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Hogan gives testimony on budget proposal

BY RICHARD VEILLEUX

UConn President Michael Hogan, while acknowledging the dire straits facing the state economy, said that the governor's proposed budget, if not adjusted, would make it nearly impossible for the University's Storrs-based programs to continue the quest to become one of the nation's top public universities. He said it would also have serious implications for the future of the UConn Health Center.

He made his remarks during testimony to the legislature's Appropriations Committee on Feb. 13.

During a discussion that touched on the economy, the governor's budget proposal, tuition, rescissions, and the University's contributions to Connecticut, Hogan told the committee that cuts of the magnitude proposed – $34 million short of current services in fiscal year 2010 and another $50 million short in 2011 for Storrs-based programs, with shortfalls of $7 million and $12.5 million, respectively, at the Health Center – would be devastating to the University.

"It takes decades to build a world-class university, but only a year or two to bring it down," he said.

The budget proposal – and Hogan's testimony – was only the beginning of a journey that will run until at least June 3, the official closing date for the session.

Hogan told the committee the University has already sliced more than $12 million from its current year's budget, as a result of a 3 percent rescission mandated by the governor in November.

"The reductions of more than $12 million were extremely difficult to execute, due to their magnitude, timing, the University's commitment to provide the highest quality academic experience to our students, and our commitment to provide financial aid that goes beyond statutory requirements," Hogan said. "Nevertheless, due to creativity and the hard work of Provost Peter Nicholls and the leadership of our schools and colleges, we were successful in managing these reductions, without compromising quality, accessibility, or jobs."

The new reductions, however, would be more difficult to make, Hogan said, explaining that the proposed 5 percent cut was

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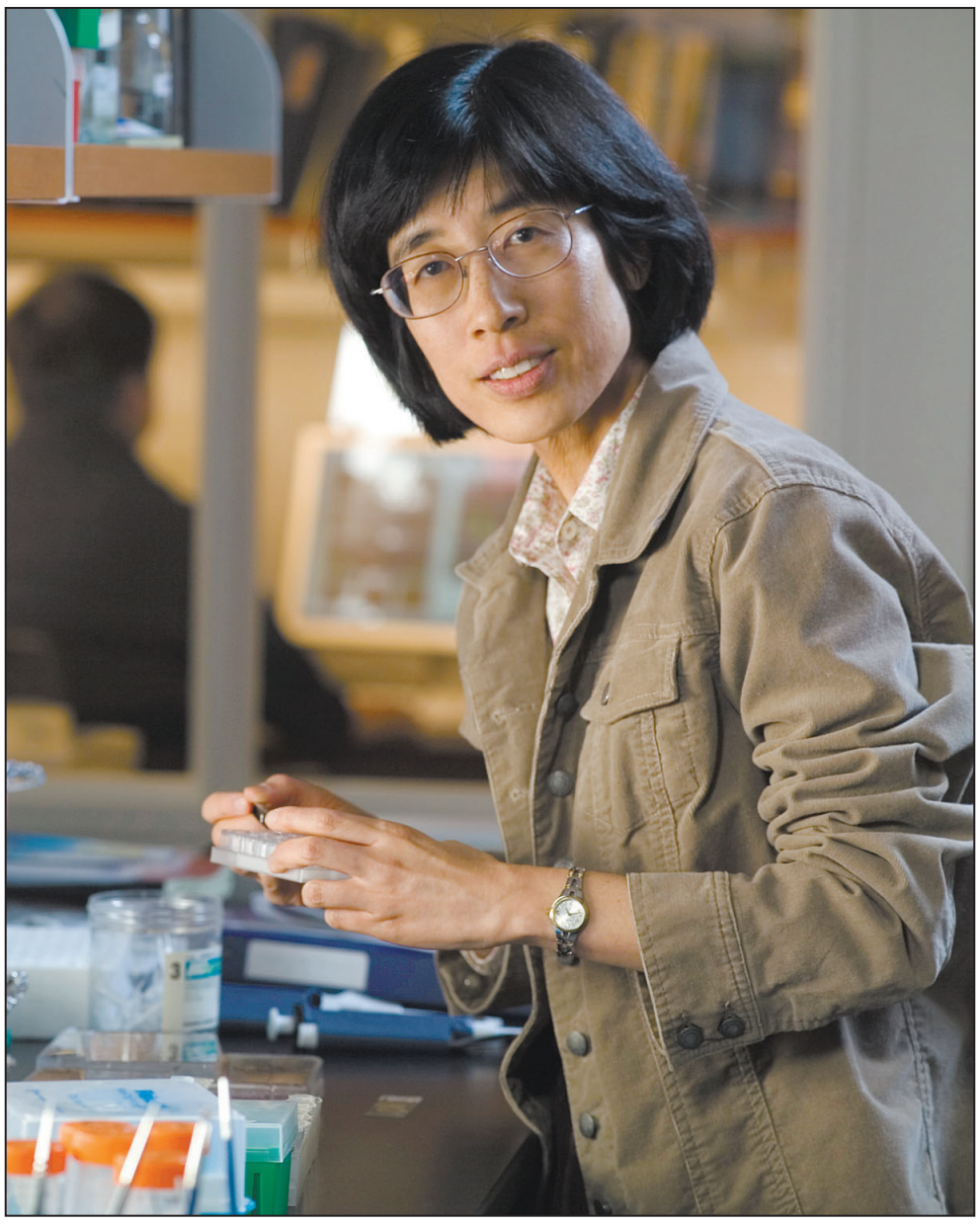

PHOTO BY AL FERREIRA

Akiko Nishiyama, associate professor of physiology and neurobiology.

Neurobiologist recognized for research on brain cells

BY CINDY WEISS

Akiko Nishiyama, associate professor of physiology and neurobiology, is an unlikely iconoclast.

She is a quiet presence in her own busy laboratory group of postdoctoral fellows, graduate students, research assistants, and undergraduate researchers.

But after years of struggling to get her ideas and papers accepted, she is now gaining recognition for her research on cells in the brain.

Her invited lead review paper in the January 2009 issue of *Nature Reviews Neuroscience* covers the state of research into NG2 cells, a type of glial cell in the central nervous system that she began studying more than 20 years ago.

Once described as housekeeping cells that support neurons and remove debris, glial cells are now thought to have a much more active role in the brain and spinal cord.

There are many more of them than neurons in the brain. Nishiyama has been at the forefront of scientists who have found that one type of glial cell, NG2, gives rise to another type that makes insulating sheaths – myelin – around neurons.

NG2 cells are a little like stem cells in that way, says Nishiyama, who also has a grant from the state's stem cell initiative. It is debatable, however, whether NG2 cells, like stem cells, are multipotent – able to give rise to many other types of cells – or whether they have an unlimited ability to renew themselves.

Their role as precursors to myelin-producing glial cells leads to potential applications in treating disease. Multiple sclerosis,

see Brain cell research *page 6*

Study shows defensive medicine widespread

BY KRISTINA GOODNOUGH

The cost of 'defensive' medicine – tests, procedures, referrals, hospitalizations, or prescriptions ordered by physicians fearful of lawsuits – is huge and widespread, according to a study by the Massachusetts Medical Society and UConn Health Center researcher Robert Aseltine Jr.

The study is based on a survey – believed to be the first of its kind – that was completed by more than 900 physicians in Massachusetts. It asked about their use of seven tests and procedures: plain film X-rays, CT scans, magnetic resonance imaging, ultrasounds, laboratory testing, specialty referrals and consultations, and hospital admissions.

About 83 percent reported practicing defensive medicine, with an average of between 18 percent and 28 percent of tests, procedures, referrals, and consultations and 13 percent of hospitalizations ordered for defensive reasons.

Such practices were estimated to cost a minimum of $1.4 billion per year in Massachusetts.

The study, "Investigation of Defensive Medicine in Massachusetts," is the first to specifically quantify defensive practices across a wide spectrum and among a number of specialties.

It also is the first to link defensive practices across a number of medical specialties – anesthesiology, emergency medicine, family medicine, internal medicine, general surgery, neurosurgery, orthopedics, and obstetrics/gynecology – directly with Medicare cost data.

The survey, conducted between November 2007 and April 2008, queried physicians in eight specialties: anesthesiology, emergency medicine, family medicine, internal medicine, general surgery, neurosurgery, orthopedics, and obstetrics/gynecology.

"Defensive medicine is not only the ordering of medically unnecessary tests, prescriptions, specialist referrals, invasive procedures, and hospital admissions," says Aseltine, who is director of the Health Center's Institute for Public Health Research. "It can also be the avoidance of high-risk procedures or even high-risk patients."

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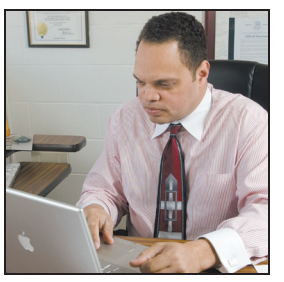

Inside

Photo by Jessica Tommaselli

Stuti Akella performs *A Memory, A Monologue, A Rant and A Prayer: Writings to Stop Violence Against Women and Girls* at von der Mehden Recital Hall on Feb. 16.

Expert on gravity to give two talks on Einstein

Eric Adelberger, emeritus professor of physics at the University of Washington, will give a public lecture, "Short-Distance Gravity: From Newton to Einstein to Strings," on Thursday, Feb. 26. It will take place at 7 p.m. in Room P38, Gant Science Complex. A reception will follow.

He also will give a talk on "Testing Einstein's Happiest Idea" at the Physics Colloquium, on Friday, Feb. 27 at 4 p.m. in the same location.

Adelberger is a member of the National Academy of Sciences, and a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the Institute of Physics, and the American Physical Society. He received the American Physical Society Bonner Prize for outstanding experimental research in nuclear physics in 1985. In 1992-93, he was a scientific associate at the European Organization for Nuclear Research in Geneva.

He has given named lectures as the Loeb Lecturer in Physics at Harvard University, Nordberg Lecturer at the Goddard Space Flight Center, Selove Lecturer at the University of Pennsylvania, Feenberg Lecturer at Washington University, and Leigh Paige Prize Lecturer at Yale University.

His research focuses on gravity, the fundamental force whose origins remain mysterious. Adelberger founded the Eöt-Wash Group that has made many technical advances in torsion-balance technology. These developments have led to extraordinarily precise experimental tests of Einstein's Equivalence Principle, measurements of Newton's constant G, searches for hidden extra dimensions by testing Newton's Inverse-Square Law down to distances smaller than a human hair, and highly sensitive tests of the isotropy of space.

The lecture is part of the Phi Beta Kappa Visiting Scholar Program, which brings distinguished scholars to selected campuses to contribute to the intellectual life of the institution. It is co-sponsored by the physics department, the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, and the local chapter of Phi Beta Kappa. Phi Beta Kappa is the nation's oldest academic honor society.

Conference on democracy set for Feb. 27-28

A two-day conference bringing together 50 democracy scholars from around the world will take place Feb. 27 and 28 at the Thomas J. Dodd Research Center.

The University of Connecticut Democracy and Democratization Conference will feature 10 panels, two keynote addresses, and a workshop on human rights. The event, which begins at noon on Friday, is free and open to the public. Registration is at 11:15 a.m.

Participants will discuss topics including human rights, political participation, political theory, and political development focusing on a variety of regions in the world.

On Friday, Feb. 27, Ian Shapiro, Sterling Professor of Political Science at Yale University, will give the keynote address at 5:45 p.m. He will discuss "Luck, Leadership, and Legitimacy in Transitions to Democracy: Lessons from South Africa and the Middle East."

A luncheon and keynote address on Saturday, Feb. 28 will feature UConn's UNESCO Chair in Human Rights, Amii Omara-Otunnu.

The program will conclude with an interactive workshop on the relationship between democracy and human rights.

The conference was organized by graduate students in the political science department. Sponsors include the Human Rights Institute, UConn's UNESCO Chair, the political science department, Provost Peter Nicholls, Jeremy Teitelbaum, dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, and the Louis Gerson Fund.

Budget testimony *continued from page 1*

actually larger than that, because it included no additional funding for standard inflationary increases in energy and other costs or for contractual increases.

"The proposed rescission for the University amounts to $21.2 million and $37.7 million in the next two fiscal years," he said. "Together with our projected increase in operating costs, this creates a deficit in the University budget of 9 percent or $34 million in FY10, and 13 percent or $50 million in FY11. Make no mistake: these are deep cuts."

Hogan said some of the reduction – about $7 million – will be covered through savings and new revenues identified by his Cost, Operations, and Revenue Enhancement (CORE) Task Force, and tuition increases could cover millions more. However, the governor asked the Board of Trustees to table a planned discussion of tuition and fee increases from its Feb. 10 meeting. They expect to return to the issue during their March meeting.

Hogan said not increasing tuition would be problematic.

"Failing to look to tuition and to increase it at an appropriate level that still protects access would be devastating to the University, its students, and the state over both the short and long run," he said.

Rather, he added, the trustees should consider a "middle ground," an increase that would be understandable to parents and students, while also helping the University temper the impact of the budget cuts.

Hogan noted that sacrifices must and will be made, as the state and UConn manage the budget challenges ahead. He said wage freezes are a possible tool for savings, but largely depend on concessions on the part of collective bargaining units. While faculty and staff want to support UConn during these difficult times, he added, they also want to ensure that any savings from concessions would remain with the University and not lead to further reductions in the state appropriation.

Hogan said that, if necessary, "We are also prepared … to consider selling University assets; closing the Graduate School and distributing its services; curtailing weekend dining services; reducing our financial aid set-asides from 17 percent [of tuition revenues] to the state-mandated level of 15 percent; and curtailing operating hours at our libraries, museums, recreational facilities, and performance venues."

Hogan also expressed grave concerns regarding the governor's proposed budget for the UConn Health Center. That budget would reduce the Health Center's appropriation by $19.5 million over the biennium, and would not cover the fringe benefit differential for employees of the John Dempsey Hospital, which amounts to another $27 million during fiscal years 2010 and 2011.

Further, Hogan said, the proposed budget would eliminate reimbursement of routine dental care in the Department of Social Services' budget [$3 million]. He noted that, as in past years, the Health Center is also forecasting deficits totaling $51 million during the two-year span.

Consequently, he said, "The proposed budget for the UConn Health Center, if passed, puts us on a path for the closure of the John Dempsey Hospital and the serious impairment, if not a terminal blow, to the schools of medicine and dental medicine."

Such a scenario would, he added, "severely compromise healthcare services to Connecticut citizens, as well as the research enterprise at the Health Center and the vitality of all of UConn."

Hogan reminded legislators of the support of the Connecticut Academy of Science and Engineering (CASE) for a partnership between the Health Center and one or more of the other hospitals in the region.

"Investment in an educated citizenry in good economic times is desirable," he said. "Investment in difficult economic times is critical."

Talk on future of libraries slated for March 10

Is Google threatening the very existence of libraries?

David W. Lewis, dean of the University Library, Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis (IUPUI), a respected voice in envisioning academic libraries of the future, will address that question in a presentation titled, "Libraries in the Age of Google, or Not …."

The talk will take place on Tuesday, March 10, at 10:30 a.m., in Konover Auditorium at the Thomas J. Dodd Research Center.

Lewis holds a bachelor's degree in history from Carleton College, an M.L.S. from Columbia University, and two certificates of advanced study in librarianship, one from Columbia University and one from the University of Chicago. He has worked at SUNY Farmingdale, Hamilton College, Franklin and Marshall College, Columbia University, and the University of Connecticut.

He joined IUPUI in 1993 as head of public services, and has been dean of the university library since 2000. Lewis has written on reference services, library management, and scholarly communication.

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File photo by Peter Morenus

Employees at Pratt & Whitney in East Hartford walk for fitness.

Workplace health promotion focus of Health Center, Pratt & Whitney study

by Carolyn Pennington

Health Center researchers are embarking on a three-year ergonomic and health promotion study with Pratt & Whitney, a United Technologies Corp. company based in East Hartford.

The effort will help improve the workplace for Pratt & Whitney employees and provide information for quality of life improvements at companies nationwide.

The research will take place at three units in Pratt & Whitney's Global Service Partners network: Cheshire Engine Center, Connecticut Airfoil Repair Operations, and East Hartford Repair Operations.

The study is funded through a five-year, $5 million grant from the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health. The grant helped create the Center for Promoting Health in the New England Workplace, one of three national WorkLife Centers of Excellence. The Pratt & Whitney study is one of the Center's major research projects.

Pratt & Whitney employees design, manufacture, and service aircraft engines, space propulsion systems, and industrial gas turbines. Researchers will gather data and provide recommendations to reduce the potential for employee injuries, while improving overall employee health.

"Pratt & Whitney's participatory ergonomics program provides a fertile environment for programs that can add significantly to the national effort to improve quality of life in the workplace and health care," says principal investigator Dr. Martin Cherniack, director of the Health Center's Ergonomic Technology Center.

The study will include extensive economic analyses to evaluate both actual health care burden and the avoided costs associated with preventive interventions. The research involves a comparison of two different approaches at two separate sites: one is a "best practices" program reflecting current state-of-the-art approaches; the other is a "participatory" program, where health interventions come out of a joint labor-management design team. The information gathered is intended to help prevent on-the-job injuries and illnesses.

Nearly 4,000 Connecticut workers reported a job-related illness in 2006. Another report by Health Center researchers said the overall illness rate in Connecticut of 27.7 per 10,000 workers was higher than the national average of 24.6 per 10,000, driven by Connecticut's higher rates of hearing loss and repetitive trauma injuries.

Workers in the manufacturing sector reported the highest number of occupational illnesses.

"Occupational injuries and disease can have major impacts on worker health, productivity, and employer costs," says Nicholas Warren, an occupational and environmental expert at the Health Center. "Prevention efforts can reduce both diseases and costs because, in theory at least, all occupational diseases are preventable."

Nancy Hitchins, environment health and safety manager for Pratt & Whitney Global Service Partners, says, "Launching this 'first in the nation' research-to-practice program at Pratt & Whitney is an acknowledgement of the company's history of innovation in workplace health and safety and in labor-management cooperation."

Board of Trustees approves administrative measures

by Karen A. Grava

The Board of Trustees has agreed to merge the physical therapy and kinesiology programs into a Department of Kineosology and to eliminate the master's and Ph.D. programs in music education.

The merger of the two departments is actually a success story resulting from the closure of the School of Allied Health and the transfer of the physical therapy program to the Neag School of Education, Provost Peter J. Nicholls told the board.

"We moved the programs because we thought there might be a commonality between physical therapy and kinesiology, and the collaboration between the two departments has turned out to be extremely successful," he said. The two departments proposed the merger in order to enhance research opportunities, he said.

"We're both relatively small departments but offer very strong components," says Professor Carl Maresh, head of kinesiology.

"I think what we've come up with is a more holistic approach – from the lab to the bedside, he adds. "By combining physical therapy's clinical reputation and expertise with kinesiology's research reputation and expertise, the new team can be more creative in research collaborations within our new department, across the University, and with other groups."

The doctoral program in kinesiology is ranked number one in the country, tied with Penn State, a much larger program.

The music education programs were closed because of low participation, although the board did approve a new master of arts program with a concentration in music.

"The discontinuation of the doctoral program was considered in the context of available resources, enrollment levels, graduation rates, and placement statistics over an eight-year period," said Nicholls. The current master's program does not meet the requirements for teacher certification, he added. Moving it to the Neag School will align it with other teacher preparation programs.

The trustees also approved closure of the Connecticut Center for Survey Research Analysis and the Center for Contemporary African Studies.

The CSRA has accumulated a $700,000 deficit and is unable to support itself, Nicholls said.

Nicholls also told the trustees that an ongoing five-year review of centers and institutes has resulted in plans to close the Center on Aging and Human Development; the Center for Healthcare and Insurance Studies; the Frederick G. Humphrey Center for Individual, Couple, and Family Therapy (which will continue its work as a clinic); and the Institute for Children, Youth, and Families at the Stamford campus.

The review also resulted in a three-year renewal for the Connecticut Center for Economic Education, and five year renewals for the Marine Sciences and Technology Center and the Center for the Study of Culture, Health, and Human Development.

Nicholls also announced that the urban studies programs at Storrs and the Tri-Campus have been merged.

"The action will reduce organizational redundancies, without sacrificing the substance of two popular interdisciplinary majors that draw between 30 and 40 undergraduates each year at Storrs and 60 or 70 undergraduates each year at the Tri-Campus," Nicholls said.

In other business, University President Michael Hogan told the trustees that budget considerations have led to elimination of the positions of dean of students, vice provost for public engagement, and vice provost for multicultural and international affairs, and a freeze on the search for a vice president for research.

On-street parking can revitalize downtowns, researchers say

by Michael Kirk

A UConn engineering professor and his graduate students have received a national award for their paper on the role on-street parking can play in helping to revitalize downtowns and conserve land.

Norman Garrick, an associate professor of civil and environmental engineering, Ph.D. candidate Wesley Marshall, and graduate student Gilbert Hansen were recognized by the Washington, D.C.-based Transportation Research Board for an outstanding paper in policy and organization.

The paper suggests that downtowns with on-street parking are more vibrant, safer, more pedestrian-friendly, and use land more efficiently than those without it.

The three looked at West Hartford Center, Northampton, Mass., and Brattleboro, Vt. – which all feature on-street parking within the downtown area – and compared them to the downtowns of Avon Center, Glastonbury Center, and Somerset Square in Glastonbury, which do not.

"We found that on-street parking plays a crucial role in benefiting activity centers," says Garrick. "On-street parking is more convenient, uses less space, slows traffic down so it's safer for pedestrians, and helps create an atmosphere that encourages more walking, biking, and use of public transportation.

"This is a lesson for Hartford, Norwich, and other U.S. cities that are in the midst of downtown redevelopments, and are seeking to move away from projects that feature vast parking areas that waste valuable land, create dead zones, and discourage foot and bike traffic," he adds.

Parking in a surface lot typically uses considerably more square feet per space than on-street parking. The researchers estimated that if an average town center with approximately 2,000 spaces were to provide 15 percent of its parking curbside instead of off-street, it would save more than 2.3 acres of land.

Photo by Frank Dahlmeyer

Norman Garrick, associate professor of civil and environmental engineering.

Even during the busy holiday season, according to Garrick, off-street parking in the areas studied reaches only 59 percent of capacity, while on-street parking is at 95 percent.

Garrick says nearly every town in the state has street space available that could be reallocated toward on-street parking, enabling some of the land that is currently used for inefficient off-street parking lots to be re-used.

Garrick and Marshall authored a related study two years ago showing that even mixed-use places like West Hartford provide far more parking than is needed, even during the holiday season. They suggested that the land in these areas could be used more efficiently.

Training, promoting compliance, are tasks of chemical safety unit

BY SHERRY FISHER

Today Stefan Wawzyniecki's task is to read a two-inch thick booklet of new rules and regulations about laboratory safety at universities. Tomorrow, he'll be in Hartford for a DEP meeting. Another day, he'll be training faculty and staff about laboratory safety and chemical waste management.

Wawzyniecki has been UConn's chemical health and safety manager since 1990. His unit is part of the University's Department of Environmental Health and Safety (EHS), which includes radiation safety, biological health and safety, and occupational health and safety. The department deals with regulatory matters, and ensures that faculty, staff, and students work in healthy and safe environments.

Wawzyniecki, a board-certified industrial hygienist, hazardous materials manager, and chemical hygiene officer, was recently honored with the 2008 Tillmanns-Skolnick Award from the American Chemical Society (ACS). The award recognizes outstanding, long-term service to the ACS's Division of Chemical Health and Safety. In addition, UConn's chemistry department, headed by Steven Suib, received the ACS's College and University Health and Safety award. That award recognizes the most comprehensive laboratory safety program in higher education (undergraduate study only).

PHOTO BY FRANK DAHLMEYER

Stefan Wawzyniecki (left), manager of environmental health and safety, and Steven Suib, department head and distinguished professor of chemistry, examine safety protocol in a teaching lab in the Chemistry building.

Promoting compliance

The chemical health and safety unit develops policies and procedures, conducts training, responds to chemical-related problems, and performs lab inspections, hazardous waste audits, and investigations of accidents and spills.

"We're tasked with promoting University compliance with OSHA, EPA, the state DEP, and other safety regulations," Wawzyniecki says. "Employees at the University work in a variety of settings, including facilities, research labs, art studios, and food, farm, and custodial services. For example, if a chemical, such as paint or degreasing solvent, is used in a facilities shop, it has to be managed properly while it's being used, and handled safely when the person is done with it. My job is to oversee both ends of the spectrum."

Training faculty, students, and staff is an important component of the program, Wawzyniecki says, noting that when DEP inspections are conducted, nothing is overlooked. "Even rags or wipes that may have been used for chemical cleanups are checked to ensure that they're disposed of properly," he says.

Wawzyniecki offers year-round training in hazardous waste management and laboratory safety. "There will always be more regulations on the way, not fewer," he says.

He says people don't always know that they're working with materials that are potentially hazardous. "An artist working in a studio may not even realize that he or she is working with something that is hazardous, like paint solvents and photo processing chemicals. In addition to protecting themselves from the chemicals, proper management of the waste paints, solvents, and chemicals is an inherent part of the overall environmental health and safety program at UConn."

Computers are another issue, Wawzyniecki says: "They can't just be thrown in the trash. Even a circuit board is considered potentially hazardous. That's why training is so important. It's one of the biggest services we offer to the University."

Wawzyniecki says training is mandatory, and the goal is to get full compliance.

"I've tried to get a feeling for all the employees who work in labs or might have a safety or environmental issue," he says, "but the University's population is somewhat transitory. Also, we're home to many international faculty and students who come from places with different laws and regulations. It's challenging."

If there is a demolition on campus, EHS is involved. "We'll work with Facilities Operations, Architectural and Engineering Services, and the Office of Environmental Policy, who may be working with a contractor, to make sure the demolition debris is managed properly," he says.

Popular course

Wawzyniecki also teaches a course on hazardous waste operations in the allied health department. The popular course includes a trip to a mock hazardous waste site, where students dress in protective suits with self-contained breathing apparatus. They perform various remediation tasks, such as cleaning out an underground storage tank.

"They say the best part of the course is putting what they've learned in the classroom into practice," says Wawzyniecki.

The three-credit course is also attractive to students because they receive a certificate that shows they've completed an OSHA-recognized 40-hour class in hazardous waste operations.

"It's great for the job market." Wawzyniecki says, noting that the certificate helps graduates seeking jobs with engineering firms and in industry, where evaluating industrial processes or contaminated properties for chemical pollutants is important in complying with environmental regulations.

PHOTO BY CHRIS DEFRANCESCO

Robert Aseltine, director of the Health Center's Institute for Public Health Research, and Martha Lawless, a student in UConn's Ph.D. program in public health.

Defensive medicine *continued from page 1*

Aseltine says the study is the first to try to quantify the costs of defensive medicine "from the ground up," by asking physicians about their actual practices.

Other studies have tried to determine the cost of defensive medicine by reviewing medical records or by looking at overall health care costs and trying to determine practices that could be classified as defensive.

Because defensive medicine is largely "in the eye of the beholder," Aseltine adds, asking physicians directly about practices taken solely to avoid malpractice claims provides more accurate information.

A study published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* in 2006 analyzed more than 1,400 malpractice claims and found that in almost 40 percent of cases, no medical error was involved. The uncertainty surrounding malpractice claims helps drive the increase in increase testing and other defensive practices.

"The fear of being sued that is driving physicians to defensive medicine is dramatically increasing health care costs and threatens the success of health reform efforts," says Dr. Manish Sethi, a researcher with the Department of Orthopedic Surgery at Massachusetts General Hospital. Sethi is a member of the Medical Society's Board of Trustees and its Committee on Professional Liability.

For the full report on the investigation of defensive medicine in Massachusetts, go to www.massmed.org/defensivemedicine.

Family studies professor helps students understand aging

BY SHERRY FISHER

Laura Donorfio describes her teaching philosophy as practical pedagogy.

"It's not just the content area that I try to get across," says Donorfio, an assistant professor of human development and family studies in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. "I want students to understand what they can do with that content and theory once they graduate and go out into the real world. I teach them how the course material is relevant to their everyday lives, their families, and their communities, and how they can use it in their careers."

Donorfio teaches courses on adulthood and aging, aging and society, death and dying, human sexuality, and public policy and the family.

She was recently recognized for teaching excellence when the Association for Gerontology in Higher Education awarded her the Distinguished Teacher Honor. The award will be presented this month at the Association's annual meeting.

Donorfio earned her doctorate in family studies at UConn in 1996, and worked for several years in the corporate world before joining the University faculty.

She says aging isn't a subject most people are eager to study: "People don't want to age. Death and dying isn't a topic people want to talk about. I have to take these topics to another level."

Keeping students engaged is the key to their learning, Donorfio says: "The more involved students are with the material, the greater the level of success." That's why her courses integrate field trips, speakers, videos, and documentaries.

"Over the years I've collected a lot of cutting-edge videos on a variety of topics," she says. "I like to mix things up, rather than give traditional lectures."

Her course on death and dying has included a trip to a funeral home. A class on aging was marked by a visit from a 100-year-old woman. Lawyers and state representative speak in her public policy and the family course, and she gives extra credit if students vote.

"I like to show them how policy really dictates our family and social structure, and how we can have an impact on policy," she says. "They need to know that one person can make a difference."

Donorfio encourages student input as early as the first day of class. She has them review the syllabus and asks for their suggestions: "If there's a topic they'd like to learn about that's not there, I ask them to let me know."

Every day she brings a book to class for discussion. She does the same with articles and current news pieces.

"By the third week, students are bringing in books for me to read, or newspaper articles – without my even asking," she says. "Sometimes I'll get an e-mail with a link, and the student will say, 'I think you'll like this.' That's exciting."

One of Donorfio's most important teaching accomplishments has been to develop an interactive television – iTV – program to enable students at the Tri-Campus to take more human development and family studies courses.

Donorfio's courses are always oversubscribed. Students praise her teaching and note her passion for the elderly.

"She's a wonderful teacher," says former student Autumn Stokes, who took Donorfio's course on death, dying, and bereavement. "Due to past pain with the loss of my grandmother, I was hesitant to take the class. She presented an emotional topic in a soothing and comforting manner."

Marion Buonocore, another former student, says, "You can feel her excitement and get caught up in the energy. She has not only given me the educational background I needed, but also intensified my desire to work and care for older adults."

PHOTO BY KEITH BARKER

Laura Donorfio, assistant professor of human development and family studies, teaches a class in the Distance Learning Room at the Torrington Campus.

Online journalism expert discusses Internet's impact on the media

Emmy-nominated Fox 61 news anchor Rick Hancock is teaching three courses this semester, including Advanced Online Journalism.

An assistant professor-in-residence with the journalism department in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Hancock was selected in 2003 as an Academic Fellow by the Western Knight Center for Specialized Journalism.

He recently sat down with staff writer Colin Poitras to discuss the current state of the news business, and how UConn is preparing journalists for the future. These are edited excerpts from the interview.

Q: What do you feel newspapers, broadcast television, or radio must do to stay relevant in a world dominated by multimedia and the endless boundaries of the Internet?

A: Create multimedia. Create content that's relevant, understanding the power of the Internet. The Internet's greatest power is its level of interactivity. That's not in our nature as journalists necessarily – to engage with the public. We produce a story, write a story, we broadcast a story, and that's it. We followed all the solid tenets of journalism, what else is there to be said? Why would you question my authority about what I produced? Well, the Internet has allowed people to question that, engage, share, debate, add to the conversation, and that's been a culture shock to a lot of journalists who never had to deal with that, especially journalists who have been in the field for a number of years. The Web has democratized news and information in a way that some journalists are still struggling with.

Q: It sounds like journalism today needs to redefine itself and its relationship with its market.

A: Journalism is journalism. How we approach it is what's changing. Telling great stories, factual stories, transparent stories, speaking truth to power, all those really important elements of journalism – that's not going away. How we engage with our public? That is changing and that's something we have to come to grips with. How we produce our content? How we distribute our content? These are things we need to think of. It's more of a mindset.

Q: Do you think the Internet will be the demise of newspapers?

A: Will the Internet destroy journalism? No. I think it's going to increase our ability to communicate. Short term will there be fewer journalists? Yes. In 2008, we lost thousands and thousands of journalists from the payroll. But that doesn't mean that that's the end of journalism. I've always advocated that entrepreneurial journalism is something we should all be considering. Journalism is a business. We have to understand it's a business. People are looking at it as a commodity to turn a profit. I think the Web and digital media, mobile media, have created a whole bunch of very unique opportunities for us to dominate some of that space.

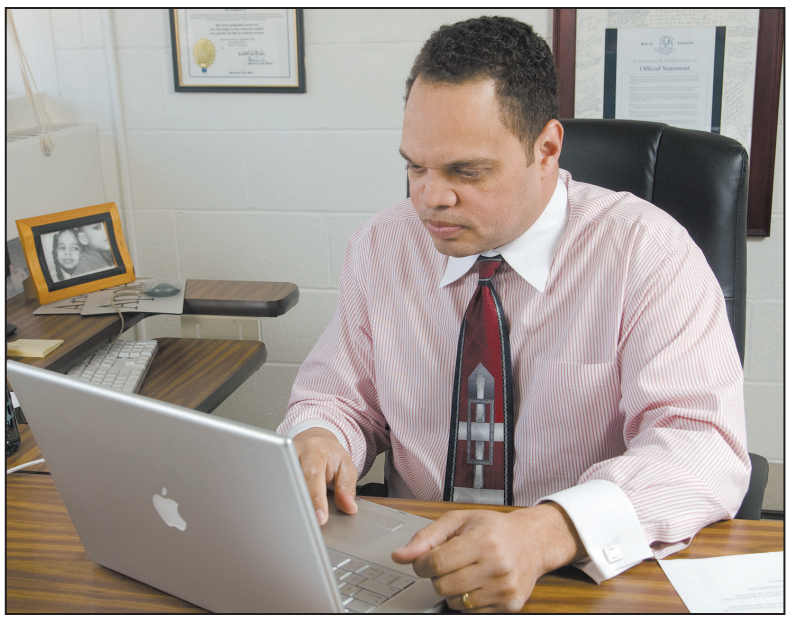

PHOTO BY FRANK DAHLMEYER

Rick Hancock, assistant professor-in-residence of journalism, works on his computer.

Q: Are your students ... seeing opportunities beyond traditional formats like print, TV, and radio?

A: They want to be journalists. They want to tell stories. It has nothing to do with the technologies. I teach online journalism and I teach a class – Publications and Practice – and we have students who are creating an interactive journalism website. So we put them through a boot camp of learning Photoshop and Dreamweaver [software] and non-linear editing, and it's like "Wow, I want to be a journalist. I just want to tell stories. Why do I need to learn all this kind of stuff?" But they realize when they apply for internships and when they apply for jobs … that they … need to be in that space to be competitive.

Q: What is your online journalism class like?

A: In Intro to Online Journalism, students don't touch any applications for the first two weeks of class. In fact, I have them reading a book called *We, the Media,* by Dan Gillmor ... about where we are in the media. It needs to be put in context. There was a process for how we got here. Then I have them create a blog. But ... they can't just be sitting in their pajamas writing and riffing about the news. They have to go out and do some original reporting. So I teach them these basic elements of "online" journalism, but it's still journalism. Who, what, when, where, why – sometimes how much. We're going to be incorporating all those things you are learning in [other journalism] classes, but we're going to be introducing some of these multimedia tools that you now have at your disposal. And you now have to make the decision, do you use them? Or when do you use them? Online journalism classes are primarily that ... it's getting them into the right framework.

Q: Where do you see the world of journalism five or 10 years from now?

A: I think you're going to see a lot more migration to digital platforms again out of the Web, mobile devices, gaming systems. ... As far as newspapers, we see it right now. They are struggling. Some are folding. … Those that can, survive; those that can't, die. But the industry of journalism will never die. It's how we produce it and consume it in the future that's going to change.

Photo by Frank Dahlmeyer

Carolyn Cumming, left, and Maria Madjar, both seniors, take part in UConn's Hunger Banquet, an event to raise awareness about hunger. During the event, some participants received a large meal, while others were given only rice and water.

GRANTS

The following grants were received through the Office for Sponsored Programs (OSP) in November 2008. The list represents only new proposals awarded, and excludes continuations. The list is supplied to the *Advance* each month by OSP.

Principal Investigator	Department	Sponsor	Amount	Award Period
Alpay, P.	Chemical, Materials, & Biomolecular Engineering	Dept. of Defense/Army/ Structured Materials Industries Inc.	$225,000	8/08-8/10
Frequency-Agile, Ka-band Filters Based on Functionally Graded BST Thin Films				
Anyah, R.	Natural Resources Management & Engineering	Nat'l. Science Foundation	$146,997	8/08-8/09
Modeling Climate Variability and Change of the Greater Horn of Africa				
Barnes-Farrell, J.	Psychology	Nat'l. Inst. of Health/ Ctrs. for Disease Control & Prevention/UConn Health Center	$214,845	9/08-8/13
Aging, Musculoskeletal Health, and Work Capacity				
Barrett, J.	Extension	Conn. Dept. of Environmental Protection	$38,688	11/08-11/09
Development of Statewide Tools to Assess and Manage Grasslands Resources in Connecticut				
Cao, C.	Mechanical Engineering	Nat'l. Inst. of Health/ National Heart, Lung, & Blood Institute/AfaSci Inc.	$15,000	11/08-12/08
Image Sensing and Sleeping Deprivation Systems for Smart Home Cages				
Carstensen, F.	Economics	McFarland-Johnson Inc.	$24,170	7/08-10/08
Seymour-Beacon Falls Area Transportation Study				
Chrysochoou, M.	Civil & Environmental Engineering	National Chromium Company Inc.	$10,000	11/08-10/09
Column Studies of Cr-Contaminated Soil in National Chromium Facility				
Civco, D.	Natural Resources Management & Engineering	Dept. of Interior/ U.S. Geological Survey	$15,000	8/08-7/09
USGS Co-sponsorship of "Fifth International Workshop on the Analysis of Multi-Temporal Remote Sensing Imagery"				
Ellis, D.	Plant Science	Conn. Dept. of Environmental Protection	$50,000	10/08-6/09
Project Agreement for Dept. of Environmental Protection, Univ. of Connecticut Cooperative Projects				
Fitzgerald, W.	Marine Sciences	University of Alberta	$2,070	10/08-11/08
Mercury Analysis of Lake Sediments Using the DMA80 Instrument				
Frisman, L.	Social Work Instruction & Research	Nat'l. Inst. of Health/ Substance Abuse Mental Health Svcs. Admin./ Conn. Dept. of Mental Health & Addiction Svcs.	$396,300	9/08-9/13
Veteran Diversion Evaluation				
Garrick, N.	Civil & Environmental Engineering	Dept. of Transportation/ New England Univ. Transportation Center	$75,901	9/07-8/11
Community Design and Transportation Safety: Towards a "Vision Zero" Road Fatalities Plan				
Gaudio, M.	Extension	Conn. Dept. of Social Services	$137,218	8/08-6/09
Proposal to Develop a Curriculum for the Education of Educators Regarding Lead Poisoning in Children				
Ivan, J.	Civil & Environmental Engineering	Dept. of Transportation/ Massachusetts Institute of Technology	$82,000	9/07-8/11
Connecticut Transportation Institute NEUTC Graduate Fellowships				
Jordan, E.	Mechanical Engineering	Rolls Royce Inc.	$80,921	6/08-12/08
Remaining Life Estimation of Realistically Contaminated Turbine Blades by Oxide Fluorescence Measurements				
Karan, O.	Educational Psychology	Lyman Hall High School, Wallingford, Conn.	$14,386	8/08-6/09
Counseling Psychology Internship – E. Frenette				
Kraemer, W.	Kinesiology	Under Armour	$70,068	5/08-12/08
Use of Compression Garments in the Exercise Recovery Process				
Lewis, T.	Geography	National Geographic Society Education Foundation	$50,000	11/08-10/09
Program Plan for the Connecticut Geographic Alliance 2008/09				
Lopez, R.	Agricultural & Resource Economics	Conn. Dept. of Economic & Community Development	$12,000	10/08-12/08
Economic Impact of the Dairy Industry				
Molter, T.	Conn. Global Fuel Cell Center	Greater New Haven Transit District	$34,638	10/08-4/09
GNHTD Prototype PEM Fuel Cell Evaluation Program				
Noll, K.	Molecular & Cell Biology	U.S. Dept. of Energy/ North Carolina State Univ.	$525,061	9/08-8/11
Biohydrogenesis in the Thermotogales				
Pattipati, K.	Electrical & Computer Engineering	Toyota Motor Engineering & Manufacturing North America Inc.	$30,000	9/08-12/08
Audit/Quantification of Embedded Software Quality				
Payne, D.	Educational Psychology	Environmental Protection Agency/Long Island Sound Office	$129,668	10/08-9/10
LIS Mentor Teacher Program (2008-2009) and LIS Fellows Program (2008-2010)				
Schiffler, R.	Mathematics	Nat'l. Science Foundation	$43,292	11/08-8/10
Cluster Algebras and Tilting Theory				
Schweitzer, J.	Physics	Nat'l. Science Foundation	$30,500	1/09-12/09
Conference: The Third International Symposium on Nanotechnology in Construction, Prague, Czech Republic				
Settlage, J.	Curriculum & Instruction	Nat'l. Science Foundation/ Boston College	$54,409	10/08-9/09
Urban Ecology: Curriculum Field Testing				
Stwalley, W.	Physics	U.S. Dept. of Energy/ Thomas Jefferson National Accelerator Facility	$147,343	11/08-11/11
JLab/UConn MOU for Bridge Position in Theoretical Nuclear Physics				
Super, C.	Human Dev./Family Studies	Children's Trust Fund	$290,000	10/08-9/11
Family Development Training: Effects on Agency Culture and Client Experience				
Wagner, D.	Ecology & Evolutionary Biology	Conn. Dept. of Environmental Protection	$9,600	11/08-6/09
Classification and Biomass Estimation of Aquatic Invertebrates in Coastal Wintering Black Duck Habitat				
Weaver, S.	Human Dev./Family Studies Instruction & Research	U.S. Dept. of Education/ Conn. Dept. of Education	$50,000	7/08-6/09
UConn HDFS College Career Pathways Program				

Brain cell research *continued from page 1*

for example, destroys myelin.

While Nishiyama has championed the study of NG2 cells, even giving them a new name, polydendrocytes, her interest in them is based on careful observation that has sometimes challenged accepted concepts.

Twenty years ago, Nishiyama was a postdoctoral fellow with William Stallcup in La Jolla, Calif., at what is now called the Burnham Institute. Stallcup's lab had been the first to isolate the NG2 molecule, around 1980, and the first to discover that it is expressed by cells in the brain. Nishiyama's contribution was to clone it, identify its primary structure, and characterize the cells in the brain that express NG2.

The first time she presented a paper on the existence of NG2 cells in the normal adult brain, Nishiyama recalls, people dismissed her results as an artifact. The second time, some wanted to test her ideas. It took five years to gain credibility.

"We had struggled to get our papers accepted," she says.

Prevailing opinion can be daunting for young scientists, she notes.

She recalls how one of her students did experiments over several months but did not see neurons being generated from NG2 cells, as many scientists in the field would have expected.

"I cannot see neurons. What should I do?" she asked Nishiyama.

"I had to convince her each time that what she was seeing was the real truth, as long as she had taken all the necessary controls and done the experiments correctly," Nishiyama says.

An experiment that Nishiyama's lab at UConn developed with transgenic mice was critical to establishing that NG2 cells are progenitors to oligodendrocytes, the glial cells that provide neurons with insulating sheaths. This dispelled the false but popular myth that NG2 cells also generate neurons.

With the help of Steve Clark, professor of genetics at the UConn Health Center, Nishiyama began generating transgenic mice in 1998, shortly after she arrived at UConn. She had previously conducted research at the Cleveland Clinic Foundation, in a group studying multiple sclerosis.

She has since developed several mouse lines that have a fluorescent marker in their NG2 cells and in all the cells that develop from them. When the marker shows up in oligodendrocytes in the mice, it is clear that the fluorescent oligodendrocytes developed from the fluorescent NG2 cells.

These experiments provided the first concrete evidence of the role of NG2 cells. Previously, scientists had done Petri dish experiments on NG2 cells and theorized that they gave rise to oligodendrocytes.

Nishiyama attended medical school in Japan, earning an MD and training as a neuropathologist. Halfway through her residency, she decided that she wanted to learn more about the mechanism of the disease process, so she switched to a molecular neurobiology lab for her Ph.D. degree.

She worked at the Cleveland Clinic Foundation before coming to UConn.

Her research is supported by the National Science Foundation, the National Multiple Sclerosis Society, the National Institutes of Health, the Wadsworth Foundation, and the Connecticut Stem Cell Research Program.

While she now reviews grants and papers nationally and oversees a large research group, her first love remains experimental work.

"I consider experiments as a simple and direct dialogue with nature," she adds. "You ask nature a question in a way that you will get a meaningful, interpretable answer, and you want to witness the delivery of nature's response yourself, not through an interpreter."

CALENDAR Monday, February 23, to Monday, March 2

Items for the weekly *Advance* Calendar are downloaded from the University's online Events Calendar. Please enter your Calendar items at: http://events.uconn.edu/ Items must be in the database by 4 p.m. on Monday for inclusion in the issue published the following Monday.
Note: The next Calendar will include events taking place from Monday, March 2 through Monday, March 16. Those items must be in the database by 4 p.m. on Monday, Feb. 23.
If you need special accommodations to participate in events, call 860-486-2943 (Storrs), or 860-679-3563 (Farmington), or 860-570-5130 (Law School).

Academics

Friday, 2/27 – Mid-semester progress reports due to students from faculty.

Libraries

Homer Babbidge Library. Monday-Thursday, 7:30 a.m.-2 a.m.; Friday, 7:30 a.m.-10 p.m.; Saturday, 10 a.m.-10 p.m.; Sunday, 10 a.m.-2 a.m.
Dodd Center. Monday, 10 a.m.-7 p.m.; Tuesday-Friday, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.; Saturday, noon-4 p.m.; closed Sunday.
Pharmacy Library. Monday-Thursday, 8:30 a.m.-10 p.m.; Friday, 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.; Saturday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.; Sunday, 1-9 p.m.
Music & Dramatic Arts Library. Monday-Thursday, 9 a.m.-10 p.m.; Friday, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.; Saturday, noon-5 p.m.; Sunday, noon-10 p.m.
Health Center Library. Monday-Thursday, 7 a.m.-11 p.m.; Friday, 7 a.m.-7 p.m.; Saturday, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.; Sunday, noon-10 p.m.
Law Library. Monday-Thursday, 8 a.m.-11 p.m.; Friday, 8 a.m.-9 p.m.; Saturday, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.; Sunday, 1-9 p.m.
Avery Point Campus Library. Monday-Thursday, 8:30 a.m.-7 p.m.; Friday, 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m.; closed weekends.
Greater Hartford Campus Library. Monday-Thursday, 9 a.m.-9 p.m.; Friday & Saturday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.; closed Sunday.
Stamford Campus Library. Monday-Thursday, 8 a.m.-9 p.m.; Friday, 8:30 a.m.-4 p.m.; Saturday, 11 a.m.-4 p.m.; closed Sunday
Torrington Campus Library. Monday-Thursday, 9:30 a.m.-6:30 p.m.; closed Friday-Sunday.
Waterbury Campus Library. Monday-Thursday, 8:30 a.m.-7 p.m.; Friday, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.; closed weekends.

University ITS

Help Desk: Call 860-486-4357, Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.-5 p.m.

Ph. D. Defenses

Thursday, 2/26 – Genetics & Developmental Biology. *Novel Response to Double Stranded RNAs in Mammalian Cells,* by Ling-Ling Chen (adv.: Carmichael). 1 p.m., Low Learning Center, Health Center.
Monday, 3/2 – Pharmaceutical Sciences. *Development of In Vitro Release Testing Methods for Modified Release Parenterals and Correlation with In Vivo Performance,* by Upkar Bhardwaj (adv.: Burgess). 11:30 a.m., Dean's Conference Room, Pharmacy/Biology Building.

Lectures & Seminars

Monday, 2/23 – Stamford Faculty Colloquium. "Memory and Personality," by Jerome Sehulster. Noon, GE Global Classroom, Stamford Campus.
Monday, 2/23 – Economy Lecture. "Our Economy: What Happened? What Now?" with David Wyss, Standard and Poor's, and Ralph Norton, Wasmer, Schroeder & Co. 2 p.m., Graduate Business Learning Center, Constitution Plaza, Hartford.
Monday, 2/23 – Physics Seminar. "Cold Collisions: Magnetic Trapping of Atomic Nitrogen and Imidogen (NH)," by Matt Hummon, Harvard University. 4 p.m., Room P121, Gant Science Complex.
Tuesday, 2/24 – Humanities Institute Lecture. "War Crimes in Chechnya," by Emma Gilligan. 12:30 p.m., Room 301, CLAS Building. Contact UCHI at 860.486.9057 or uchi@uconn.edu to reserve a seat.
Tuesday, 2/24 – Coastal Perspectives Lecture. "Historical Ecology, Fisheries, and Human Relationships to the Sea," by Matthew McKenzie and Peter Auster. 7 p.m., Branford House, Avery Point Campus.
Wednesday, 2/25 – Rainbow Center Lecture. "Bisexuality: An International Perspective," by Robyn Ochs, professional speaker and workshop facilitator. Noon, Room 403, Student Union.
Wednesday, 2/25 – Statistics Colloquiuim. "Environmental Risk Evaluation: A Bayesian Hierarchical Approach for Extreme Temperature over Space and Time," by Hongfei Li, IBM T.J. Watson Research Center. 4 p.m., Room 344, CLAS Building.
Wednesday, 2/25 – Humanitarianism Lecture. "Of Veils and Mourning: Fazal Sheikh's Widowed Images," by Eduardo Cadava, Princeton University. 5 p.m., Room 217, CLAS Building.
Thursday, 2/26 – Comparative Pathology Seminar. "Immune Evasion by Foot and Mouth Disease During Infection in Swine," by William Golde, USDA. 11 a.m., Room A001, Atwater Laboratories.
Thursday, 2/26 – Assessment Colloquium. "Spotlight on Assessment: Value Added Assessment: Promise, Pitfalls, and the Louisiana Assessment of Teacher Preparation," by George Noell, Louisiana State University. 11:30 a.m., Register at: www.education.uconn.edu/assessment/colloquia.cfm. Participants will be notified of the location in a confirmation e-mail.
Thursday, 2/26 – Discovery Health Program. "My Heart Skipped a Beat," by Bruce Liang, Christopher Pickett, and Heiko Schmitt. 7 p.m., Keller Auditorium. Health Center. To register call 860-679-7692.
Thursday, 2/26 – Physics Lecture. "Short-Distance Gravity: From Newton to Einstein to Strings," by Eric Adelberger, visiting scholar. 7 p.m., Room P38, Gant Science Complex.
Friday, 2/27 – Geography Seminar. "Snow, the Earth System, and Climate Change," by Allan Frei, Hunter College. Noon, Room 434, CLAS Building.
Friday, 2/27 – Environmental Engineering Seminar. Presentations by students on their research. Noon, Room 212, Castleman Building.
Friday, 2/27 – Marine Sciences Seminar. "Plant Cell Biology," by Page Owen, Connecticut College. 3 p.m., Room 103, Marine Sciences Building, Avery Point Campus.
Friday, 2/27 – Physics Colloquium. "Testing Einstein's Happiest Idea," by Eric Adelberger, visiting scholar. 4 p.m., Room P38, Gant Science Complex.
Friday, 2/27 and Saturday, 2/28 – Democracy and Democratization Conference. With keynote presentation, "Luck, Leadership, and Legitimacy in Transitions to Democracy: Lessons from South Africa and the Middle East," by Ian Shapiro, Yale University, at 5:45 p.m. Conference begins at noon, Dodd Center. Admission is free. Registration begins at 11:15 a.m.
Monday, 3/2 – Stamford Faculty Colloquium. "Family-Centered Care: Ideals and Realities in Human Services and Education," by Anne Farrell. 1 p.m., GE Global Classroom, Stamford Campus.

Photo supplied by the Jorgensen Center for the Performing Arts

DrumLine Live, marching band artists from historically black colleges and universities, will perform at Jorgensen Center for the Performing Arts on Feb 27 and 28.

Exhibits

Through Friday, 3/6 – Benton Museum. *¡Merengue! Visual Rhythms/Ritmos Visuales*, paintings, works on paper, photographs, sculpture, video, and popular graphics that span the 20th century; *Yuyanapaq: To Remember,* photographs from Peru; *Rhythms in Design,* exhibition highlighting music in the visual arts. Tuesday-Friday, 10 a.m.-4:30 p.m.; Saturday & Sunday, 1-4:30 p.m.
Through Friday, 3/6 – Babbidge Library. *An Accidental Artist*, hooked rugs by Lida Skilton Ives, Gallery on the Plaza; *Familiar Terrain*, prints by Joan Jacobson-Zamore, Stevens Gallery. For hours see Libraries section.
Through Friday, 3/6 – Dodd Center. *Charles Darwin, 1809-1882, the Legacy of a Naturalist*, Research Gallery; *Holodomor: Genocide by Famine*, West Corridor. For hours, see Libraries section.
Through Friday, 4/10 – Jorgensen Gallery. *Beyond a Boundary*, exhibits by Michael Gellatly, Adam Niklewica, and Kevin Van Aelst. Monday-Friday, 11 a.m.-4 p.m.
Through Wednesday, 4/15 – Health Center. *Art as a Healing Process*, pastels by Rozanne Hauser, and *Moments in Time*, pastels by James Sheehy. Daily, 8 a.m.-9 p.m., Celeste LeWitt Gallery. Also, through Wednesday, 3/25, *As Always Jean*, collage, assemblage, and handmade paper by Jean Roberts. Daily, 8 a.m.-9 p.m., Main and Mezzanine Lobbies.
Through Friday, 4/17 – Contemporary Art Galleries. *The Super City*. Monday-Friday, 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m., Fine Arts Building. Free admission.
Ongoing – State Museum of Natural History & Connecticut Archaeology Center. *Human's Nature: Looking Closer at the Relationships between People and the Environment.* Tuesday-Saturday, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.; Sunday & Monday, closed. Free admission, donations welcome.

Performing Arts

Monday, 2/23 – Jazz Showcase. Kenny Davis, Earl MacDonald, John Mastroianni, and Bill Reynolds, ensemble directors. Admission fee $7, students and children free. 8 p.m., von der Mehden Recital Hall.
Thursday, 2/26 – Pirates of the Caribbean. Demonstration and lecture by pirate re-enactor, John McNiff, from *Free Men of the Sea*. 9 a.m., Jorgensen Center for the Performing Arts. Free admission.
Thursday, 2/26 through Sunday, 3/8 – *Pericles*. Connecticut Repertory Theatre production of William Shakespeare's *Pericles*, directed by Dale AJ Rose. Nafe Katter Theatre. For schedule and tickets, call 860-486-4226. Tickets $11-$29.
Thursday, 2/26 – Wind Ensembles. Jeffrey Renshaw, conductor. Admission fee $7; students and children free. 8 p.m., von der Mehden Recital Hall.
Friday, 2/27 – Faculty Recital. Kangho Lee, cello, joined by Theodore Arm, violinist and Minyoung Lee, piano. 7 p.m., von der Mehden Recital Hall. Free admission.
Friday, 2/27 and Saturday, 2/28 – Cabaret. *DrumLine Live*. Tickets $34, $38, $45. 8 p.m., Jorgensen Center for the Performing Arts. For tickets and information, call 860-486-4226.
Saturday, 2/28 – Student Recital. Thomas Labadorf, clarinet. 3 p.m., von der Mehden Recital Hall. Free admission.
Saturday, 2/28 – Student Recital. Kathryn Bowden and Caitlin O'Hara, sopranos. 7 p.m., von der Mehden Recital Hall. Free admission.
Sunday, 3/1 – Community School of the Arts Recital. Piano students of Cheryl Price. 11 a.m., Vernon Building, Depot Campus. Free admission.
Sunday, 3/1 – Student Recital. Janet Pohli, soprano. 3 p.m., von der Mehden Recital Hall. Free admission.
Monday, 3/2 – Student Recital. Carlynn Savot, cello. 7 p.m., von der Mehden Recital Hall. Free admission.

Film

Thursday, 2/26 – African American Music Film. *Jubilee Singers: Sacrifice and Glory*. 4:30 p.m., Konover Auditorium.
Thursday, 2/26 – Women's Center Film. *Full Circle*. 6 p.m., Women's Center, Student Union.

Athletics

Tuesday, 2/24 – Women's Basketball vs. Villanova. 7:30 p.m., Gampel Pavilion.
Saturday, 2/28 – Men's Basketball vs. Notre Dame. 2 p.m., Gampel Pavilion.
Saturday, 2/28 – Women's Basketball vs. Seton Hall. 7:30 p.m., XL Center, Hartford.

Potpourri

Friday, 2/27 – Author Event. Readings from *Nuclear Jellyfish* by Tim Dorsey, author. 4 p.m., UConn Co-op.
Friday, 2/27 – Museum of Natural History Workshop. "Look Up! Venus, Ceres, and the Milky Way," by Cynthia Peterson. 7 p.m. Adults and children ages 8 and above, children must be accompanied by an adult. Admission fee: $10 Museum of Natural History members, $15 non-members. Call 860-486-4460 for more information.
Sunday, 3/1 – Museum of Natural History Workshop. "What You Eat Can Make a Difference," by Rebecca Canfield. 1 p.m. Adults and children ages 8 and above, children must be accompanied by an adult. Admission fee: $10 Museum of Natural History members, $15 non-members. Call 860-486-4460 for more information.
Mondays – Al-Anon. Twelve-step meeting. Noon-12:50 p.m. For more information, call 860-486-9431.
Mondays – Muslim Student Association. 4:45-5:30 p.m. General meeting for Muslim Student Association, Islamic Center. For more information, call 203-687-5464.
Mondays – Graduate Student Christian Fellowship. 5-6:30 p.m. Room 213, CUE Building. For more information, call 860-368-9024.

UConnomy report highlights University's outreach programs

Over a period of several weeks, the *Advance* is presenting sections of a report produced by University Communications in conjunction with a study by Stanley McMillen, chief economist at the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development. The *UConnomy* report outlines the many ways UConn contributes to the state's economic well being.

The complete report and fast facts are available at www.uconn.edu/uconnomy.

One section of the report discusses how UConn supports the community through outreach programs, and alliances with local, state, and federal agencies.

• Students in the School of Business Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program offer free tax preparation help to low-income residents. The School of Law Tax Clinic provides pro bono legal representation to low-income taxpayers who have federal and state tax disputes.

• The Institute for Violence Prevention and Reduction at the School of Social Work develops violence reduction policies through treatment and prevention programs, public and professional educational efforts, and research.

• The campus in Waterbury, which offers both undergraduate degrees and some graduate programs, is home to the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute, serving nearly 500 older adult learners from across the state.

• Through the Husky Sport Program, children from Hartford's North End are receiving lessons in nutrition, physical activity, and life skills with the help of volunteers from among UConn's student-athletes, education students, and the Husky Nutrition Program.

• *The Connecticut Economy,* a nonprofit quarterly review published by the University, offers regional and state economic information and analysis. It is used as a resource by the business community, citizens, and state, regional, and local governments.

• Law school students participate in pro bono work, enriching their education and addressing the unmet legal needs of local residents. For example, the Center for Children's Advocacy, based at the School of Law, promotes the legal rights of Connecticut's low-income children.

• Through the School of Pharmacy's public service efforts, state residents benefit from greater access to and more effective use of medications. In one such outreach program, pharmacy students counsel Medicare patients on choosing prescription drug plans.

• The state Department of Developmental Services has partnered with the School of Dental Medicine to support a dental fellowship program focused on the dental health of people with developmental and acquired disabilities.

• Each summer, high school juniors and seniors interested in engineering turn to UConn's E2K program. They spend a week in state-of-the-art labs, conducting experiments with faculty.

• UConn's Center for Continuing Studies is working to develop future leaders in homeland security. The Center has a federal training grant to run an eight-week leadership development program to prepare future leaders in homeland security.

• The Migrant Farm Workers Clinic, formed in part by the School of Medicine, provides free health education and increased access to primary health care services for migrant and seasonal farm workers in Connecticut.

• The Human Rights Institute coordinates UConn's human rights initiatives and promotes international human rights scholarship. It sponsors conferences and lectures on economic, social, children's, women's, and civil rights.

• The Neag School of Education has joined forces with some of Connecticut's teacher unions and school administrator organizations to form a coalition to raise student achievement in urban schools through the Connecticut Alliance for CommPACT Schools.

• UConn offers support to communities in land use planning and natural resource protection through its Center for Land Use Education and Research in the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources.

Photo by Al Ferreira

Homero Gonzalez, right, a migrant worker, has his heart checked by Christopher Binette, a 2008 graduate of the School of Medicine, as Felipe Martinez waits his turn.

UConn efforts help curb spread of invasive plants in state

by Elizabeth Omara-Otunnu

You see them in the parking lots of retail chain stores and fast food outlets – neat shrubs with glowing scarlet leaves in fall and bright crimson berries in winter.

Burning bush is beautiful but, as many people now know, it's one of a growing number of invasive plant species that are threatening indigenous ecological systems.

In Connecticut, that public awareness owes much to the efforts of UConn's Les Mehrhoff and Donna Ellis.

"Euonymus – burning bush – is planted everywhere," says Mehrhoff, director of the Invasive Plant Atlas of New England (IPANE) in the ecology and evolutionary biology department. "There's not a McDonald's or Burger King without them. The plant's a money maker – it's easily grown, resists pests, and it's beautiful."

The problem is that birds love the fruits, which are high in energy and fats. They fly off and spread the seeds, and now the plant is growing in numerous unmanaged habitats.

Mehrhoff says he became aware of invasives in the 1990s, while working on endangered species.

"I started seeing a lot of habitats being encroached by invasive species," he says.

In 1997, he and Ellis, a senior extension educator in the plant science department, established an advocacy group to focus on the issue. The Connecticut Invasive Plant Working Group (CIPWG) began with about 30 members, including faculty from UConn and other colleges, and representatives of The Nature Conservancy, the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station, municipalities, state and federal agencies, and garden clubs. It now has a listserv of more than 500.

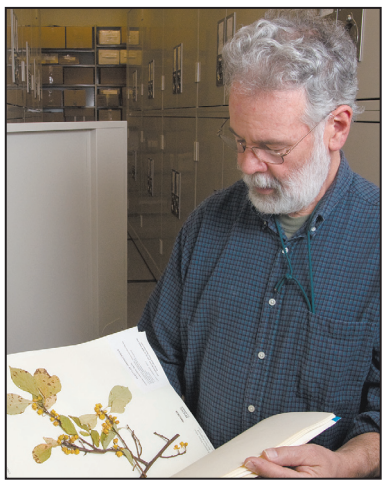

Photo by Frank Dahlmeyer

Leslie Mehrhoff examines invasive plant specimens in the biology collections facility.

UConn is also represented on a state-mandated council, the Invasive Plants Council, a nine-member group that is currently chaired by Professor Mary Musgrave, head of the plant science department.

"There are a lot of people in the state who care," says Mehrhoff.

During the past 10 years, Mehrhoff and Ellis have played a leading role working with these two groups to identify invasive plants, and take action to address the problem. An official list has been compiled of 96 non-native plants considered invasive or potentially invasive in Connecticut, 81 of which are now banned by law from being sold, purchased, transplanted, or cultivated in the state. These include Japanese barberry, Asiatic bittersweet, purple loosestrife, and other, less showy plants, such as garlic mustard and mile-a-minute vine, newly recognized as invasive.

The work is sometimes controversial. Not everyone agrees on all the species that are invasive, Mehrhoff says. In addition to ecological considerations, there are economic issues at stake.

"Some are big money plants for the nursery industry or the aquatic trade," he says. "Some aquatic species are sold in every pet store."

One of the primary reasons efforts in Connecticut have succeeded, according to Mehrhoff, has been the involvement of UConn faculty and staff.

Photo by Greg Tormey

Donna Ellis, senior extension educator.

"The imprimatur of professionalism and academics that comes from this work being conducted at the University has been key to its success," he says.

Plant science professor Mark Brand, ecology and evolutionary biology professor John Silander, and others have worked to establish the criteria for labeling a plant as invasive, based on its biology, and to document its occurrence in the state.

"If growers see something on the list, they know it's there for a good reason," Mehrhoff says. "There's science behind it."

Although efforts have focused on Connecticut, their scope goes beyond state boundaries.

In 2002, Mehrhoff launched the Invasive Plant Atlas of New England, a USDA-funded initiative to track the distribution and spread of more than 100 invasive plant species throughout the region. The Atlas is now part of a virtual network of invasive species programs nationwide.

UConn people are also coordinating efforts to eradicate invasive species, offer alternatives, and spread the word to the public.

"We're working with the nursery industry and the public to educate them about the plants on the list," says Ellis.

The Connecticut Invasive Plant Working Group web site (http://www.hort.uconn.edu/CIPWG) includes lists of invasive plants in the state, criteria for identifying them, photographs, legislative information, invasive plant alerts, and information about who to contact with questions. There is also a list of publications, including a management guide to the different types of control appropriate for each species.

In addition, Ellis and Brand are now developing a campus walking tour – both real and virtual – that identifies invasive plant species along the way.

For those species used in horticulture, Ellis helps spread the word about alternatives. "Native plants are becoming more important in the landscape because of their links to wildlife," she says. "Another gardening option is using non-native plants that are not invasive."

UConn researchers Brand and another plant science professor, Yi Li, are developing alternatives to Japanese barberry, cultivars that have similar aesthetic properties but are not invasive.

Mehrhoff and Ellis say it's important to find invasive plants early.

"With early detection and rapid response – like in the medical industry – the prognosis becomes much better," says Mehrhoff.

"Even small-scale actions can make a difference," adds Ellis. "At least you're cutting down on the future supply of seeds that can start new plants in other areas."

Mehrhoff says invasive species control can be costly, but the cost of not taking action may be higher.

"You can't easily put a monetary value on the loss of native species that are outcompeted by invasive species," he says. "Native biodiversity is our natural heritage. Invasives are changing the integrity of the whole system. We are trying to slow that process and where possible, put a stop to it."

Feb. 23-27 is National Invasive Weeds Awareness Week.