Expanded advising center serves students yet to declare a major

By Sharita Forrest

ike many undergraduate students, Mackenzie Barron and Angela Turk arrived on campus their freshman years thinking they knew what they wanted to study—but quickly changed their minds. Barron, from Spring Valley, Ill., thought she was interested in biology; Turk, a native of Waukegan, Ill., intended to study business. But once they began taking classes, each of them soon realized that her chosen major didn’t quite fit, and each needed some guidance finding the right academic path.

And that confusion is what prompted Barron and Turk—and hundreds of students like them—to turn to the Division of General Studies, formerly known as the General Curriculum Center, for help. Since the late 1960s, the unit’s mission has been to help students make informed decisions so they can progress toward graduation in a timely manner if they are undecided about their academic objectives, in transition between colleges or majors, or just want to explore some of the nearly 200 majors and 100 minors available at Illinois.

The advising center, formerly in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, recently expanded and became a campus-level unit to better meet the needs of undergraduates across campus. The division is a unit in the Campus Center for Advising and Academic Services, reporting to the provost. The unit moved from the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

The Division of General Studies was designed to be flexible enough that students can explore a variety of fields while taking courses that fulfill the general education requirements for almost any major on campus. Students may remain undeclared until they have completed 56 academic hours, at which time they must transfer to another curriculum or college.

“The advising we do is very developmental,” said Chris Armstrong, who was recently appointed assistant director and has been an adviser in the center for more than three years. “We legitimize the idea that it’s OK to explore, and that students can create skills that are highly sought after and can be used anywhere while they stay on track for graduation.”

Parrott, who served as Barron’s adviser, encouraged her to explore courses in business because she had a fondness for numbers, and he made her aware of a minor in information technology studies that she didn’t know existed.

“Sometimes students and other people think that not having a major and being unusual is pejorative, but these are not second-rate students,” Parrott said. Historically, 10–15 percent of the incoming freshmen in the general curriculum have been honor students.

The Division of General Studies is designed to begin offering academic advising services in the residence halls and offer them to support them and keep them on track,” Barron said.

This fall, the center moved into a central campus location, in the Illini Union Bookstore Building, 807 S. Wright St., Champaign. And, with the greater resources available under the purview of Provost Linda Katehi, the center expanded its staffing, programming and services.

Beginning with the fall 2008 semester, the Division of General Studies will begin directly admitting and enrolling students who elect to start their academic careers as “undeclared.”

Over the next few years, some of the center’s academic advisers will serve about 3,600 undergraduates this semester within the newly expanded Campus Center for Advising and Academic Services, which now reports to the provost. The unit moved from the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.
Moms, Dads associations make all parents automatic members

By Laura Prusik

The Moms Association encourages moms to plan their own support clubs and activities for their kids and themselves. This year, the program is expanding to include many different topics for parents. The associations’ volunteer events, resources, board meetings and other general topics for parents.

In order to keep parents involved in their children’s lives year-round, the Moms Association encourages moms to plan their own support clubs and activities for their kids and themselves. This year, the program is expanding to include many different topics for parents. The associations’ volunteer events, resources, board meetings and other general topics for parents.

How can this happen? Could it happen here?

By Craig Cramer

How can this happen? Could it happen here?

The Illinois approach is perhaps best demonstrated in the suicide-prevention program put in place in September.

In contrast to practice on most other campuses, the program focuses on preparing students to recognize when someone is having a crisis and asking the student to meet them. Those expectations will often include counseling.

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What they’re reading on college campuses

- "The Vida Banana," by Rosario Molano
- "A Thousand Splendid Suns," by Khaled Hosseini
- "Water for Elephants," by Sara Gruen
- "The Kingdom of the Back Half," by Mark Haskell Smith
- "Easy: I Say, Easy: We Burn," by Elizabeth Knowles
- "America's Next Top College Gridiron," by Gilchrist, by Stephanie Mayer
- "The Vagina Monologues," by Emily McDermott

The curious gather at a September open house of the UI’s submission in the Solar Decathlon competition at the University of Illinois. After two years, more than 200 students, under the supervision of faculty members, "elementhouse" was transported to Washington, D.C., for the biennial international competition, Oct. 12-20.

Students have been involved in every aspect of the project, from designing its portable foundation, to participating in project management, raising and finishing its walls, windows and doors. Designing and integrating all of its mechanical and electrical systems, designing and constructing the built-in furniture, and designing and creating the team’s Web site. Online and all of its printed communication materials.

For James Young, a junior in materials science and engineering, working on the solar house has raised him from an interest in doing research on photovoltaics to thinking more about starting a business devoted to integrating solar technology in homes and businesses. In the meantime, he is consider volunteering for a project that develops solar-powered refrigerators for grocery stores and restaurants in countries such as Haiti that lack a reliable electric supply.

"I think solar energy is an up-and-coming technology," said. "But only in this community – useful here in the U.S., it’s also useful in developing countries where there is no (electrical) grid."

When the competition is finished in Washington, D.C., most of the team will take their houses back to their campuses and use them for research. The UI Solar Decathlon entry eventually will be used for research, too, but first it will make a stop in Washington, D.C., November to exhibit in the "backyard" of the Chicago Center for Green Technology at 440 S. Sacramento Blvd. The center is a non-profit organization established by Mayor Richard Daley in 2002 to help promote green technology in the Chicagoland area.

The university solar house will be open to the public for tours and will be a tour opportunity for attendees attending the Greenbuild conference in Chicago Nov. 7-9.

A large, diverse and dedicated team of faculty and staff members have guided and supported the project. For more details – including a virtual tour of the house – visit the UI Solar Decathlon Web site (www.uiuc.edu).
20-year-old partnership with East St. Louis reaps many benefits for residents, students

By Melissa Mitchell

East St. Louis as eye-opening.

have grown up in relative comfort in suburban
non-existent city infrastructure.

"the most distressed small city in
federal housing authorities as
Municipal League, East St. Louis
more than 100 UI students, armed with hammers, drills,
convoy of vans and SUVs arrives in East St. Louis

Hailed as "An All-American City" in 1957 by

The students and faculty members – among the
earliest participants in the university's East St.
its Action Research Project – had a hard time figuring out where they because many of the city's strongest stories were existing – staking out their
salvation value.

Fast forward to September 2007. An entire
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Latino/A Family Visit Day: better than a ‘once in a dozen years’

By Roxana Ryan

O

is a beautiful September Sunday. Daissy Dominguez welcomed her parents for the 1st time to the UI campus for an introduction to all things Illinois – in Spanish – for Latino/A Family Visit Day. Her younger siblings went one way for fun and games; her parents and grandmother another, for information on campus life.

“The day is all about ‘College Knowledge,’” said Cathy Acredolo, an associate dean of students and co-chair of the Latino Family Visit Day. “Family support is essential for student success, regardless of cultural background.”

All parents feel mixed emotions when it’s time for a child to leave home for a large university. Combine this with language barriers, confusing paperwork and unfamiliar campus, and the process can be terrifying.

Since 2004, the UI has hosted an orientation program for families of Latino/a students new to campus. The daily event focuses on helping parents and siblings become familiar and comfortable with the university. Adult family members learn about campus resources, older siblings learn about the college experience and leadership skills while younger siblings are escorted to the Campus Recreation Center East facility for swimming, crafts and movies.

Acredolo said some transient families aren’t familiar with higher education in the U.S.

“If the student’s parents attended a university in their home country or didn’t attend college at all, they might be hesitant about sending their child away to an American university,” Acredolo said. “The educational system is different here in the U.S. and can be very confusing.”

Daissy Dominguez, a sophomore in political science and psychology, said in Spanish. “We want to know who will take care of my and my siblings’ needs and we want to feel comfortable knowing where I’m at and how things are going.”

While parents and younger siblings are one big family, the older siblings have a unique role to play. As the first in the family to attend college, the older siblings are their parents’ liaisons to the campus and act as role models.

“Parents always have their doubts,” Belinda Zuñiga, Dominguez’s mother, agreed that she was uncertain at first. “They need to be reassured that their child is going to do well.”

Since parents and younger children are separated for most of the day, parents are able to focus on the program without worrying about keeping the younger family members happy.

Daissy Dominguez, 17-year-old Alton, 6-year-old Ariana and 3-year-old Alexis, were escorted to workshops designed for them.

The sibling programs are designed so they can relate to the place their older siblings attend college,” Acredolo said. “Family Visit Day is very much a recruitment tool as well. We want to show the families that the university is for them too.”

For siblings aged 17-13, a program is available on the engineering campus to encourage siblings to set goals on higher education, learn about college administration and cultivate leadership skills.

For younger siblings, a day of郁闷, crafts, snacks and movies was planned at CRCE. Parents were also given a chance to exhibit their own secrets. The secrets were revealed in postcards with secrets were collected.

The siblings were able to see their own secret written by somebody else. And through that, they hoped people could feel liberated knowing they were not alone.

For siblings aged 11-7, a program is available on the engineering campus to encourage siblings to set goals on higher education, learn about college administration and cultivate leadership skills.

The main difference between Warren’s Web site and Kitchka’s was that the secrets display on the museum at the museum are exclusive contributions from the UI and the Champaign-Urbana community.

“The Web site, secrets could come from California or New York, and it’s easier to brush off,” Kitchka said. “New, (I) mean, I’m just fa…ciling you know people are more aware of other other and maybe even more willing to react to each other.”

As it turned out, some people seemed to respond as Kitchka had hoped. Next to the exhibition was a notebook inviting visitors to make comments about the display or share a secret of their own.

“One entry said, ‘I didn’t realize so many people have the same secrets.’ Another asked, ‘How many people do you know who carry around secrets that may influence their very being? … The real hard-nosed ones break my heart.”

Maxson acknowledged.

“Siblings were from LaFayette, Ill., majoring in art history with a minor in French studies, was an intern with the museum last semester and helped Kitchka organize the exhibit.

Buhie said as the exhibition progressed, she noticed that some of the postcards were taken down and replaced with new postcards that had either “Faith” or “Fictions” typed in the middle.

“The main difference between Warren’s Web site and Kitchka’s was that the secrets display on the museum at the museum are exclusive contributions from the UI and the Champaign-Urbana community.”

“Some of the secrets were motivated by hopes and dreams. One showed a picture of some Lucky Charm cereal spilled over a tabletop. It said in Spanish, ‘I want to be a graphic designer,’ and another showed a picture of a man jumping into a pool of water next to a waterfall. It said, ‘I know where the pool is, I’ve been there.’”

Others were motivated by love and relationships. A postcard with a picture of a laughing bride and groom said, “Here comes the groom…” and another with brides was written, “I’m not sure you won.”

“My family, like many Latino families, is very close,” Dominguez said. “My parents have encouraged all of my siblings to get a good education. They understand how important it is.”

Dominguez’s family arrived from Chicago early on Sept. 30 in time for a contextual broadcast at the Illini Union.

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“We often hear it’s a party school but now my opinion has changed,” Dominguez said. “(I) learned more about the university and it was very interesting at first. I wasn’t sure where to go for information.”

Dominguez’s father, Alfredo Zuñiga, said the program gave a different perspective on the university.
Emergency text-messaging system in place

The Illinois is launching a new emergency communications system that will alert students and faculty and staff members to crisis situations on the Urbana campus through mass cell phone text and e-mail messages.

The emergency messaging system - one of several emergency communications strategies for the campus - was developed by Nuance Software, a company based in Schaumburg, Ill., that has developed similar systems for the U.S. Senate, General Electric and Ohio University. The system enables authorized campus officials to send thousands of text and e-mail messages to cell phones, PDAs, computers and other devices to alert people to incidents that may affect their health or safety.

The system, which will be used to broadcast information to the entire campus community only when there is information about potentially life-threatening situations, will be used on a smaller scale to contact first responders about urgent situations.

Students and faculty and staff members are requested to log on to the emergency system Web site at emergency.illinois.edu and enter their contact information. Each person can be given up to three e-mail addresses and two text message addresses. Users can change, add to or delete their contact information at any time.

It should be noted that the system can deliver messages more quickly to e-mail accounts on university-owned e-mail systems and cannot control the speed of delivery to account with Internet service providers such as Gmail.

While delivering the contact information is voluntary, enrollment will ensure that the campus community receives critical information in the most efficient manner possible. People who elect not to sign up for the service will receive emergency alerts only by e-mail to the e-mail address they have listed in the campus directory, but everyone is urged to enter alternate e-mail addresses as well. People who want to receive alerts by text messages to their electronic devices or other notifies will need to enter that information into the system.

“We think that the emergency messaging system is going to enhance our ability to contact a large number of people quickly, but no one system is going to reach everyone,” said Krystal Fitzpatrick, assistant chief of police and director of public safety. “We have a multitude of reasons for reaching people, and the text messaging system is just one component of the campus emergency communications strategy that includes disseminating information through e-mail, a telephone tree, local radio and television stations, and the 217-351-2000 toll-free phone number.”

Emergency plans in place for threats on campus

The Division of Public Safety and the Office of Campus Emergency Management have been reviewing best practices and guidelines for dealing with threats posed by people armed with weapons, as well as other potential crises.

“We are looking at what we have in place and suggestions about how things could be improved," said Krystal Fitzpatrick, assistant chief of police and director of public safety.

Counselors have been trained in response techniques to active threats, and crisis intervention team officers have specialized training in responding to and assisting people with mental health issues.

The Office of Campus Emergency Management has been working with individual campus units to develop emergency operations plans for various sorts of emergencies - including pandemics, fires, armed subjects and campus emergency plans and participated in realistic exercises. Because college campuses are very open environments and despite the best efforts of police and other campus units, people may be brought into the grounds or a building on campus. The UI police and the Office of Campus Emergency Management have developed a template to assist units in preparing plans for dealing with potential threats. Active threats are defined as incidents that create an immediate threat or pose an imminent danger to the campus community, such as an active shooter or sniper.

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Emergency mental health services: 244-7511 (24-hours a day, 365 days a year)

In non-emergency situations:

Dean of Students Office: 333-0510

What to do

In the event of an active threat, such as a shooter, police and the Office of Campus Emergency Management offer the following tips:

If possible, distance yourself from the threat by evacuating the building or area safely.

If evacuation is not possible, go into the nearest room, restroom or office and lock the door. If you cannot lock the door, block the entrance with objects to prevent entry. DO NOT answer or open the door until instructed to do so by police.

Secure doors and windows.

If time allows, turn off all lights and electronic or other devices to give the impression that the room is unoccupied.

Seek shelter behind sturdy cover - bookshelves, heavy desks, etc. - and stay out of sight.

As soon as safe possible, call 911 from a non-university phone or 8-911 on a campus phone. Provide your location, your name, the number of individuals (if known), and information about injuries to you or others.

Provide first aid to those who are injured.

DO NOT approach police officers as they search for the suspect(s) and eliminate the threat. Once the area is cleared of the threat, emergency personnel will aid the injured and safely evacuate the facility.

Student fee funds extend library hours

A new fee that is being charged on Jan. 11 for students.

The fee, caused by the UI Board of Trustees in March, means Illinois students will be able to spend more time in the library. On Aug. 2, the interrogation and the Orange Engineering Libraries began offering extended extended hours – 4 to 10 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday.

The library fee of $25 a semester for new full-time undergraduate and graduate/professional students supports a number of initiatives in addition to increasing library hours, including developing electronic media and digitization; improving information technology services and enhancing tools for online learning and research, and increasing the positions focused on direct student support, student learning and service.

The University Library's new hours Monday through Thursday are 8 a.m. to 10 p.m.; Friday, 12 a.m. to 10 p.m.; Saturday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.; and Sunday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Additionally, it will offer the "study hall" from 3 a.m. to 10 a.m. Monday through Friday.

The new schedule begins Monday through Thursday, open 3 hours, Friday, 12 a.m. to 9 p.m., Saturday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., and Sunday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.
Fall 2007

Dear Parents,

Last June, I stood at the western gate of the Silk Road near Dunhuang in northwest China. This is where the Great Wall ends its 6,000-mile traverse and where ancient traders once exchanged their goods. Just a few years ago it might have seemed odd for me, the chancellor of a major land grant university, to be standing on the clay-colored landscape of the Gobi Desert. But this past summer, I knew I had to be there.

Consider the symbolism. In the midst of trying to internationalize this university that sits in the heart of the American Midwest, I was standing at one of the most historical junctions on the most famous of trade routes – the Silk Road. Dunhuang has historically been a vital crossroads where many people from different races came together to exchange the most important ideas of the day.

These were the seeds of today’s globalization. We may not be trading spices and silk for gunpowder and paper, but the same principles still apply: Ideas transcending political boundaries. Knowledge shared among people who may not even share a common language. An unquenchable thirst for understanding this complex world we all share.

I’m hardly new to overseas travel but this summer it all came together: I knew I had to be out in the world because the world has come to Illinois like never before. To effect change in the world, it was always important to be out there, on the road less traveled, and to be a university that attracts the best and brightest from around the world. And to some extent we have done that for more than 100 years at Illinois.

We broaden the Illinois experience for all our undergraduates when, every year, we welcome international students to our campus. These students bring a wealth of cultures and experiences with them and we would not be the same without their contribution.

But what about our students who have never left the states? Never left Illinois? Standing, with my feet planted in the Gobi Desert this summer, I was sure I wanted all our students to have the opportunity to immerse themselves in another culture, to learn what it means to be a citizen of the world.

It is our mission to prepare our students to step seamlessly into the global economy. To have the skill set and the cultural awareness to negotiate their workplace whether in Bangalore, Beijing or Berkeley. Our associate provost for international affairs, William Brustein, says: “Students who have lived abroad are students who do not shun challenges. Our global students play a crucial role in internationalizing our classrooms.”

Each year 25 percent of Illinois students participate in our study abroad program. I want to see this number grow to 50 percent. We have made this a priority in our campus strategic plan, echoing a national movement that is working to increase the numbers of students who study overseas. Legislation currently moving through Congress, the Paul Simon Study Abroad Act, proposes to support universities in these efforts. In the meantime, Illinois is making great progress as we build relationships with universities worldwide. We now even offer joint degrees with universities in China, Poland and Singapore.

I want to encourage you and your student to consider studying abroad. International education has immeasurable value in terms of cultural understanding, international cooperation, democratization and peace. And I would argue that today, it has gone from being important to being imperative.

In order to give students the tools they need to change the world, we must give them the opportunity to see the world. And then they will see that for all our differences, we remain a curious and gregarious species and at this moment in time we need each other more than ever.

Sincerely,

Richard H. Herman
Chancellor