a public skate session.

**‘Pursuit of Happiness’**

Free faculty/staff seminar is April 22

The 17th Annual Faculty/Staff Seminar, “The Pursuit of Happiness: Strategies to Create a Sustainable Work-Life Balance,” will be April 22. This all-day program will offer insights and practical life skills for both personal growth and professional development. Topics include establishing healthy boundaries, living a vibrant life, building meaningful capstone skills to maintain a sustainable work-life balance.

To register, go to https://fasu2014.thereregistrationsystem.com. Registration is open to all of our facilities. For more information, call 217-333-8342.

This event is sponsored by the Office of the Provost, the Faculty/Staff Assistance Program, the U. of I. Wellness Center, the Student Recreation Center, the Office for Training and Professional Development, and the U. of I. Extension.

**Urbana Chapter of AAUP**

Promotion, tenure workshop is April 22

On April 22, Provost Ilesanmi Adesida will be the principal panelist at a workshop on “Achieving Tenure and Promotion” as part of the Urbana Campus’ Promotion and Tenure Workshop Series. Sponsored by the Urbana Chapter of the American Association of University Professors, the program begins at 2:30 p.m. in 210 Altgeld Hall.

Adesida and the other presenters will make short presentations, lead a discussion and answer questions from the audience on tenure and promotion. This program may be of particular interest to untenured faculty and continuing tenured-track-assistant professors, associate professors seeking promotion and to those mentoring these people or serving on promotion and tenure committees.

Panelists (and the topics they will address): Adesida and Barbara Wilson, the executive vice provost for faculty and academic affairs, and Bruce DeCock, the U. of I. emeritus of aerospace engineering and a past president of the Urbana Faculty Advisory Committee); Billie Jean Theide, a professor of art and design; Sandy Garfinkel, the assistant vice provost for faculty relations; and Robert O’Leary, an assistant professor in the U. of I. Humanities Department and a past president of the Urbana AAUP Chapter (AAUP position and support provided by the AAUP at the national and campus levels).

No prior registration is required and all faculty members and staff are invited to attend.

For further information, contact Harry H. Hinton, 217-333-2653, h-hinton@illinois.edu.

**Agreement to facilitate research**

U. of I., Carle reach agreement

To be effective, however, space is limited and advance registration is required. For information about the seminar facilitator, Brian Luke Seaward, go to www.brianlukeseaward.net. For more information, call 217-333-8342.

This event is sponsored by the Office of the Provost, the Faculty/Staff Assistance Program, the U. of I. Wellness Center, the Student Recreation Center, the Office for Training and Professional Development, and the U. of I. Extension.

**Two events support U. of I. Wildlife Study Center on April 6, May 2**

Lea your love for local wildlife run wild at “Run Wild for Wildlife” on April 6. Lace up your runnning shoes, head to Homer Lake and choose from either the 10-mile or 6K course. Resident raptors from the Wildlife Medical Center will serve as course marathons. Runners are encouraged to bring your runnning medical care of injured wildlife at the Wildlife Medical Center, part of the U. of I. College of Veterinary Medicine.

For more information, visit runwild.eventbrite.com. For larger events, the Illinois Wildlife Study Center’s resident hawks and owls will also be on hand. The cost per person is $90. A $10 early registration discount is available through April 21. All proceeds will benefit the Illinois Wildlife Study Center.

For more information, visit go.illinois.edu/wws14

The Illinois Wildlife Medical Center is a nonprofit, volunteer-run organization that cares for nearly 1,500 sick or injured animals a year while training veterinary students and educating the public about local wildlife.

The Illinois Wildlife Medical Center is supported by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, the Illinois Department of Conservation, the Illinois Wildlife Study Center, and the Illinois Wildlife Study Center’s Endowment Fund.

**Eligibility**

The Illinois Wildlife Medical Center is a nonprofit, volunteer-run organization that cares for nearly 1,500 sick or injured animals a year while training veterinary students and educating the public about local wildlife.

**Registration**

Registration is underway for the U. of I. Spanish summer camps at the University Language Academy for Children.

The camps are designed for students ages 4-11 to promote early second-language acquisition through Spanish immersion in a safe, fun and stimulating environment by combining the renowned language teaching expertise of the department of Spanish, Italian and Portuguese with age-appropriate activities. The camp’s teachers are native and near-native speakers of Spanish with experience working with children.

The camps are open to children who want to explore Spanish, as well as for children in Spanish-speaking families.

Children will have the opportunity to learn or continue developing the language and gain knowledge of the rich cultural traditions of the Spanish-speaking world through Spanish summer camps.

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**Journal of the Illinois Historical Society**

Association for Japanese Cultural Studies

The Association for the Study of Japanese Cultural Studies is hosting the 33rd Annual Conference in Chicago on April 4-6 at the Chicago Marriott Downtown Magnificent Mile. The conference is open to the public and will feature panels on a wide variety of topics related to Japanese cultural studies. For more information, visit www.jacso.org.

**Call for papers**

**Taxonomy and ontogeny in Japanese art**

*The Journal of the Illinois Historical Society* is currently accepting papers for a special issue on “Taxonomy and ontogeny in Japanese art.” The issue will be published in the spring of 2015. Papers are due by October 1, 2014. For more information, contact Kelly L. Kincaid at kkincaid@illinois.edu.
BRIEFS. CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13

University YMCA

Work by MFA candidate featured

This year’s Emerging Artist show at the University YMCA will feature the work of multimedia artist Laura Wennstrom, an MFA candidate in new media at the U. of I. The opening reception for “Inside/Outside,” from 5-7 p.m. on April 10, also is a Boneyard Arts Festival event. Wennstrom’s work will be on view at the Y weekdays April 10-May 17.

Wennstrom’s new installation piece, “Reticulation,” has been selected as the 2014 Boneyard Arts-Festival Signature Image and will be on display April 18-May 17 at Figure One gallery, the School of Art and Design’s exhibition space in downtown Champaign. Additionally, “Inside/Outside” will feature interactive art workshops and programming at the University YMCA and at Figure One. For more information on upcoming events, visit www.universityymca.org/art/

Wennstrom has worked with children in underserved neighborhoods across the Midwest and in rural Ecuador teaching art, reading and special education. She has developed and implemented art curriculum for after-school programs and art classes for students of all ages. In addition, she has created several public murals in collaboration with children and adults from local communities.

“In the process of making art, I am interested in gathering those materials and objects – the cast off, the forgotten, the incidental, the profound – and through combining and layering, I find new ways to tell stories,” Wennstrom said. “My art represents the intersection of my life with the people I have worked with while honoring their experiences and trying to make sense of my own. Sometimes this intersection happens within the studio, sometimes this exchange happens outside of the studio with others. I am interested in these spaces and how they inform my practice.”

Illiini Union Bookstore

First university-operated Starbucks opens

A Starbucks Coffee retail store is now open in the Illini Union Bookstore. It is the first of three Illini Union-operated Starbucks Coffee shops that will open during the next three years.

A student survey issued in late 2012 showed a high demand for Starbucks coffee, ranking it overwhelmingly first in the “coffee/drink shop” category. The Illini Union subsequently purchased three franchise licenses in November 2012.

The Illini Union Bookstore was chosen as the first location because of its foot traffic near the busy bus stop at the corner of Daniel and Wright streets. The store is located

ON THE WEB

Photo series: illinois.edu/blog/view/1561
University Archives: archives.library.illinois.edu

Inside Illinois

April 3, 2014
Expert on ‘Global Hinduism’ to deliver this year’s Thulin lecture at Illinois

By Dusty Rhodes

Arts and Humanities Editor

The religious tradition that brought us yada, meditation and the concepts of karma and reincarnation will be the topic of this year’s Marjorie Hall Thulin Lecture in Religion, an annual event sponsored by the U. of I. department of religion. Vasudha Narayanan, the distinguished professor of religion at the University of Florida and the author of “Hinduism” and “The Vernacular Veda: Revelation, Recitation and Ritual,” will deliver the lecture at 8 p.m. April 9 at Spurlock Museum. Her topic, “Global Hinduism,” will touch on Southeast Asia, the Caribbean and the United States. A reception will follow the lecture.

Narayanan, a past president of the American Academy of Religion, was educated at the University of Madras and Bombay in India, and Harvard University. In 2010, she was named Teacher Scholar of the Year at the University of Florida, where she helped establish the nation’s first Center for the Study of Hindu Traditions. She is a co-editor of the popular essay collection “Life of Hinduism.” Her research has been supported by a variety of grants and fellowships, including the National Endowment for the Humanities and the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation.

For the past 15 years, she has been researching Hinduism in the U.S., Cambodia, the Caribbean and elsewhere. “Hindu traditions have flourished in many parts of the world over the past 2,000 years,” she said. With the exception of the influence of a few charismatic leaders, the spread of Hinduism has happened mainly by migration. Narayanan said, since the religion has no tenet compelling followers to proselytize. “Exporting of religious ideas does not seem to have been the primary reason for Hindus to be traveling outside of India,” she said. “There have been economic reasons – largely trade, indentured work, and in the 20th and 21st centuries, I would say professional opportunities in Europe, Australia and certainly our country.”

Hindus began moving to the U.S. after passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 replaced the quota restrictions (70 percent of immigrant slots were reserved for people born in the United Kingdom, Ireland or Germany) with a system based on family reunification and job skills. Narayanan traces the relatively recent building boom in Hindu temples back to this initial wave of highly skilled immigrants and their appreciation of traditional American values.

“Because of the nature of the Act, the first major wave of immigrants was professionals. They were not under financial strain,” she said. “In addition to that, the socioeconomic and political system here values religious patronage. Religion has a certain cultural capital here in America that it might not have in other countries. So freedom of religion, the value placed on institutions of faith, the financial infrastructure and the professional qualifications of the immigrants – all these things have combined here to result in the building of temples in practically every city in America.”

The temples are the most visible representation of Hinduism in America; the religious tradition itself defies easy definition, because of its expansive breadth, encompassing a range of ideas and traditions.

“I could argue that it’s even more diverse than Christianity,” Narayanan said, “because with few exceptions, in Christianity, there’s the centrality of Christ. Hinduism is more like a Venn diagram: There are multiple areas of overlap, but the diversity is quite amazing.”

For the Thulin lecture, Narayanan plans to discuss Hinduism from two perspectives: as practiced by people who identify themselves as Hindus, and by teasing out themes that may have had Hindu connections at some point – connections that have been ignored, forgotten or so transformed that they may be rendered irrelevant.

“I’m talking about ideas and practices that at some point had Hindu context, but which are de-contextualized from their sociocultural milieu and distanced from the name Hindu,” she said. “Yoga and different kinds of meditation are actually promoted under the guise of being universal, or good for your health. But these have been almost completely decontextualized from the Hindu religion.”

The Thulin lectures were endowed by Marjorie Hall Thulin (1910-2009) out of her desire for students to understand how religion grows and functions in a complex society, especially Christianity in America. She was a 1931 graduate of Illinois, and enjoyed a successful career in advertising. She published poetry and children’s literature, and edited a book on the history of Glencore, Ill.
blung the number of minimum wage investigators in Illinois from 13 to 26, so that there would be one investigator per 228,000 workers, or one for every 10,000 to 16,000 sub-minimum wage earners.

Finally, they also recommend promoting unionization and partnerships with worker centers to reduce minimum wage theft.

**ACHIEVEMENTS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12**

**SOCIAL WORK**

Pallassana R. Balgopal, a professor emeritus of social work, has received a lifetime achievement award from the National Association of Professional Social Workers in India. This is the first time this association has given this award. The award was given because he has "made remarkable contribution to the social work profession, a man of Indian origin and has addressed the global issues and strengthened the social work profession at an international level," the association said. The award was presented by the former president of India, Mrs. Pratibha Patil at the International Conference on Spirituality and Social Work, held in Pune in March. ◆