

# at LAS

a newsletter for alumni and friends of the college of liberal arts and sciences | SPRING 2009

**UIC** COLLEGE OF  
LIBERAL ARTS & SCIENCES

## LAS Undergraduate Research Initiative Breaks New Ground

by Bruce Pecho



*Undergraduate Rupal Satra asks Dr. Richard Labotka questions in the hallway of the UIC Pediatric Sickle Cell Clinic. Photo courtesy of Rupal Satra.*

Let's say you're a motivated undergraduate eager to get moving on an innovative research project.

You've heard of all the opportunities and funding out there and available to support the research of graduate students. But, woefully, after searching high and low, you've found the pickings are slim—sometimes even non-existent—when it comes to funding for undergraduates.

This scenario is repeated time and again on college campuses all across the nation.

But no longer in LAS.

This spring, Dean Dwight A. McBride launches the LAS Undergraduate Research Initiative (LASURI). With seed money from the College and generous donor support, the program supports faculty-student research projects in the natural sciences, social sciences and the humanities. Its mission is to make undergraduate research integral to teaching, learning and scholarship in LAS by providing funding to undergrads and faculty involved in research collaborations.

"One of the reasons I am so passionate about opportunities for undergraduates to participate in research experiences at UIC is deeply personal," said Dean McBride. "As a first generation college student myself, I—through a series of happy accidents—had an opportunity to serve as Toni Morrison's undergraduate research assistant when I was at Princeton. That experience truly

changed the course of my life and career. It opened up for me the world of research and the kinds of career possibilities that were available in it. Ultimately, it was that experience that led me to pursue an academic research and teaching career."

The benefits of undergraduate research programs are many. Studies indicate that such programs can improve students' leadership, research, thinking, and communication skills; deepen their interest in and knowledge of topics of study; enhance their personal growth; and advance their professional development. In addition, the program can help establish mutually beneficial research partnerships between students and faculty.

LASURI pairs undergraduates with faculty members and provides them with financial support to complete and present semester-long undergraduate research projects. These research partnerships have the caliber to bring profound change to the world around us.

Take the dwindling bee population, a crisis that has earned a lot of attention. According to Alan Molumby, a lecturer in the department of biological sciences, honeybees are an introduced species and their decline in the United States is probably due to pesticides, habitat destruction, and a change in the way we grow fruits and vegetables—all bad news for native pollinators.

Under Molumby's program, undergraduate students are instructed in the fundamentals of

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## Message From The Dean



*Photo by Jason Reblando*

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Except where otherwise indicated, all photographs are by Julie M. Jaidinger.

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**Dear LAS Alumni & Friends:**

I write today to update you about the evolving circumstances surrounding the budget of the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences in the context of the recent downturn in the global financial markets. As we all are witnessing daily in the news media, this credit crisis is now inflicting lasting damage on the U.S. and global economies.

Many of us are dealing with the effects of the recession in our own personal financial situations as well. Some cannot sell homes, others are losing their homes. Some have seen their retirement investments plummet. Others have watched as the equity in their homes that they have been banking on for emergency funds, college tuition payments for their children, or money to support their retirement has disappeared in a matter of weeks. All of this has resulted in elevated personal stress levels in our lives. I think it is important for us to know in these times that we are not alone.

Nor is the University of Illinois at Chicago alone in the impact that the markets have had on higher education budgets. Some private institutions with large endowments have been hit with double-digit percentage losses, leading them to curtail spending and scale down growth in efforts to conserve cash. In cases where endowments are not so robust, some private institutions also have implemented hiring freezes and ceased construction projects. The situation for many of our publicly assisted peers (with perhaps the exception of a few mineral rich states like Alaska, North Dakota, Texas, and Wyoming) has been quite dramatic. In some cases hiring freezes or delays have been announced, staff cuts and the cessation of construction projects implemented. When all is said and done, few will be impervious to the serious economic challenges of these uncertain times.

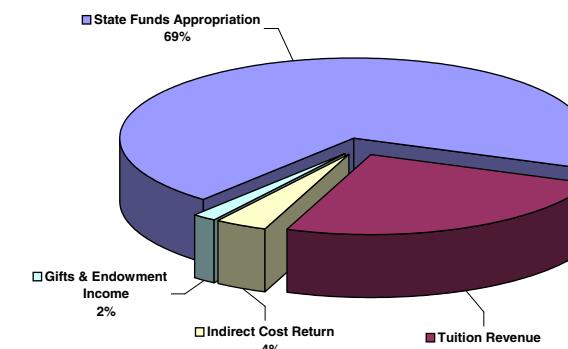
We in LAS are engaged in short and long term planning to ensure that our core mission remains possible—student access to an excellent research caliber education. I know well the impact that LAS has had on the lives of our alums, on the city of Chicago, and on our state and nation. Our alums go on to be leaders and to make important contributions in practically every known sector of our society. The research conducted by our faculty

*continued on next page*



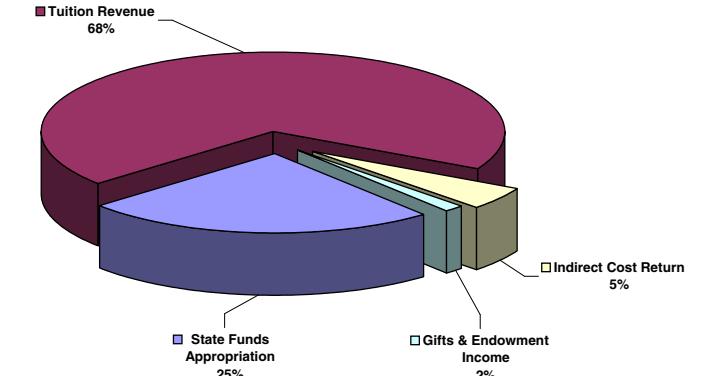
Sources of LAS Operating Funds

2002-2003 Fiscal Year



Sources of LAS Operating Funds

2007-2008 Fiscal Year



not only garners major awards and grants, but also fuels the engine of important discoveries. And our students and faculty are engaged in service to our communities through collaborations that span local schools and non-profits to cultural institutions and sponsored research. We achieve all of this in the context of one of the most racially, ethnically, and intellectually diverse campuses in the nation—a great point of pride for us all. These are the qualities of our institution and of LAS that drew me to UIC.

But our mission of providing an accessible, excellent, research quality education in the heart of Chicago has never been more imperiled. And the larger reasons for that imperilment have only been brought into sharper focus by the current economic recession. The national trend over the last few decades has been one of steady decline in relative state support of higher education. Indeed, studies have shown that nationwide states are funding a shrinking proportion of the costs of higher education. Here is a 20-year snapshot of the national picture of the percentage of higher education funding that was state derived:

**1979-80 44.8%**

**1989-90 39.2%**

**1999-00 32.3%**

It would appear that at a time when we need a more highly trained, highly skilled, globally minded workforce than ever before, our states are reducing their support of public higher education. The only way that most institutions have filled that gap has been through a growing dependency on tuition

income, which translates to higher tuition costs for students and their families. This trend endangers our mission of access as certain families get priced out of being able to afford college tuition.

The story in Illinois has been ever more dramatic than the national trends, and the picture for LAS has been on a downward spiral of state support as well.

As the charts above illustrate, in the five-year period between fiscal year 2003 and 2008, the percentage of the College's operating budget that comes from state appropriation has gone from 69% to 25%; essentially tuition revenues have changed places with state appropriation in terms of the proportion of our College budget, placing more of the pressure for inflationary adjustments each year on tuition dollars. This trend is not only undesirable, but is also untenable if we are to maintain our mission to provide access to excellence.

This steady and dramatic decline in state sponsorship has forced many state supported universities to increase their activities in the area of fundraising over the last few decades. Unless we are able to buttress the teaching and research enterprises of our public universities with aid and support from our alumni, friends, and corporate partners, our mission will only become further attenuated. The other figure represented in the foregoing pie chart is the "gifts & endowment income" slice of our operating funds, which has held steady at roughly 2% over the past five years. I would like to see that number grow

closer to 5% over the next three years. I think that together, here in the midst of our Brilliant Futures Campaign, we can make that happen in LAS.

Despite our budgetary challenges, we will continue to do all we can to remain mission centered, and to focus on our core values as a College community. To be sure, this has not and will not be an easy time for any of us. But we are in this together, and will also be challenged by this situation to grow closer and to rely on each other. We will continue to move forward with the agenda of the College—though perhaps at a pace slower than we originally imagined. And we will continue to provide for our students the excellent quality and caliber of education for which we are known.

I am ever amazed by the generosity shown to us by our alumni, friends, and community partners. I trust we will continue to earn your support in these trying times when it is more critical to our mission than ever before. I welcome your comments, suggestions, and questions to the College at the following e-mail address: LAS\_Questions@uic.edu.

Sincerely,

Dwight A. McBride, PhD

Dean

brilliant  
futures

THE CAMPAIGN FOR THE  
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS  
AT CHICAGO

# Special Times, Special Events

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## 13TH ANNUAL LAS RECOGNITION DINNER

On Wednesday, October 1, 2008, the College honored donors, scholarship recipients, and alumni at its 13th Annual LAS Recognition Dinner.

**Arnold Bodmer**, professor emeritus in physics, was presented the Sustainer Achievement Award, the College's highest honor, in part to acknowledge his generosity and vision for establishing the Arnold R. and Doris G. Bodmer Science Travel Award. The Science Travel Award affords junior or senior undergraduates or first or second-year graduate students in the Natural Sciences the opportunity to travel abroad for science-related study, seminars, workshops or summer sessions. It offers UIC science students the opportunity to broaden their experiences in ways not previously available to them.

Three Bodmer Science Travel Award scholars were honored this year at the LAS Recognition Dinner. William Michael, '07 graduate cum laude and medicine student, used the award to spend one month in South Africa where he conducted experiments and studied the foraging behavior of the African Giant Rat, which can be trained to detect and sniff out land mines. Carrie Seltzer, a second-year PhD student in Biological Sciences, spent one month last summer in Tanzania investigating the effects of forest fragmentation on seed dispersal by fruit bats in an African rainforest. And Marta Witek, a PhD candidate in Chemistry, participated in a molecular biology symposium sponsored by the Polish Academy of Sciences in Zakopane, Poland, which focused on cyto-skeletal proteins, a topic vital to her dissertation research on one such protein, spectrin. Pictured, from left: William Michael, Marta Witek, Professor Emeritus Arnold Bodmer, and Carrie Seltzer.

The 14th annual LAS Recognition Dinner will be held on November 5, 2009.

Photo by Renee Gooch

## INAUGURAL LAS DEAN'S LECTURE WITH JEREMY VARON

On October 23, 2008, Jeremy Varon, professor of history at Drew University and editor of *The Sixties: A Journal of History, Politics, and Culture*, gave the inaugural LAS Dean's Lecture. On the eve of the Presidential election, Varon's talk directly addressed the controversy surrounding UIC Professor William Ayers, whose actions in the Weather Underground in the 1960s had become a topic of political schism during the 2008 campaign season. Below is an excerpt from the conclusion to Varon's talk, titled "Who's Still Afraid of the Sixties? The 1960s in Politics, Pedagogy and Popular Culture."

"Great as my affection for the 1960s is, I have come to believe that we need to at last transcend the period—that is, to move past its signal divisions, so as not to be consumed by them. And, as is my consistent plea, I believe that this is best achieved by engaging the 60s more deeply. Such an engagement, among other things, could help us to overcome a persistent and profound unease with our own national heritage. On the one hand, Americans are eager to claim Martin Luther King, Jr.'s dream, forged in political struggle, as the national creed, and to praise the Maverick spirit speaking truth to power—so abundant during the 1960s—as a defining American virtue. We all know, deep down, that we were made better as a country by virtue of the movements of the 60s, however sometimes messy and prone to transgressive extremes. On the other hand—and even knowing this—some Americans seem unable to jump the line of fully accepting that opposition from even the mild left, such as Barack Obama represents, to the flaws of our governments policies or our social structures can be expressions of love and commitment to, not hatred of, one's society."

Photo by Mary Hanlon



Left: James W. Pellegrino; Right: Roger P. Weissberg

## 2008-09 LAS DISTINGUISHED PROFESSOR EVENTS

In January 2008, LAS celebrated its first Liberal Arts and Sciences Distinguished Professor, Paul Zeleza, with an inaugural lecture and celebratory reception. This academic year, four additional faculty members have been nominated by the LAS Executive Committee to join Zeleza in this honor, two of whom have recently delivered lectures on their research.

On November 17, 2008 **James W. Pellegrino** delivered "To Test or Not to Test: That is Not the Question!" Pellegrino, professor of psychology and education and co-director of the UIC Learning Research Institute, concentrated his lecture on the nature of assessment in K-16 education, about the need to wade through "the morass of rhetoric and arguments about tests and testing" to arrive at "deeper discussions about what constitutes good assessment, the ways it should be designed, and how it might be used properly and profitably to aid the processes of learning and teaching." Recently elected to the National Academy of Education, Pellegrino has focused his recent research on analyses of complex learning and instructional environments, including those incorporating information technologies, with the goal of better understanding the nature of student learning. His lecture attracted approximately 130 guests, including several teachers and administrators from Chicago Public Schools.

A second LAS Distinguished Professor event brought more guests from Chicago's education community to campus on January 26, 2009 when Dean Dwight A. McBride celebrated Psychology and Education Professor **Roger P. Weissberg's** achievements. In his lecture, "Social and Emotional Learning: Strategies to Improve the Lives of Millions and Millions of Children," Weissberg highlighted a growing body of research documenting that social and emotional learning (SEL) programs promote children's positive behavior and school performance. He also provided examples of his own efforts to work with schools, districts, states, and countries to support quality implementation of evidence-based SEL programming to benefit many children worldwide. Named one of the 2008 Daring Dozen by the George Lucas Educational Foundation, Weissberg has authored 200 publications focusing on preventive interventions with children and adolescents and is considered one of the country's leading advocates for training scholars and practitioners about innovative ways to design, implement, and evaluate family, school, and community interventions.

Photos by Mary Hanlon

## LAS UPCOMING EVENTS

ALL EVENTS FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC\*

Thursday, April 16, 2009—4 p.m.

LAS Distinguished Lectureship

750 South Halsted Street, UIC Campus

**Richard I. Morimoto**, Bill and Gayle Cook Professor of Biology, Northwestern University

*LAS Alumnus Richard I. Morimoto returns to campus to deliver a talk on his research which focuses on the underlying mechanisms of neurodegenerative diseases including Huntington's disease, Parkinson's disease, ALS, and Alzheimer's disease. A reception will follow.*

Friday, April 17, 2009—3 p.m.

Stanley Fish Lecture: Frames of War

UIC Forum, Second Floor Meeting Rooms

725 West Roosevelt Road, UIC Campus

**Judith Butler**, Maxine Elliot Professor at the University of California, Berkeley, and author of *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990) writes on contemporary politics, cultural and literary theory, philosophy, psychoanalysis, feminism, and sexual politics.

April 28, 2009—1 p.m.

Conference on Development and Democracy in Post-conflict African Nations

Student Center East, Room 302

750 South Halsted Street, UIC Campus

*The opening session of this two-day interdisciplinary conference is a collaboration of themed panel discussions on the study of development and democratization in post-conflict areas of Africa. Day two is a faculty session.*

Sunday, March 10, 2009 — 10 a.m.

LAS Commencement

*Tickets are required for this event.*

UIC Pavilion

525 South Racine Avenue

**Illinois Governor Pat Quinn** will address the LAS graduates. This year's honorary degree recipient will be LAS alumna and renowned evolutionary biologist **Barbara Ann Schaal**.

\*LAS Commencement requires tickets for attendance

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## Scenes From My Fulbright Year

By Jessica Harper



I look out my bedroom window each morning and see the sun beaming, the birds singing, the endless mountain ranges, fields of lemon trees and olive trees, and smell the salt from the nearby beach. It couldn't get any better than this. I'm in paradise—also known as Greece. On September 15, 2008, I arrived here to start my nine-month adventure with a United States Fulbright Fellowship.

**I remember the day I found out about the Fulbright Fellowship program.** It was another typical night as a UIC student—studying for the multiple exams, quizzes and reports due the next day!

Opposite page—Top: Harper visits the Temple of Poseidon at Cape Sounion, Greece on a weekend of sightseeing. Bottom: Harper teaching English to one of her students as a volunteer at the Varkiza Elementary School.

This page—Harper enjoying her work in the Stem Cell Biology laboratory of Dr. Eumorphia Remboutsika at the Alexander Fleming Biomedical Sciences Research Center in Athens, Greece.

I received another one of those endless mass emails sent by the UIC Honors College. Before I hit the delete button, the headline “research in a foreign country” caught my eye. I went to the website to learn more about Fulbright and I immediately knew this prestigious scholarship was something I wanted to do. By aiming to increase the mutual understanding and cooperation between students of the United States and other countries, this scholarship allows anyone who has received their bachelor’s degree to do any type of research in any country of choice. Stem cell research has always fascinated me and Greece was always a country I dreamt of visiting. I did some research and found the laboratory of Dr. Eumorphia Remboutsika at the Alexander Fleming Biomedical Sciences Research Center (BSRC) located in Athens, Greece. After an extensive application, interview, and Greek visa—I am finally here!

In the past few months of living out this dream I have realized that every day of being a Fulbright fellow means another exciting day of learning about science and the Greek culture. My research project takes place at B.S.R.C. Alexander Fleming under the supervision of my host, Dr. Eumorphia Remboutsika. In Dr. Remboutsika’s laboratory I work with five PhD students on a gene called Sox2. Only a small amount of information is known about this gene, but past research has shown that Sox2 is a stem cell, pluripotency gene that maintains the self renewal of embryonic stem cells. In other words, an increase in Sox2 levels reverts cells to their embryonic stem cell state. Using mice as the experimental organism, my research analyzes the effects of a conditional by inversion allele that affects the Sox2 gene, which in turn, affects the stem cell fate of cells. So far, I have gained a vast amount of knowledge about lab work and different techniques, and have worked with some amazing technology. For example, I’ve learned how to use FACS analysis, prepare and run PCR experiments, how to photograph and examine neural stem cells under a microscope, how to dissect embryos, and most importantly, how to think like a scientist. I believe stem cell research is important because in the near future it can lead to therapeutic approaches for diseases in humans.

As a Fulbright fellow, I think it’s important to be well-rounded and involved in the community. Therefore, I became a volunteer at the Varkiza Elementary School. Every Thursday I spend two hours with first and second grade Greek children and teach them English. To me, this has been one of the most amazing and rewarding opportunities. Each week I enter the school with English phrases, vocabulary, grammar or games and I leave with hugs and kisses from the students. Nothing is more rewarding than having children who have no knowledge or access to learning English become able to have a con-



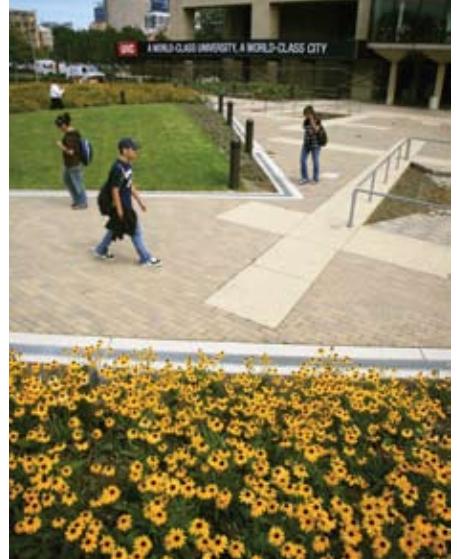
versation with me. Not only am I teaching them English, but they have helped me to improve my Greek in the process.

I came here to learn more about science and stem cells, but I also came to learn more about myself and the world around me. Every weekend, I take the time to explore Athens and the town I reside in, Vari. So far, I have seen some amazing sites in Greece—Olympia, Nafplio, Meteora, Corinth, the ancient theatre of Epidaurus, the island of Aegina, the Parthenon, and the Temple of Poseidon at Sounion, to name a few. During Christmas break I went on a tour to Egypt where I saw the pyramids of Giza, cruised down the Nile, explored the Luxor temple, and met some great friends from all over the world.

My host, Dr. Remboutsika, has become a friend, mentor, and role model. The first day I arrived in Greece she picked me up from the airport and we went for a swim in the sea and out to a Greek tavern. I think an important part of the Fulbright fellowship is finding a host that is willing to take you in like a family member. I wouldn’t have felt so comfortable and at home here in Greece if it wasn’t for Dr. Remboutsika.

There is not one day that goes by that I regret my decision to accept the Fulbright Fellowship to Greece. If not for the guidance and support I’ve received at UIC in the Special Scholarships Program, especially from Beth Powers, this amazing experience would not be possible. Although nothing compares to sweet home Chicago, the thought of leaving Greece soon saddens me. I have made friendships, contacts, and gained knowledge that will last a lifetime and guide my future.

For more information about Fulbright: [www.iie.org/fulbright](http://www.iie.org/fulbright). The Fulbright Foundation - Greece awards grants to both Greek and U.S. citizens to enable them to study, teach or conduct research in either the U.S. or Greece. For more information see: [www.fulbright.gr](http://www.fulbright.gr). Photos courtesy of Jessica Harper.



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## Giving During Tough Economic Times



[Make a gift](#)



Many people are concerned about their capacity for charitable giving during troubled economic times. Yet we at the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences continue our work of educating promising young students, carrying out transformative research, and serving our communities. And we continue to rely on the generous donations of our alumni and friends.

Here are some giving strategies to consider during times of economic recession:

- **BEQUEST** Making your gift through your will or revocable trust defers it until after your death so that your assets will continue to be on hand for your personal financial needs during your lifetime. A bequest can be a permanent part of your giving plan, or it can be a temporary gift, to be replaced by lifetime gifts after the economy turns around.
- **BENEFICIARY DESIGNATION** Naming LAS as a primary beneficiary of your IRA or 401(k) plan account or of a life insurance policy is another way to defer your gift and in the meantime keep assets you may need during your lifetime. Again, it can be a temporary gift or a permanent part of your giving plan.
- **CHARITABLE GIFT ANNUITY** A charitable gift annuity gives to one or two individuals a guaranteed fixed annuity for life. At a time when most investment assets are vulnerable to loss, a charitable gift annuity offers income that is not subject to market risk and will not decline under any circumstances. Moreover, annuity rates are higher than the yields of money market funds, certificates of deposit and bond mutual funds, and annuities are given advantageous income tax treatment.
- **APPRECIATED SECURITIES** Even though all of the stock market indices have declined recently, you may still own a stock whose value hasn't declined as much as the index and is worth much more than its cost. Making a gift of appreciated securities is usually more tax-effective than making a gift of cash, because you can deduct the full market value of your shares as a charitable gift and avoid the capital gain tax you would have owed if you had sold them in order to give cash.
- **OTHER ASSETS** You may own assets that don't produce income for you and are not essential for your financial security—e.g., real estate, savings bonds, precious metals and other collections. Real estate is usually an excellent asset to donate, and many kinds of tangible personal property can also be advantageous gifts.

Your gifts ensure that the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences can give the students of today and tomorrow the fine liberal arts education you received.

Please consult your financial advisors about which giving strategy is best for your situation. For the proper wording of bequests or beneficiary designations and for information about the other strategies outlined above, please call or write Chuck Coughlin, Associate Dean for Advancement, at (312) 413-3469 or [cec@uic.edu](mailto:cec@uic.edu).

# Join us at the Fourth Annual Meeting of the LAS Alumni Association

SATURDAY, APRIL 25, 2009

9 A.M. – 12:30 P.M.

STUDENT CENTER EAST, ROOM 509

750 SOUTH HALSTED STREET

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

The Liberal Arts and Sciences Alumni Association invites you to attend our fourth annual meeting and learn about the amazing accomplishments of LAS students, faculty, and alumni. This is an excellent opportunity to come back to campus and meet Dean Dwight A. McBride, and take a tour of the UIC Forum and James Stukel Towers which houses 740 of our undergraduate students.

9 a.m. Continental Breakfast, Networking

9:30 a.m. Call to Order, Welcome by Dean Dwight A. McBride

10:00 a.m. Guest Speakers

**UIC Student: William Michael, '07 LAS, MD '12**



photo courtesy Renee Gooch  
Michael graduated cum laude with college honors and earned highest departmental distinction in Biological Sciences in 2007. He served in Iraq as a United States Marine while completing his bachelor's degree, and also initiated research in South Africa involving the African Giant Rat. Michael is a medical student in the UIC College of Medicine.

**UIC Faculty: Professor Maria Krysan, Ph.D., University of Michigan '95**



photo courtesy Kathryn Marchetti  
Krysan is an Associate Professor in the Department of Sociology and the Institute of Government and Public Affairs. Co-author of *Racial Attitudes in America: Trends and Interpretations* (Harvard University Press, Revised Edition, 1997), Krysan focuses her research on racial residential segregation and racial attitudes.

**UIC Alumnus: Professor Vali Siadat, MS '86, Ph.D. '90, DA '97**



photo courtesy Vali Siadat  
Siadat holds a masters and two doctorates in Mathematics from the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. He is chair of the Mathematics department at Daley College where he has taught for twenty-six years. Siadat was recently awarded the Deborah and Franklin Tepper Haimo Award of Distinguished Teaching of Mathematics. The prize is considered the Mathematical Association of America's most prestigious teaching award. Saidat is the first community college professor to win it.

11:15 a.m. General LASAA business

11:45 a.m. Closing Remarks

Noon Tour of the UIC Forum and James Stukel Towers Residence Hall



UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS  
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LIBERAL ARTS & SCIENCES  
Alumni Association



# Voices of the College

Faculty Awards & News

By Stacia Campbell & Julie Hunt



In recent months **PETER DORAN**, associate professor of earth and environmental sciences, along with former graduate student Maggie Kendall Zimmerman conducted a survey-based study that indicated overwhelmingly that scientific experts agree global warming is both real and caused by humans. The study's results appeared January 19th in *Eos*, the newspaper of earth and space sciences published by the American Geophysical Union. The study surveyed 3,146 scientists on the subject of global warming. The two most important questions on the survey asked 1. Have mean global temperatures risen compared to pre-1800s levels, and 2. Has human activity been a significant factor in changing mean global temperatures? The results were overwhelming, with nearly 90 percent of the scientists answering yes to both questions. *"The debate on the authenticity of global warming and the role played by human activity is largely nonexistent among those who understand the nuances and scientific basis of long-term climate processes,"* concluded Doran, whose research has led to his ascension in the international conversation on global warming.

Doran was also the lead investigator on a recent NASA mission that sent the robot ENDURANCE to explore Lake Bonney, a body of water in Antarctica that is locked under 15 feet of ice. The robotic probe is designed to draw an underwater three-dimensional map showing the biological and geochemical composition of the Antarctic lake. "The lessons learned from mapping out Bonney will be important for developing strategies for exploring Vostok and icy moons, like Europa," said Doran. "You're not going to send people there, so you have to develop autonomous ways to do it."

*Photo courtesy of Peter Doran*

**AIZZET COSKUN** and **ALINA MARIAN**, assistant professors of mathematics, statistics and computer science, are among the 118 scholars named 2009 Alfred P. Sloan Research Fellows. Both work in the area of algebraic geometry which focuses on properties of solutions of polynomial equation systems and how it relates to fields such as evolutionary biology, statistics, physics—notably string theory—and computer science. *"One of the most amazing aspects of mathematics research is that other scientists often find beautiful and unexpected applications of mathematical theories,"* says Coskun. He and Marian are among seven mathematicians in the department's algebraic geometry group, one of the strongest in the country. "Both are very talented researchers on the forefront of their field," said David Marker, head of the department. "I'm delighted to see them receive the recognition they so richly deserve." The award, which includes a two-year, \$50,000 grant, is often cited as an indicator of future distinction in science, mathematics and economics; 38 Sloan Fellows have gone on to win Nobel Prizes. The Department of Mathematics, Statistics and Computer Science currently has 15 faculty members who have won Sloan fellowships.

*"There are numerous long-term health consequences associated with the rise in obesity in kids and significant health care costs associated with that,"* says **FRANK CHALOUPKA**, distinguished professor of economics, director of the Health Policy Center at the UIC Institute for Health Research and Policy, and principal investigator of a study being conducted by the UIC ImpactTEEN project. The project was recently awarded a \$16 million grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and seeks to provide comprehensive research that helps legislators and policymakers develop effective policy and make informed decisions about funding programs to change youth health behaviors. The study will consider behavioral influences such as nutrition, physical activity, obesity and tobacco use.

**ROBERT KLIE**, assistant professor of physics, was recently awarded a five-year, \$400,000 National Science Foundation Faculty Early Career Development Award to further his research on cobalt oxides. *This award is the National Science Foundation's highest honor, awarded to junior faculty members in the sciences and engineering who demonstrate a commitment to research and education.* Klie plans to use the award to hire graduate and undergraduate assistants to carry out laboratory experiments aimed at unlocking the secrets of what makes cobalt oxides work at the atomic level, and how to scale-up production for useful application. Cobalt oxides are a class of ceramic materials with potential application for future use as magnetic storage devices in computer hard drives. "They have promise, but at this point we simply don't know how they work," said Klie.

**MARIA KRYSAN**, professor of sociology, is the lead author of a report recently published on the racial segregation of neighborhoods. The survey-based experiment, conducted collaboratively by UIC and the University of Michigan, proves conclusively that whites will judge the value of a neighborhood to be higher if the residents of the neighborhood are white and lower if the residents are black. Participants, all white adults, were shown identical neighborhoods that randomly had either black or white people depicted as neighbors, performing normal activities like getting the mail. The participants rated each neighborhood in terms of housing cost, property upkeep, school quality, safety and future property values, and the results showed that all-white neighborhoods were deemed to have the highest value. *"These findings demonstrate that 'objective' characteristics such as housing are not sufficient for whites to overcome the stereotypes they have about communities with African American residents,"* said Krysan.

*All photos on this page by Kathryn Marchetti*

## TWENTY-THIRD

*And at the picnic table under the ancient elms,  
one of my parents turned to me and said:  
"We hope you end up here,"  
where the shade relieves the light, where we sit  
in some beneficence—and I felt the shape of the finite  
after my ether life: the ratio, in all dappling,  
of dark to bright; and yet how brief my stay would be  
under the trees, because the voice I'd heard  
could not cradle me, could no longer keep me  
in greenery; and I would have to say good-by  
again, make my way across the white  
California sand and back: or am I now creating  
the helplessness I heard those words express,  
the psalm torn like a map in my hands?*

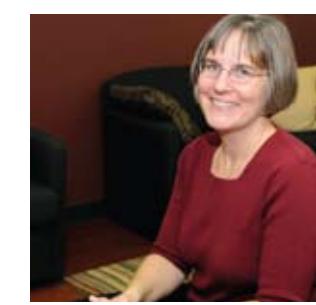
This poem was taken from Assistant Professor **CHRISTINA PUGH'S** recently published book of poems, *Restoration*. Pugh is also the author of *Rotary*, which won the 2003 Word Press First Book Prize, and the chapbook *Gardening at Dusk*.



FRANK CHALOUPKA



ROBERT KLIE



MARIA KRYSAN

# LASTING IMPRESSIONS



Did you have an amazing undergraduate experience, full of friends and activities, and new ways of looking at the world? Or did you, like so many of us, ever say to yourself or to someone else, "Wow, if I could go to college again, I would make sure to..." Perhaps you might have declared a major a little less "practical" but closer to your heart. Or maybe you would have joined a student organization or just spent a little more time on campus.

**"What advice would you give an LAS student today?"** That is the question we'd like you to answer for the next issue of *AtLAS*. Send us your bits of wisdom at [atlas@uic.edu](mailto:atlas@uic.edu).

In the meantime, the LASing Impressions question for this issue was: "Who was the most memorable person you met at UIC?" As you can see, we received some wonderful replies.

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## LAS UNDERGRADUATE INITIATIVE (continued from page 1)

pollinator conservation, taxonomic identification of bees, and techniques for collecting and curating small collections. Molumby is helping to compile a database of pollinator species found in this region in an attempt to establish changes in the guild of pollinators in Chicagoland since the 1930s.

"This project would be very well-suited for LASURI, because it attempts to train undergraduates for careers in taxonomy, conservation, or other areas of biodiversity research and awareness," Molumby said. "This undergraduate research effort would then contribute in helping educate local conservationists about providing bee habitats in their backyards."

How exactly will LASURI work? Faculty mentors who are interested in the initiative submit a profile describing their research project and what they expect from their Undergraduate Research Assistant (URA). Faculty may work with students they have already selected, or interview and select students interested in becoming a URA.

At the beginning of the working semester, students will review faculty profiles, contact faculty members with whom they are interested in working, and request interviews. From these interviews, faculty will select one student who will then apply to become a URA. Students begin working on projects by the third week of each semester.

Nilda Flores-Gonzalez, a professor in sociology and latin american and latino studies, is the co-director of the Immigrant Mobilization Project, an interdisciplinary initiative

that studies the immigrant rights movement in Chicago since 2006. The project focuses on youth participation in the marches, especially the interaction between racial and ethnic identities on political and civic participation. She feels this project could work well as part of LASURI.

"Undergraduate students that have collaborated in this project have conducted individual interviews and participant observation in community events," Flores-Gonzalez said. "Because this study focuses on Latino youth, many undergraduate students find it meaningful not only academically and methodologically but personally as well since it relates to their own experiences."

"I strongly believe in programs such as the LAS Undergraduate Initiative because they translate what we read in the classroom to real life and let students apply concepts to practice," she said. "It also provides students with skills—including interviewing skills—they can use if they continue on to graduate school or join the labor force."

In the fall of 2008, Crystal Patil, assistant professor in anthropology, initiated a medical anthropology project at UIC's Sickle Cell Adult and Pediatric Clinics (with Dr. Robert Molokie and Dr. Richard Labotka). The undergraduates in her "Anthropology of Children and Childhood" course had the opportunity to think beyond their readings by becoming anthropologists. The student anthropologists observed the interworkings of the clinic and conducted qualitative interviews

with children and adult patients trying to better understand the lived experience of sickle cell disease today.

"This project is perfect for UIC undergraduates because students can do research that speaks to local policy issues and is of interest to the clinicians interacting with sickle cell patients on a daily basis," Patil said. "This is a great opportunity for students to apply their book knowledge and actually be and think like anthropologists."

Unlike other undergraduate research programs, the LAS Undergraduate Research Initiative provides funding directly to the participants. In fact, funding for both halves of the research partnerships is not unsubstantial and should help students and faculty reach their broader professional and academic goals. Undergraduate Research Assistants will earn scholarships of \$2,500 and faculty mentors will receive \$1,500 research grants to cover related project costs, including materials, travel, and equipment.

"Researching as an undergrad is a good thing because my most profound educational experiences have taken place in the field, where classroom theory fails to be relevant," said Daniel Schneider, an undergraduate anthropology major. "Undergraduate research has shown me that education is more than a resume builder. The skills I have learned can be put to practical uses that make a difference in people's lives." Photo by Marcus Thomasson

## NNEDI OKORAFOR

PhD CREATIVE WRITING, 2007

I met a lot of characters at UIC who made great impressions on me. One of them was Professor Luis Urrea. Talk about a whirlwind. He always had a million things going at the same time and you could always sense that energy about him. I often stopped by his office just because. Plus, he was into science fiction and fantasy and knew a lot of the people in that circle (who were also people that I was just starting to meet). That was refreshing because up until then, I had sensed a sort of disconnect between the genre of science fiction/fantasy and academia.



I remember one semester where I took his nonfiction workshop. One day, before class started he went into telling us about the story of *The Hummingbird's Daughter*. Even back then, well before the book was finished and published, I was hooked.

Nnedi Okorafor is the 2008 winner of the Wole Soyinka Prize for Literature in Africa for her young adult fantasy novel, *Zahrah the Windseeker*. A Pan-African Award, the Soyinka Prize, named after Africa's Nobel Prize winning playwright, poet and political figure, comes with a \$20,000 cash prize, and is considered the African Nobel Prize. Photo of Luis Urrea by Al DiFranco.



in an externship in neuropsychology in the UIC Department of Psychiatry. Photo of Katie and Nick York by Michael Ryan.

campus activities and join student groups. It can be a great experience and you never know who you might meet.

Catherine York is a PhD candidate in Clinical Psychology. She currently works as a research assistant studying adolescent alcohol and tobacco use at the Institute for Health and Research Policy on the west campus. She is also working

## TIMOTHY J. DUSZYNSKI BA WITH HONORS ENGLISH, 1974

My favorite professor at UICC was Preston M. Browning of the English Department. Preston possessed a gentle nature and profound sense of imagination and possibility. He motivated his students to not just "yak yak yak" about criticism and critical theory—he was a kind of throwback

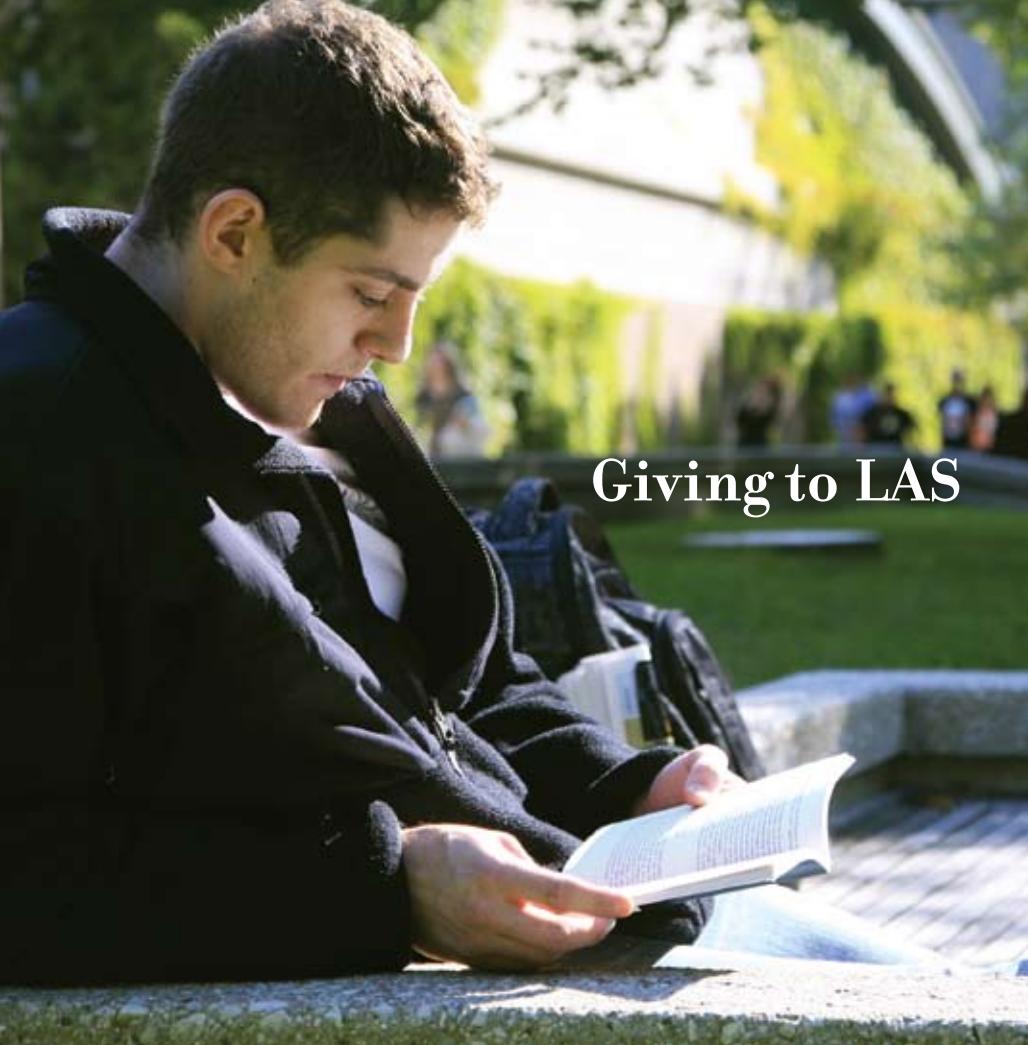


in that he really took pleasure in reading the literature, the stories, novels, poems—and engaged his students in a friendly way and full of that Southern charm and slight reserve of his, in discussion on literature, as well as the profound issues of the day.

Preston and I had remained in contact long after my studies with him. I invited him to my inauguration as president of a liberal arts college...and he attended, full of pride and humor and a genuineness that I feel to this day. He was a good friend.



Timothy J. Duszynski is the founder of Continuum Learning LLC, providing limited term executive leadership to colleges in transition or start-up phases. His multi-faceted career in higher education includes three years as president of Kansas Newman College in Wichita, followed by a five-year stint as president of the National College of Naturopathic Medicine in Portland, Oregon. He is the author of more than fifty professional articles and publications. Photo of Preston Browning courtesy of UIC Photographic Services.



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