



UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT

# Advance

Volume 27, No. 32  
June 8, 2009

www.advance.uconn.edu



Kaitlin Heenehan, Class of 2011, an ecology and evolutionary biology major, relaxes beside Mirror Lake.

PHOTO BY SEAN FLYNN

## Chemistry professor wins state Medal of Science

BY CINDY WEISS

Robert Birge, The Harold S. Schwenk Sr. Distinguished Chair in Chemistry at the UConn, has won the 2009 Connecticut Medal of Science, the state's highest award for scientists.

He received the award from Frank Ridley, chairman of the Board of Governors for Higher Education, during the annual meeting of the Connecticut Academy of Science and Engineering on May 20.

"Dr. Birge's pioneering work in protein engineering and biomolecular electronics has led to seminal discoveries in the fields of vision, quantum computation, and protein-based data processing," said Ridley. "His efforts have boosted the growth and national reputation of UConn's science programs, and have immeasurably strengthened Connecticut's economic position."

Birge is known for his basic research on protein structure and function and in biomolecular electronics, yielding breakthroughs that lead to technological developments.

He has used a protein from an archaea, a bacteria-like organism that has been on the planet for 3.5 billion years, to make artificial retinas, for example.

He was the first scientist to propose using proteins to store data. A protein-based disk drive that his research group developed in 1982 was the first such memory device ever produced.

He has pioneered the use of many methods to study biological molecules. His research group in 1978 was the first to apply a new spectroscopic technique to reveal previously unavailable information about a biological molecule, vitamin A.

Scientists who supported Birge's nomination for the Connecticut Medal of Science called him a superb teacher and communicator whose broad interests combine basic science and technology.

His current research on vision concerns the deep red pigments in the cone, or color-sensing part, of the retina. His research team has already solved fundamental questions about how UV pigments in cones function.

He has written widely about the molecular basis of vision. His research also has far-reaching implications for the development

## Bull confirmed as a vice provost

BY RICHARD VEILLEUX

Nancy Bull, interim vice provost for academic administration since July 2008, has been named to the position full-time.

"Dr. Bull is an experienced faculty member who understands the operations of the institution," said Provost Peter Nicholls in an e-mail to the University community. "She has demonstrated ability to articulate academic priorities, she is effective at conflict resolution, and she is knowledgeable of the University's budgeting system. She brings to this position enthusiasm and an exciting vision for academic administration at the University."

Bull says she has enjoyed serving in the role for the past year: "It's a very rewarding position. There's so much to learn, and it's

see Nancy Bull page 5

## Health Center administrator to head University Communications

BY ELIZABETH OMARA-OTUNNU

Jim Walter, associate vice president for communications at the Health Center, has been appointed as the University's associate vice president for communications, effective July 1. He will be responsible for marketing and public relations for all the University's campuses, including the Health Center.

University President Michael Hogan says having a single communications director for the entire University will promote consistency and integration across the campuses.

"UConn's two communications groups have a long and successful history of close collaboration," said Hogan in an e-mail announcing the appointment. "In bringing these groups under single leadership, I have charged Jim with identifying opportunities

that further enhance our messaging and strengthen our overall reputation."

Walter will report to President Hogan, and will be part of the University's senior management team, along with other vice presidents and managers who report directly to the president.

He replaces Scott Brohinsky, who will retire July 1.

"Over his long term of service to UConn, Scott has worn many hats," said Hogan, "always with success and as a loyal advocate for the University."

As part of the reorganization, Government Relations and the Alumni Association will now report to the president.

Walter will divide his time between the

see Jim Walter page 2



5 Parasite research



8 Book on feminism



8 Mercury in fish

Inside



# Pharmacy professor Henry Palmer dies

BY COLIN POITRAS

Henry A. “Hank” Palmer, a clinical professor and former associate dean in the School of Pharmacy, died May 23. He was 73.

Just a few weeks previously, he had been honored by colleagues and friends in the School of Pharmacy with the creation of a Palmer Pharmacy Professorship in his name.

Palmer spent 42 years teaching at UConn. His teaching career began as a graduate teaching assistant and ended with his retirement in January 2000 as a clinical professor and associate dean.

An expert in the areas of prescription compounding, non-prescription medication, and consumer education, Palmer received many awards for his outstanding work and commitment to students.

The Connecticut Pharmacists Association named a scholarship after him in 2000 and the School of Pharmacy’s continuing education program was named after him in 2002. Palmer was a past president of the Connecticut Pharmacists Association and was active in many state and national pharmacy and health-related organizations. He served as a consultant to pharmaceutical companies, government agencies, and health-related institutions, and pioneered the development of several methods of

medication use for consumers.

“It’s hard to sum up a life and career like Hank’s,” said Robert McCarthy, dean of the School of Pharmacy, in an e-mail to colleagues. “His impact on literally thousands of students and pharmacists will be felt for many years to come.

“His former students and protégés can be found across the United States and the world, making a difference in the lives of patients and practicing their profession with the empathy and dedication to purpose that was the essence of their mentor,” McCarthy added. “We all miss his wise counsel, his enduring optimism, and his love for pharmacy and pharmacy education. We will not soon see his like again.”

Robin Bogner, associate professor of pharmaceutical sciences, was one of those who benefited from Palmer’s extensive knowledge and mentoring skills.

“Henry was a great man, a great teacher, a caring friend, and a very proactive mentor,” said Bogner. “He was, as many have said, the face of pharmacy at UConn.”

“At a time when extemporaneous pharmaceutical compounding was on the decline in the U.S., Henry doggedly kept teaching it and advocating for it,” Bogner says. “Because of his proactive

yet gentle mentoring, UConn has remained in the lead in teaching and scholarship in pharmaceutical compounding.”

Palmer was born in Albany, N.Y. in 1936. He earned his undergraduate degree in pharmacy at the Albany College of Pharmacy. He received his M.S. and Ph.D. from the UConn School of Pharmacy.

He was named assistant dean in 1979, clinical professor in 1981, and associate dean in 1985. He served as director of UConn’s Alumni Association from 1988 to 1996. He received the first Distinguished Emeritus Faculty Award in 2004.

Palmer was married for 50 years to his high school sweetheart, Janice Stuart Palmer.

The School of Pharmacy continues to pursue an endowed chair in Palmer’s name. At the time of going to press, nearly \$777,500 had been raised through private donations, enough for the professorship but short of the \$1.5 million needed to establish an endowed chair.

Those wishing to contribute to the fund may contact The Henry A. Palmer Endowment Fund, c/o Lisa Brown, assistant director of development for the School of Pharmacy, at 860-486-9342 or via e-mail at: lbrown@foundation.uconn.edu.



PHOTO BY PETER MORENUS

Barry Sheckley, left, professor of educational leadership, and Christos Anagiotos a master’s student in the Department of Educational Leadership’s adult learning program, chat outside Gentry Building.

## Alumni Association names award-winners

The Alumni Association has announced the winners of its 2009 Alumni and Faculty Awards. The awards recognize UConn alumni and faculty who have made extraordinary contributions to society and the University.

The recipients will be honored during a ceremony on Oct. 16 during Homecoming. For more information about them, go to <http://uconnalumni.com/awards>.

The winners are:

**Distinguished Alumni Award**  
**Robert Fiondella, ’68 J.D.**  
Phoenix Companies Inc., Chairman, Retired

**Honorary Alumni Award**  
**M. Kevin Fahey**  
University of Connecticut, Senior Associate Director, Division of Student Activities

**Alumni Association Service Award**  
**Theresa Hopkins-Staten ’81, ’84 J.D.**  
The Connecticut Light and Power Company

**Graduate of the Last Decade (G.O.L.D.) Award**  
**Daniel Mullins ’97, ’98 M.A., ’06 J.D.**  
EASTCONN, Regional Education Service Center Resource Specialist

**University Service Award**  
**Elizabeth T. Beaudin ’74, ’80 M.S.N., ’06 Ph.D.**  
The Connecticut Hospital Association, Director, Nursing and Workforce Initiatives

**Faculty Excellence in Research (Humanities/Social Sciences)**

**Sharon Harris**  
Department of English, College of Liberal Arts & Sciences

**Faculty Excellence in Research (Sciences)**  
**William Kraemer**  
Department of Kinesiology, Neag School of Education

**Faculty Excellence in Teaching (Undergraduate Level)**  
**Linda Strausbaugh**  
Department of Molecular and Cell Biology, College of Liberal Arts & Sciences

**Faculty Excellence in Teaching (Graduate Level)**  
**Sandra Chafouleas**  
Department of Educational Psychology, Neag School of Education

### Jim Walter *continued from page 1*

Storrs campus and the Health Center, but will be based in Storrs. He says the communications offices at the Health Center and the Storrs campus already work closely together.

“We are not starting from scratch,” he says. “We have in many ways exemplified the concept of ‘One University,’ but there are still many opportunities to extend it.

“The work never ends to grow the University’s reputation and have people understand and appreciate all the good work that occurs at the University every day,” he adds. “A strong reputation is essential to the strength of an



PHOTO BY PETER MORENUS

Jim Walter, associate vice president for communications.

organization.”

Walter, who joined the Health Center in 1996, has planned and directed communications and marketing for the medical and dental schools and the hospital, and served as the primary media spokesperson.

He holds a faculty appointment at the School of Medicine as an instructor in the Department of Community Medicine and Health Care.

Walter previously held positions in marketing and communications with Osteotech Inc., MED Communications, and Johnson & Johnson.

## Student hardship fund receives boost

BY RICHARD VEILLEUX

The Students First Fund, a fund that can help students facing serious financial hardship, received a boost last month from a golf tournament and an anonymous donor.

The Students First Fund Golf Tournament, sponsored by Rockville Bank and held May 1, raised nearly \$13,000 for the fund through tournament fees and a silent auction held after the event. Then, just one week later, an anonymous donor contributed \$30,000 to the fund, which is managed by the UConn Foundation.

“It’s a wonderful affirmation of how deeply UConn’s faculty and staff care for our students,” said Scott Gallo, a project manager in

residential life and organizer of the golf tournament.

More than 100 people took part in the tournament, which was held at the former Willimantic Country Club, now known as the University Club of Connecticut. Former UConn basketball star Donny Marshall, who recently bought the club with Chuck Grodovich, was on hand to cheer on the competitors.

Gallo has already reserved the course for June 4, 2010, for round two. The later date places the tournament on the Friday before Alumni Weekend, and he hopes a number of UConn alums will join the crowd to help raise even more money for the program.

UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT  
**Advance**  
Elizabeth Omara-Otunnu  
Editor

Contributing Writers ..... Sherry Fisher, Michael Kirk, Colin Poitras, Mark J. Roy, Richard Veilleux  
Health Center Writers .....Chris DeFrancesco, Maureen McGuire, Carolyn Pennington  
Designer ..... Betsy J. Surprenant  
Calendar Editor ..... Tracy Maheu  
Photo Editor ..... Peter Morenus  
Student Photographers ..... Frank Dahlmeyer, Jessica Tommaselli  
Manager, Media Communications ..... Karen A. Grava, APR  
Manager, Media Relations..... David Bauman  
Proof Reader..... Sheila Foran

The *Advance* is published weekly during the academic year, except during breaks. It is distributed free to faculty, staff, and students at the University of Connecticut. Published by University Communications, 34 North Eagleville Road, Storrs, CT 06269-3144. Phone: 860.486.3530. Periodical permit (ISSN 0746-3170, USPS 703-730) at Storrs, CT. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to the *Advance* at the above address. Advance website: <http://www.advance.uconn.edu> E-mail: [advance@uconn.edu](mailto:advance@uconn.edu)



# Report examines impact of mass layoffs on workers' long-term earnings

BY DAVID BAUMAN

For workers losing jobs due to mass layoffs in the current economic downturn, the bad news is that more people than ever are looking for work right now, making it the toughest job market in at least two decades.

But for those lucky enough to find another job, there is more bad news: they will likely suffer lower wages for many years compared to similar workers who are not laid off.

A new study from UConn and the Connecticut Department of Labor shows how the business cycle plays a determining role in the extent of wage losses for workers let go in mass layoffs and plant closings.

The study finds that for workers losing jobs during a recession, the damage to their earnings can linger for years. By contrast, for workers who lose jobs as part of a mass layoff or plant closure in more favorable times, long-term earnings losses are negligible.

Kenneth Couch, an associate professor of economics in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, teamed up with researchers at the Connecticut Department of Labor, economist Nicholas Jolly and analyst Dana Placzek, for the study. They examined wage records from unemployment insurance data collected by the labor department to track what happens to workers who experience a mass layoff during a period of sustained economic growth compared with a recession.

Their study, entitled "Mass Layoffs and Their Impact on Earnings During Recessions and Expansions," used information spanning 12 years, 1993 to 2004. During that period, the state experienced a full

employment cycle, consisting of a period of growth and a period of recession.

Using two data samples, one of individuals who changed jobs during a period of economic growth, the other of workers who changed jobs during an economic downturn, the study examined the experiences of both groups after being laid off.

"This is the first study to compare directly the experiences of workers displaced due to mass layoffs at different points in the business cycle," says Couch, lead author of the study.

"What it shows is that if workers who have held a job for at least three years lose that job during a recession, they still have earnings losses of 20 percent or more six years afterwards," he says. "Earnings losses among those displaced in periods of economic growth, on the other hand, have negligible earnings losses six years later."

The pattern occurred regardless of the gender or age of the workers and the size of the firm.

In addition, the state of the business cycle appears to have a disproportionately large impact on workers who change industries following job loss, those who suffer multiple layoffs, and those who receive unemployment insurance. The study shows that each of these groups experiences large earnings losses that increase during economic downturns.

For displaced non-manufacturing workers, earnings losses are significantly greater if they find re-employment by switching industries, regardless of economic conditions.

"The results of this study reaffirm our belief that it is of vital

importance to provide workforce services to individuals who experience a mass layoff during an economic recession," says Patricia Mayfield, Connecticut Commissioner of Labor. "The results clearly indicate that re-employment efforts should be focused on getting displaced workers back into positions that offer job opportunities for a longer period of time, rather than short-term employment."

"The study also suggests that whenever possible, we should help these workers find jobs within the industry from which they were laid off," she adds, "to ensure better long-term success in the workforce."

Couch says the study's findings underscore the importance of directing assistance to workers experiencing mass layoffs in difficult economic times.

He notes that over six years the earnings loss for workers let go in a mass layoff during good economic times averages 7.2 percent. However, if the job loss comes during a recession, the earnings loss over the six years could amount to 18.2 percent. For workers making \$40,000 a year, for example, that would mean earning nearly \$45,000 less over the six year period.

The impact on wages could be even more severe during conditions like those currently prevailing, Couch says. That's because of the depth of this recession and the possibility that the unemployment rate may approach 10 percent, a level not seen since the 1980s. The labor department recently reported that the unemployment rate rose to 8.9 percent in April.



PHOTO BY PETER MORENUS

Janet Jordan, program manager at the Instructional Resource Center.

## New resource to help faculty use technology in teaching

BY SHERRY FISHER

The Instructional Resource Center has created a wiki about educational technologies, as part of its ongoing efforts to provide information about new and emerging technologies.

The wiki, a website with multiple editors, allows staff from Storrs and the regional campuses who are involved with educational technologies to collaborate and share information in their areas of expertise.

Wiki comes from the Hawaiian word quick. The most well-known wiki is Wikipedia.

"The wiki is a resource not only for our group of educational technologies support staff, but for anyone interested in using technology with their teaching," says Janet Jordan, the Center's program manager. While the wiki is available for the public to read, only the UConn editors – about 15 – may contribute to it.

"Our goal at the Instructional Resource Center is to support faculty in their use of technology in their teaching," Jordan says. "We've been getting a lot more inquiries about different technologies, such as embedding YouTube video in PowerPoint presentations. Faculty members have also started asking about starting their own wikis and blogs."

Jordan says the group from Storrs and the regional campuses had been meeting remotely once a month using iTV to discuss educational technologies, and decided to create a wiki as a supplement.

"We discovered our common interests, and decided that creating a wiki would make it easy for us to communicate with each other," she says. "We wanted to develop it as a resource for our particular group, so we could collaborate and share information about the technologies we were using or learning about."

Jordan says one of the advantages of the wiki is that it enables the group to create a permanent

record that can be continually updated with new information.

"For example, if one of us writes something new about using a particular technology, someone else in our group can add additional information, making it a resource that evolves over time," she says. "A wiki would be a great tool for an instructor or a group of people working on a project because they can be editing in the same environment."

Wikis are often used in corporate situations and at universities for project management and research purposes, she adds.

The Instructional Resource Center has also started a blog focused on providing information for UConn faculty about new technologies.

"The nice thing about a blog is that it's like a newsletter that's delivered in installments," says Jordan. "Paper and e-mail newsletters don't work well any more. A blog enables us to have information out there and contribute to it over time. It generates its own archive and it's a public resource."

"Part of the motivation for creating the wiki and blog was that these are great tools for disseminating information," she says, "but it was also an opportunity for us to experience firsthand how to use them. When we're more informed, we're better equipped to assist faculty. We hope that faculty will be inspired to create their own wiki or blog for teaching and learning."

Jordan says it is important to keep up with new and emerging technologies that interest faculty. "We at IRC can talk with them about their objectives and what kinds of activities they think they'd like to use in their classes," she says. "There are so many different ways to incorporate technology into teaching to help students learn a concept or develop a skill."

The wiki may be found at: [edtechnet.wikispaces.com](http://edtechnet.wikispaces.com) and the blog is at <http://itlirc.wordpress.com/>



PHOTO BY PETER MORENUS

Kenneth Couch, associate professor of economics.

## Publication notice

The *Advance* is on a reduced publishing schedule during the summer. The next issue will be published on July 13.



# Study examines impact of eating raisins on cardiovascular health

BY COLIN POITRAS

Eating a cup of raisins and walking extra steps daily may help reduce the risk for cardiovascular disease in men and women between the ages of 50 and 70, according to a recent study by researchers in the Department of Nutritional Sciences.

In a study published in the journal *Metabolism: Clinical and Experimental*, researchers found that eating one cup of raisins a day and walking regularly as exercise helps reduce hunger and significantly decreases levels of low density lipoproteins (LDL) cholesterol – the so-called ‘bad cholesterol’ – in the blood stream.

The research was funded by the California Raisin Marketing Board.

“Our research indicates that easily implemented lifestyle changes such as increasing raisin consumption or walking additional steps each day may help decrease the risk for heart disease,” says Maria Luz Fernandez, a professor of nutritional sciences in the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources and the study’s principal investigator.

Cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death for both



PHOTO BY PETER MORENUS

Maria Luz Fernandez, professor of nutritional sciences, takes a walk near the Jones Building.

men and women in the United States. Eating raisins helps decrease the risk of cardiovascular disease because raisins contain dietary fiber known to lower LDL cholesterol. One cup of raisins provides an additional 10 g of dietary fiber and approximately 3 g of soluble fiber to a person’s diet. Raisins also are a significant source of

polyphenols, which may interfere with cholesterol absorption. One cup of raisins contains approximately 850 mg of polyphenols.

Overall, the researchers found that consuming raisins, walking, or doing a combination of these will alter lipoprotein metabolism and may thereby reduce the risk for cardiovascular disease in older men and women. Raisins particularly, as a source of soluble fiber, were shown to reduce hunger and could help individuals reduce their caloric intake by altering the hormones that indicate when the body is satiated.

In the study, 34 subjects – 17 men and 17 postmenopausal women – between the ages of 50 and 70 were matched by weight and sex and then randomly assigned to consume one cup of raisins a day, increase the amount of steps walked each day, or both.

The subjects completed a two-week preparatory period followed by a six-week intervention. Those participating in the walking regime were asked to increase their steps walked by an additional 10 minutes a day above their normal activity every two weeks, in order to increase their walking by approximately one kilometer every two weeks.

Tests at the end of the study showed that systolic blood pressure was reduced for all subjects.

Plasma total cholesterol decreased by 9.4 percent for all subjects, which the researchers believe was caused primarily by a 13.7 percent reduction in plasma LDL or bad cholesterol. Plasma triglycerides concentrations decreased by 19.5 percent for those who walked additional steps.

“This study builds upon previous research demonstrating raisins’ cholesterol-lowering and heart health benefits due to their fiber and antioxidant content,” says Julie Miller Jones, national scientific advisor to the California Raisin Marketing Board.

Jeff Volek, a registered dietitian and associate professor of kinesiology in the Neag School of Education, and one of his former students, Cherise Labonte, also participated in the research. One of Fernandez’ former doctoral students, Michael Puglisi, now a post-doctoral fellow at Vanderbilt University, wrote the published report. Two recent Ph.D. graduates – Gisella Mutungi from Fernandez’ laboratory, and Pierre Brun, who works in the nutritional sciences laboratory of associate professor Mary McGrane – also participated. McGrane, and Richard Wood, a former Ph.D. student under Fernandez who is now an assistant professor of exercise science at Springfield College, completed the research team.

# Prenatal testing for Down syndrome raises ethical concerns

BY CHRIS DEFRADESCO

Scientific advances over the last three decades have introduced several methods of screening and diagnosing Down syndrome during pregnancy. And as the number of prenatal screening options grows, so do related ethical concerns.

The newest chapter is what’s known as noninvasive prenatal diagnosis. At least one biotech company purportedly is on the verge of offering a way to detect the chromosome abnormality associated with Down syndrome, trisomy 21, based on a blood test that detects small quantities of the baby’s genetic material present in the mother’s blood.

“This new method has not gone through the battery of clinical trials, quality assurance, and other steps to prove and ensure its accuracy, so the first question is, is this new method as reliable as claimed?” says Professor Peter Benn, director of the UConn Health Center’s Diagnostic Human Genetics Laboratories and co-author of a commentary published in the May 27 *Journal of the American Medical Association*. “Let’s say it is as accurate as amniocentesis, the invasive testing that is currently used to diagnose Down Syndrome. Certainly that offers advantages, but we have to consider how this testing might

best be offered to women.

Benn notes that currently, women usually only receive detailed genetic counseling after they have undergone screening tests that identify them as being at high risk. All women considering the new testing would have to be counseled, but there are not sufficient numbers of genetic counselors available for this purpose, he says.

Co-author Audrey Chapman, a professor in the Division of Medical Humanities, Health Law and Ethics at the Health Center, says, “The new testing introduces a real need for standards of care and professional guidelines, because patients cannot be expected to completely understand their full clinical implications. Otherwise, physicians would also feel obligated to provide both noninvasive diagnosis and current standards of care to protect against malpractice, which would mitigate the full benefits of the noninvasive prenatal diagnosis.”

The abortion debate is unavoidable. The earlier in a pregnancy Down syndrome can be definitively detected, the easier it is to terminate the pregnancy. And with the potential for a significantly reduced prevalence of Down syndrome comes the possible unintended consequence of negative public perception.

If society becomes less accepting of the idea of carrying out an affected pregnancy, it “could diminish understanding and support for affected individuals and their families and increase the stigma associated with having a genetic disorder,” the authors write.

A Health Center study presented by Dr. James Egan, chairman of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, suggests that the

number of Down syndrome live births in the United States has been fairly constant over the past 30 years. The study also estimates that Down syndrome live births would have nearly doubled over that same time period in the absence of prenatal screening and pregnancy terminations.

“Our data indicate that as the availability and reliability of Down syndrome screening methods

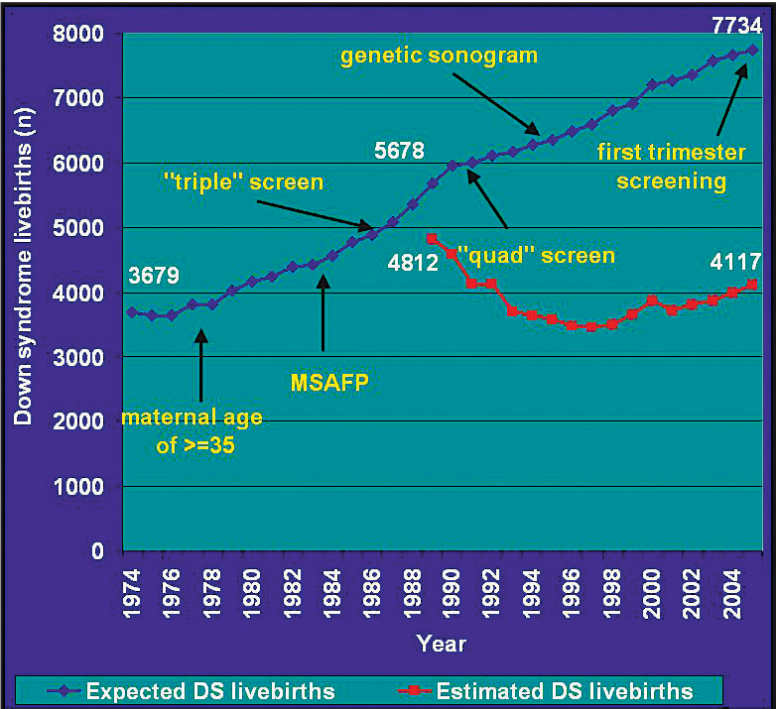
improved, a smaller percentage of affected pregnancies were continuing,” Egan says. “The percentage decreased from 1989 to 1998 and then leveled off in the late 90s, at around 50 percent of the Down syndrome live births expected. One possible explanation for this plateau in live births is patient ambivalence about Down syndrome screening.”

One in every 733 babies is born with Down syndrome, the most commonly occurring chromosome condition, according to the National Down Syndrome Society.

In the future, noninvasive prenatal diagnosis will be able to identify many genetic disorders, predispositions, and traits. Benn and Chapman acknowledge that noninvasive prenatal diagnosis is an idea with potential clinical value, but that the ethical considerations cannot be taken lightly.

“Careful thought and debate on how to shape an era in which a newborn’s future growth and potential is no longer entirely a source of speculation and wonder are essential,” they write.

Benn and Chapman’s commentary is available through the Journal of the American Medical Association Web site, at <http://jama.ama-assn.org/cgi/content/extract/301/20/2154>.



VISUAL SUPPLIED BY DR. JAMES EGAN

A chart from a Health Center study on the number of Down syndrome live births in the United States over a 30-year period.



# Health Center researcher receives grant to study parasites

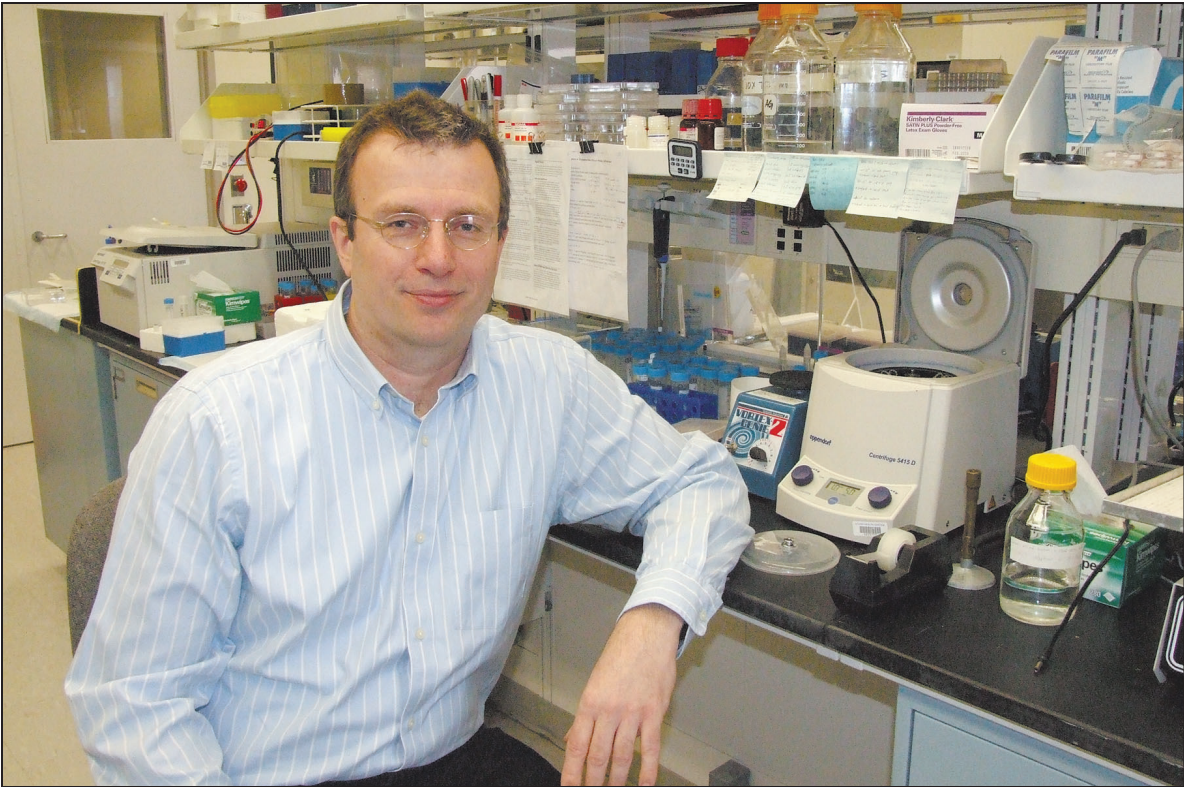


PHOTO BY CAROLYN PENNINGTON

Arthur Günzl, associate professor of genetics and developmental biology, has received a grant from the Gates Foundation.

BY CAROLYN PENNINGTON  
Arthur Günzl, an associate professor in the Department of Genetics and Developmental Biology, has been awarded a grant by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. He is the first Health Center researcher to receive a Gates Foundation grant.  
Günzl is one of 81 researchers around the world to receive a grant of \$100,000 each through the

foundation’s Grand Challenges Explorations initiative, which aims to develop a pipeline of creative ideas that could change the face of global health. The projects focus on innovative approaches to prevent and treat infectious diseases, such as HIV, malaria, tuberculosis, pneumonia, and diarrheal diseases.  
Günzl’s research focuses on *Trypanosoma brucei*, the para-

site carried by the tsetse fly in Sub-Saharan Africa that causes sleeping sickness. There are an estimated 500,000 cases each year, and in some African provinces, half the population is infected. Untreated, the disease is invariably fatal. However, existing drugs are highly toxic, expensive, difficult to administer, and/or not effective against all subspecies of the parasite. Moreover, resistance to

existing drugs is on the rise and vaccine development not in sight. New strategies to combat the parasite are urgently needed.  
With the Gates Foundation grant, Günzl will be able to concentrate on a unique trait of *T. brucei*. The parasite lives freely in the human bloodstream and must continuously swim forward to evade immune responses. Günzl will attempt to develop serum-stable adhesive RNA molecules that immobilize trypanosomes on human endothelial cells.  
“It’s just an idea, I have no preliminary data,” says Günzl. “From my previous research experience, I can see where it may work but I can also think of reasons why it might not work. But it is definitely worth trying.”  
Günzl’s proposal to the Gates Foundation was only two pages long, which differs greatly from the lengthy and data-proven proposals researchers need to submit to the National Institutes of Health in order to receive grant money.  
“It’s a nice thing for a scientist,” he says. “This grant is allowing me to go and do something completely new and unconventional, and that’s what can lead to big discoveries.”  
If Günzl’s hunch proves correct, it could lead to a short-cut for a new treatment.  
The other funded researchers will explore a wide range of new

ideas, including giving mosquitoes a “head cold” to prevent them from detecting and biting humans; developing a tomato to deliver antiviral drugs; and using a laser to enhance the effect of vaccines. Projects that show promise are eligible for additional funding of \$1 million or more.  
“Investments in global health research are already paying big dividends,” says Dr. Tachi Yamada, president of the Gates Foundation’s Global Health Program. “An incredible number of new vaccines, drugs, and other tools are becoming available to improve health in developing countries. Grand Challenges Explorations is our way to help inspire the bold ideas that could one day help transform global health.”  
Applicants were selected from more than 3,000 proposals. All levels of scientists are represented – from veteran researchers to young post-graduate investigators – as are a range of disciplines, such as neurobiology, immunology, and polymer science. The grantees are based at universities, research institutes, nonprofit organizations, and private companies in Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe, Latin America, and North America.  
Learn more about the complete list of Grand Challenges Explorations funded projects on line at <http://www.grandchallenges.org/Pages/default.aspx>.

# Hearst Foundations’ gift supports future teachers

BY JENNIFER HUBER  
An endowed gift of \$100,000 from The Hearst Foundations is boosting scholarships and the University of Connecticut’s Teachers for a New Era (TNE) program. The William Randolph Hearst Scholarship Fund will provide awards to students studying to become teachers, and support diversity initiatives at UConn.  
UConn is one of 11 institutions nationwide participating in TNE, an initiative established by the Carnegie Corp. of New York to assist exemplary programs in creating best practices for K-12 teacher preparation.  
“With that charge, we set out to strengthen UConn’s teacher preparation program in ways that would not only distinguish strong aspects of our program but would also inquire into why and how our processes produce talented, effective teachers,” says Marijke Kehrhn, associate professor of educational leadership in the Neag School of Education and director of the TNE program at UConn.  
Mason Granger, director of grants for The Hearst Foundations, says, “The Neag School of Education at UConn is one of the premier institutions of its type in the nation. We admire the vision of the leadership and the inspired, inclusive approach of the faculty

and curriculum. Together they reflect a dynamic commitment to teachers and students, which, we believe, will produce substantive improvement in children’s education and performance in the years to come.”  
TNE seeks to reform teacher preparation through integration of liberal arts and education curricula so that students receive thorough instruction in pedagogy and the subjects they intend to teach. At UConn, 30 faculty and staff from the Neag School work closely with more than 30 faculty and staff from the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS), who teach and advise in content areas associated with teacher certification. Faculty in the School of Fine Arts and the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources are also involved.  
Kehrhn says that, since the initiative began at UConn in 2003, a number of goals have been accomplished. A modification to UConn’s five-year integrated

bachelor’s/master’s degree program enables students to earn bachelor’s degrees in both education and a subject area as well as a master’s degree in education.  
TNE staff have started conducting surveys of CLAS students to assess their interest in becoming teachers, in addition to developing a database to analyze data about education students and graduates. Many projects have been implemented to foster cross-college collaborations and grant writing. UConn has also launched a study to compare the academic achievement of K-12 students taught by alumni of UConn compared with other institutions.  
In the future, the TNE program will focus on addressing pressing and emerging needs, including recruiting and preparing a diverse and culturally competent educator workforce. Kehrhn explains that, while minority student enrollment is projected to increase, minorities represent less than 10 percent of the teacher workforce.

“The Hearst Foundations’ endowment will provide financial support – an important aspect of any minority teacher recruitment effort – to young people of color pursuing a degree in teaching,” says Kehrhn.  
The Hearst Foundations’ Granger says, “Students at schools across America are increasingly representative of a myriad ethnic and social backgrounds. We must have teachers who can relate to those youngsters and can provide them with the support and counsel they need to dream big and achieve their ambitions.”  
Kehrhn hopes the commitment from The Hearst Foundations may help attract additional support. UConn’s TNE program has been largely supported by private gifts. In addition to the original \$5 million grant from the Carnegie Corp. of New York, the University received \$250,000 from the McLeod Blue Skye Foundation and \$141,000 from the estate of Dorothy Goodwin.  
Kehrhn notes that a scholarship to a student entering the teaching profession has the potential to impact thousands of lives. “One teacher times 25 students per class times 5 classes per year times 30 years equals 3,750 students,” she says. “If you want to change the future, support a teacher!”

Nancy Bull *continued from p. 1*



PHOTO BY DANIEL BUTTREY

Nancy Bull, associate vice provost for academic administration  
a great opportunity to work with people across campus.”  
The position was held previously by Suman Singha, who is now senior vice provost, vice president for research, and dean of the Graduate School.  
In her new role, Bull’s responsibilities will include dealing with faculty concerns to audit and compliance, overseeing information technology as it relates to faculty and their teaching, serving as liaison to the Board of Trustees Academic Affairs Committee and the Board of Governors for Higher Education, and management of academic positions.  
She previously served as associate dean of outreach and public service and associate director of the Cooperative Extension System in the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources.

TEACHERS

FOR A NEW ERA PROJECT @ UCONN

A Great Education Begins with Great Teachers





PHOTO BY CHRIS DeFRANCESCO

Volunteers from the Bank of America deliver gift baskets to the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit at the John Dempsey Hospital.

## GRANTS

The following grants were received through the Office for Sponsored Programs (OSP) in April 2009. 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
Ayers, J.	Electrical & Computer Engineering	Conn. Cntr. for Advanced Technology Inc./Biorasis Inc.	\$2,500	12/08-5/09
<i>Methodology to Fabricate Long-Life Wireless Needle-Implantable Glucose Sensors: Prototyping Using Advanced Processing and Packaging Technology</i>				
Bahr, B.	Pharmaceutical Sciences	Nat'l. Insts. of Health/ Nat'l. Inst. on Aging/Synaptic Dynamics Inc.	\$80,848	4/09-4/10
<i>Development of Lysosomal Modulatory Drugs to Treat Alzheimer's Disease</i>				
Barnes -Farrell, J.	Psychology	Cntrs. for Disease Control & Prevention/Nat'l. Inst. for Occupational Safety & Health/UConn. Health Cntr.	\$1,109	1/09-5/09
<i>Characteristics of Effective Job Health and Safety Committees</i>				
Bohannon, R.	Physical Therapy	Nat'l. Insts. of Health/ Nat'l. Inst. on Aging/NorthShore University Health System	\$67,944	2/09-12/09
<i>NIH Toolbox Assessment of Neurological and Behavioral Function</i>				
Casa, D.	Kinesiology	Windham Public Schools, Windham, Conn.	\$26,517	8/08-6/09
<i>Athletic Training Services: A Partnership with Windham Public Schools</i>				
Christenson, R.	Civil & Environmental Engineering	Nat'l. Science Foundation/Engineering	\$115,509	5/09-4/12
<i>Research Experience for Undergraduates Site: Collaborative Research: International REU Program in Smart Structures</i>				
Dupraz, C.	Marine Sciences	American Chemical Society/Petroleum Research Fund	\$100,000	5/09-8/11
<i>Microbial Processes During Early Diagenesis of Carbonate Reservoirs: A Laboratory Approach</i>				
Faggella -Luby, M.	Educational Psychology	US Dept. of Edu./ Office of Special Edu. & Rehabilitative Svs. Conn. Dept. of Edu. /	\$80,406	3/09-2/11
<i>Post-School Outcomes Survey of Connecticut Special Education Students</i>				
Fein, D.	Psychology	Nat'l. Insts. of Health/ Nat'l. Inst. of Child Health & Human Development	\$5,410,599	1/09-3/14
<i>Early Detection of Pervasive Developmental Disorders</i>				
Frisman, L.	School of Social Work Instr. & Research	Conn. Dept. of Mental Health & Addiction Svs.	\$195,578	3/09-2/12
<i>Nursing Home Transition Study</i>				
Karan, O.	Educational Psychology	New London Public Schools, New London, Conn.	\$21,577	8/08-6/09
<i>Counseling Psychology Internship – Kendria Vereen</i>				
Kharchenko, V.	Physics	Nat'l. Aeronautics & Space Administration	\$201,349	3/09-3/11
<i>Energetic Atoms in the Martian Atmosphere, Past and Present</i>				

Li, B.	Civil & Environmental Engineering	Environmental Protection Agency/Fuss & O'Neill Inc.	\$45,000	2/09-1/10
<i>Electricity Generation From Anaerobic Wastewater Treatment in Microbial Fuel Cells (MFCs)</i>				
Loturco, J.	Physiology & Neurobiology	Nat'l. Insts. of Health	\$432,745	4/09-3/12
<i>The Role of DISC1 in Synapse Formation and Function in the Developing Pre-Frontal Cortex</i>				
Lynch, M.	Philosophy	Nat'l. Endowment for the Humanities	\$46,200	6/09-4/10
<i>Functionalist Theory of Truth</i>				
Mazerolle, S.	Kinesiology	Eastern Athletic Trainers' Association	\$4,000	2/09-1/10
<i>Promotion of Work and Life Balance Among Division I Athletic Trainers</i>				
Papadimi-trakopoulos, F.	Chemistry	Dept. of Defense/Air Force Office of Scientific Research	\$540,000	5/09-4/12
<i>Flavin-Assisted Single-Walled Nano Tubes Separation and Functionalization</i>				
Pattipati, K.	Electrical & Computer Engineering	Dept. of Defense/Navy/ Office of Naval Research/Aptima Inc.	\$80,000	3/09-12/09
<i>Decision Support Systems for Quantifying the Impact of Oceanographic Environment on Maritime Operations</i>				
Robbins, G.	Natural Resources & the Environment	General Motors Corp./ ENVIRON International Corp.	\$50,000	1/09-12/09
<i>Evaluating the Use of Oxygen Release Compound for Remediating Excess Dissolved Manganese in Ground Water</i>				
Rossetti, G.	Chemical, Materials & Biomolecular Engr.	Dept. of Defense/Army Research Laboratory	\$46,542	4/09-12/09
<i>Short Term Innovative Research: Nanoscale Domain Structure Control in Funtional Oxides</i>				
Stein, A.	Mathematics	Dept. of Commerce/ Nat'l. Inst. of Standards & Technology	\$7,715	5/09-9/09
<i>National Institute of Standards &amp; Technology Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowship Program</i>				
Tang, J.	Mechanical Engineering	Nat'l. Science Foundation/ Engineering	\$143,333	6/09-5/12
<i>Grant Opportunities for Academic Liaison with Industry/Collaborative Research: Understanding and Controlling Variation Propagation in Periodic Structures: From Geometry to Dynamic Response</i>				
Valiquette, E.	Extension	Danbury Public Schools, Danbury, Conn.	\$1,720	3/09-6/09
<i>Danbury 4-H Afterschool</i>				
Wagner, D.	Ecology & Evolutionary Biology	Northeast Utilities	\$83,804	4/09-3/10
<i>Interstate Reliability Project Invertebrate Survey</i>				
Weiss, R.	Chemical, Materials & Biomolecular Engr.	Nat'l. Science Foundation/ Mathematical & Physical Sciences	\$375,000	6/09-5/12
<i>Shape Memory Elastomers Derived From Ionomer/Fatty Acid Blends</i>				
Zhou, S.	Electrical & Computer Engineering	Dept. of Defense/Navy/ Office of Naval Research	\$999,998	4/09-3/14
<i>Advancing Underwater Acoustic Communication for Autonomous Distributed Networks via Sparse Channel Sensing, Coding and Navigation Support</i>				

## Medal of Science *continued from page 1*

of molecular electronic devices. His ultimate goal is to make a computer with true artificial intelligence.

He typically collaborates with scientists from other disciplines, including physicists and biologists. He worked with researchers at UConn's Institute of Materials Science to establish a Center for Nanobionics, which has given UConn and the state a competitive advantage in an economically important field.

"The Academy's recognition of Dr. Birge's contributions to our understanding of the molecular components of visual perception is especially timely," said University President Michael Hogan. "He is working at the forefront of our nanobionics initiatives at the University, which have incredible potential as the technology of new biochemical and biomedical research."

Birge joined the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at UConn in 1999, after heading the chemistry department at Carnegie Mellon University and directing the W.M. Keck Center for Molecular Electronics at Syracuse University, one of the first research centers in the country to make bioelectronic devices.

He has deep roots in Connecticut, however. One of his paternal ancestors, John Birge, founded several clock companies in Bristol, Conn., in the early 1800s.

Robert Birge grew up on Long Island,

attended Choate School in Wallingford, and received his bachelor's degree from Yale University, where he studied chemistry and was musical director of the Yale Whiffenpoofs, an a cappella group. He received his Ph.D. in chemical physics from Wesleyan University and was a postdoctoral fellow at Harvard University.

His previous awards include the 3M Award of Canada in Physical Chemistry, a basic research award to physical chemists; the Connecticut Innovations 2001 Annual Technology Award; and a Time magazine Digital Top 50 Cyber Elite honor that identified some of the nation's foremost innovators.

The Connecticut Medal of Science, modeled after the National Medal of Science, was created by the state legislature to recognize extraordinary achievements in scientific fields crucial to Connecticut's economic competitiveness. The awards are made by the Board of Governors for Higher Education, the state's policy-making agency for Connecticut colleges and universities, with assistance from the Connecticut Academy of Science and Engineering.

Birge is the fifth recipient of the science medal.

To hear a podcast of Birge describing his latest research, go to <http://www.clas.uconn.edu/facultynapsshots/view.php?id=birge>



## CALENDAR

Monday, June 8, to Monday, July 13

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, July 13 through Monday, Aug. 31. Those items must be in the database by 4 p.m. on Monday, July 6. 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

**Monday, 6/1 through Friday, 7/10** – Summer Session 1. No class 7/3. **Monday, 6/1 through Friday 8/21** – Summer Session 4. No class 7/3. **Monday 6/8 through Friday, 6/26** – Intensive Session 1.

### Libraries

**Homer Babbidge Library.** Monday-Thursday, 8:30 a.m.-9 p.m.; Friday, 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m.; weekends, noon-5 p.m. Closed 7/3-7/6 and 7/11-7/12. **Dodd Center.** Reading Room hours: Monday-Friday, noon-4 p.m.; closed weekends. Research Center hours: Monday-Friday, 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.; closed weekends. Closed 7/3-7/6. **Pharmacy Library.** Monday-Friday, 9 a.m.-noon & 12:30-4:30 p.m.; closed weekends. **Music & Dramatic Arts Library.** Monday-Friday, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.; closed weekends. Closed 7/3-7/6. **Health Center Library.** Monday-Thursday, 7 a.m.-10 p.m.; Friday, 7 a.m.-5 p.m.; Saturday, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.; Sunday, 2-6 p.m. Closed 7/3-7/4. **Law Library.** Monday-Thursday, 8 a.m.-11 p.m.; Friday, 8 a.m.-5 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. Closed 7/3-7/6. **Greater Hartford Campus Library.** Monday-Thursday, 10 a.m.-6 p.m.;

Friday & Saturday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.; closed Sundays. Closed 7/3-7/6 and 7/11. **Stamford Campus Library.** Monday-Thursday, 8 a.m.-9 p.m.; Friday, 8:30 a.m.-4 p.m.; Saturday, 10 a.m.-4p.m.; closed Sundays. Closed 7/3-7/6 and 7/11. **Torrington Campus Library.** Monday-Thursday, 10 a.m.-3 p.m.; Friday-Sunday, closed. Closed 7/3-7/6. **Waterbury Campus Library.** Monday-Thursday, 9 a.m.-6 p.m.; Friday, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.; closed weekends. Closed 7/3-7/6.

### University ITS

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

### Ph.D. Defenses

**Wednesday, 6/10 – Exercise Science.** *Effect of the Mode of Rehydration on Cardiovascular and Thermoregulatory Recovery Following Exercise Dehydration*, by Brendon McDermott (adv.: Casa). 10 a.m., Class of '47 Room, Babbidge Library. **Wednesday, 6/10 – Clinical Psychology.** *Residual Cognitive Deficits in Optimal Outcome Children with a History of Autism*, by Michael Rosenthal (adv.: Fein). 10 a.m., Room 160, Bousfield Building. **Friday, 6/12 – Political Science.** *Assessing Offense-Defense Theory: A Structural Explanation for Intrastate War and Ethnic Conflict*, by Scott Creamer (adv.: Sterling-Folker). 10 a.m., Room 119, Monteith Building. **Tuesday, 6/16 – Anthropology.** *Powwow Arts and Crafts Markets and the Engendering of Social Relationships*, by Blaire Gagnon (adv.: Dussart). 1 p.m., Room 404, Beach Hall.

### Meetings

**Monday, 6/8 – Health Center Board of Directors.** 8:30 a.m.-noon, Room EG013, Academic Research Building. **Tuesday, 6/23 – Board of Trustees.** Annual Budget Workshop. 9 a.m., South Campus.

### Exhibits

**Friday, 6/12 through Sunday, 7/26 – Alexey von Schlippe Gallery.** Mixed media pieces by Carla Goldberg; oil paintings by Anne Hebebrand; paintings by Michael Mulhern; and



PHOTO SUPPLIED BY THE WILLIAM BENTON MUSEUM OF ART

“Punch,” by George Cruikshank, 1827, part of the exhibit *Punch & Judy: Handpuppets, Politics, and Humor*” now on display at the William Benton Museum of Art.

photographic images by Jerry Sims. Wednesday-Sunday, noon-4 p.m. Members and students free, others \$3 donation. Avery Point Campus. Opening reception, Friday, 6/12 with Count Steadwell and Bill Morrison

School. Daily, 8 a.m.-9 p.m., Celeste LeWitt Gallery. Also, through Wednesday, 7/22, *En Plein Air: Representations of New England and New York Landscapes and Personalities*, Watercolor and oil paintings by Kristine Angell and Madeline Peralta. Daily, 8 a.m.-9 p.m., Main and Mezzanine Lobbies. **Through Sunday, 8/9 – Benton Museum.** *A Touch of Humor*, exhibits by Adolf Dehn, John Sloan, Norman Rockwell, and other works on loan from the New Britain Museum of American Art; *Punch & Judy: Handpuppets, Politics & Humor*. Museum hours: Thursday and Friday, 10 a.m.-4:30 p.m., Saturday and Sunday, 1-4:30 p.m. Open by appointment for classes and tours, Monday-Wednesday. **Through Friday, 10/9 – Babbidge Library.** *The University of Connecticut in Kodachrome, 1939-1959*, photographs, Gallery on the Plaza; *Capturing the Stars: The Astrophotography of Robert Gendler*, Stevens Gallery; *New Haven’s Garment Workers: An Elm City Story*, photographs, artifacts, and documents. West Alcove. For hours see Libraries section. **Through Friday, 10/9 – Dodd Center.** *Train Wreck! Railroad Crashes, Calamities, and Catastrophes in Connecticut*, photographs and documents, Gallery; *Something Important Happened Today: Student Photography on Campus*, West Corridor. For hours see Libraries section. **Through Monday, 11/30 – Ballard Institute & Museum of Puppetry.** *Toy Theaters of the World and Títeres y Máscaras*, puppet and mask traditions from the Americas and Europe. 6 Bourn Place, Depot Campus. Open Friday-Sunday, noon-5 p.m. Suggested donation \$3 adults, \$2 children.

**Ongoing – State Museum of Natural History & Connecticut Archaeology Center.** *Human’s Nature: Looking Closer at the Relationships between People and the Environment*. Hours: Wednesday-Friday, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Free admission, donations welcome.

### Performing Arts

**Monday, 6/8 – Community School of the Arts.** Saxophone students of Jeff Taylor. 7 p.m., Vernon Building, Depot Campus. Free admission. **Thursday, 6/11 – Concerts on the Courtyard.** Irish traditional music by Kitchen Ceili & Friends. 12:15 p.m., Benton Courtyard. **Thursday, 6/11 through Sunday, 6/21 – Nutmeg Summer Series.** *Crowns*. Jorgensen Theatre for the Performing Arts. Tickets: \$14-\$36. For a list of performance dates and to purchase tickets, call 860-486-4226 or go to [www.crt.uconn.edu](http://www.crt.uconn.edu) **Saturday, 6/13 – Community School of the Arts.** School recital with various musical selections. 2:30 p.m., von der Mehden Recital Hall. Free admission. **Saturday, 6/13 – Community School of the Arts.** Cello student recital by Charlie Colwell. 4:30 p.m., von der Mehden Recital Hall. Free admission. **Saturday, 6/13 – Community School of the Arts.** Violin students of Ruth Shilling will perform musical selections. 7 p.m., von der Mehden Recital Hall. Free admission. **Sunday, 6/14 – Community School of the Arts.** Piano students of Cheryl Price will perform musical selections. 11 a.m., Vernon Building, Depot Campus. Free admission. **Sunday, 6/14 – Community School of the Arts.** Musical selections will be performed by students of Peter Olson, trumpet; Topher Logan, trombone; George Sanders, trombone; Gary Sienkiewicz, tuba; Gary Kirsch, trombone and euphonium; accompanied by Ken Clark. 6 p.m., von der Mehden Recital Hall. Free admission.

### Potpourri

**Monday, 6/15 – Radio Interview.** “Developing and evaluating HIV risk reduction interventions for drug users,” Michael Copenhaver is interviewed by Wayne Norman. 7:15 a.m., WILL Radio Morning Show, 1400 AM, 98.3 FM. **Friday, 6/26 – Friday Afternoons at the Natural History Museum.** Cultural and natural history activities for students entering grades 1 through 5, accompanied by an adult. 1 p.m., Call 860-486-4460 for more information. **Saturday, 6/27 – Museum of Natural History Event.** *Beekeeping – A Sweet Idea*, presented by Amy Gronus. 10 a.m. Adults and children ages 6 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, 6/28 – Museum of Natural History Event.** *Foods from the Landscape*, walk led by Peter Picone, Department of Environmental Protection. 1:30 p.m., All ages welcome, children must be accompanied by an adult. Admission fee \$10 for Museum of Natural History members, \$15 for non-members. Call 860-486-4460 for more information. **Tuesdays – Tons of Fun Tuesdays.** Make your own sundae. Student Union. 11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. Admission \$1 for students, \$2 for others. **Wednesdays – What’s On Wednesday.** Enjoy music while eating your lunch at the Student Union Market Place. Noon-1 p.m. Free admission.

## Education professor John Leach dies

BY SHERRY FISHER

John Leach, associate professor of curriculum and instruction in the Neag School of Education, died May 27. He was 84.

Leach, who lived in Manchester, joined the UConn faculty in 1968. He earned a master’s degree from Trinity College and a Ph.D. from the University of Connecticut.

His fields of research specialization included second language acquisition, teaching English as a second language, dual language instruction, and Caribbean cultures.

“He was a gentleman, a professional, and a warm person who was loved and admired by many people,” says Thomas Goodkind, professor of curriculum and instruction. “He was probably the best public relations person the school had. He was positive, always had a smile on his face, and was a great ambassador for UConn and the school. He had a great gift for attracting

people.”

Goodkind says Leach, who worked with minorities, was noted for his innovative courses. “His students loved him,” he says. “He was a great person and will be sorely missed.”

Eliana Rojas, assistant professor of curriculum and instruction, says Leach was a dedicated educator, known for his strong leadership and community activism.

“He encouraged students to be proactive in the community,” says Rojas. “He would recommend that students write letters to community leaders and Congress to express their concerns about issues. He wanted them to be proactive in a conciliatory, non-aggressive way.”

Rojas adds, “Many teachers, administrators, and school leaders participated in his international educational seminar in Aruba, one of the first study abroad educational experiences for educators in a multilingual, multicultural, in-

ternational arena. The teachers and administrators I talked to always had praise for it.”

Ana Davila, a former graduate student, says, “Dr. Leach left a lifelong impression in my heart. He was kind, caring, comprehensive, and a strong advocate of equal education. He believed that one day we will be able to teach all children with the same respect and enthusiasm, without barriers or differences due to languages or ethnicities.”

Leach was a member of International Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), the Connecticut Association of Latin Americans in Higher Education, and Connecticut TESOL. He traveled extensively and was an Honorary Citizen of Aruba.

He is survived by his wife Sofia, four children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren.

Donations in his memory may be made to the American Cancer Society, P.O. Box 1004, Meriden, CT 06405.



# Author Regina Barreca takes a humorous look at feminism

BY COLIN POITRAS

In an age when girls are marrying younger for the first time in 20 years and a nation obsesses over Sarah Palin's high heels, Regina Barreca, a professor of English literature and feminist theory in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, wants to know, what happened to feminism?

Barreca – a best-selling author, humorist, and nationally-acclaimed speaker – explores the perceived decline of feminism in the 21st century and shares a few laughs along the way in her latest book – “*It’s Not That I’m Bitter ... or How I Learned to Stop Worrying About Visible Panty Lines and Conquered The World.*”

“Who hijacked feminism?” says Barreca, whose humorous take on the female experience has led to appearances on *Oprah*, the *Today* program, *20/20*, and *48 Hours*.

“I used to assume my students were feminists,” she says. “It seemed like everyone got my jokes and laughed. Now I have to explain myself.”

Barreca says she’s surprised by the perceived changes in attitude.

“Why are my students so reluctant to use the ‘F-word’? And by the ‘F-word,’ I mean Feminism,” she says. “It seems like 21st century feminism has moved from a backlash to a whiplash. Talk about

feeling bad about your neck!”

Besides writing popular books, Barreca is a regular contributor to *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. She writes a weekly blog for *Psychology Today* and a monthly column for *Education World*. She is also a columnist for the *Hartford Courant*. Some of her previously published books have been translated into eight different languages.

Barreca celebrated the national release of *It’s Not That I’m Bitter ...* with a launch party and book signing at the UConn Co-op on May 12. The book (St. Martin’s Press, 2009) has been well received by critics.

“University of Connecticut English Professor Barreca offers feminism for the everywoman in these humorous essays,” says *Ms.* magazine in its Spring 2009 issue. “Expect poignant insights tucked between the laugh lines.”

And from *Publishers Weekly* in May 2009: “Fans of Nora Ephron’s *I Feel Bad About My Neck: And Other Thoughts on Being a Woman* will find humor along with serious insights about women and aging in Barreca’s latest challenge to women to ‘stop obsessing over hymens, husbands, and hangnails and once again direct our attention outward to the larger issues of ... the creation of genuinely significant opportunities for women in all



PHOTO BY FRANK DAHLMAYER

English professor Regina Barreca speaks about her latest book *It’s Not That I’m Bitter...* during a publication launch event at the Co-op on May 12.

workplaces.”

Barreca grew up in Brooklyn and Long Island. She received a B.A. from Dartmouth College, an M.A. from Cambridge University (where she was a Reynolds’ Fellow), and a Ph.D. from City University of New York. She is the founding editor and co-editor of the scholarly journal *LIT: Literature*

*Interpretation Theory*, now in its 20th year

Barreca’s other works include the best-selling *They Used to Call Me Snow White, But I Drifted*, *Perfect Husbands (and Other Fairy Tales)*, *Sweet Revenge: The Wicked Delights of Getting Even*, *Untamed and Unabashed: Essays on Women and Humor in British Literature*,

and *Too Much of a Good Thing is Wonderful*. Her book *Babes in Boyland: A Personal History of Coeducation in The Ivy League*, was published by the University Press of New England in 2005.

More information about Barreca’s latest book, including scheduled events can be found at <http://www.ginabarreca.com>

# Connecticut study shows levels of mercury in fish declining



PHOTO BY FRANK DAHLMAYER

Jason Vokoun, assistant professor of natural resources and the environment, in a boat at Spring Manor Farm.

BY DAVID BAUMAN

A new study by two UConn researchers has found that mercury contamination levels in the meat of largemouth bass caught in Connecticut lakes were significantly lower in 2005-2006 than levels documented a decade earlier.

But the study’s results are tempered by the findings that although mercury contamination in fishes is lower than previously, it is still present at levels that merit a continuation of the statewide fish consumption advisory.

“Formal inference about any trend of mercury contamination

in fish tissue through time will require more data to create a proper time-series,” says Jason Vokoun, an assistant professor of natural resources and the environment in the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, and co-author of the new study.

“Qualitatively, there was a smaller proportion of individual fish sampled with mercury concentration values above thresholds that are used to determine risk to human health,” he says. “However, these higher-contamination fish were still widespread and occurred in all five regions of the state.”

The study by Vokoun and Christopher Perkins, laboratory co-director at UConn’s Center for Environmental Sciences and Engineering, is the second statewide assessment of mercury levels in fishes from Connecticut lakes and the first to directly compare the mid-90s to the present.

Currently, the state Department of Public Health advises young women who are or may become pregnant, nursing mothers, and children under age six to limit eating freshwater fish to one meal per month because of the risk of mercury contamination. Research

shows that exposure to mercury is particularly destructive for the developing nervous system and can lead to behavioral or learning problems.

State officials have cautioned the rest of the public to limit consumption of all locally caught freshwater fish to one meal per week, except for trout raised in hatcheries and released in stocking programs into ponds, streams, rivers, and lakes around the state.

There are many health benefits to eating fish, however, Vokoun notes.

Connecticut and U.S. health officials believe the elevated levels of mercury in freshwater fishes in the Northeast are largely the result of mercury released from coal-burning power plants – many of them far away. Once in the air, the toxic metal can travel vast distances before entering soil and water.

Once mercury settles into watersheds and enters the water, it is transformed by water-borne bacteria and then can enter algae, which are eaten by plankton, which are eaten by little fishes, which in turn are eaten by bigger fishes such as largemouth bass. At each step in the food chain, the mercury accumulates and becomes more concentrated. Mercury is a naturally occurring metal, but becomes toxic to human and animal consumers when highly concentrated in fish flesh.

Because of mercury’s toxicity, both federal and state public officials have agreed to efforts to

reduce manmade mercury emissions in power plants. The federal Clean Air Act has imposed stricter standards on coal-burning plants and smokestack “scrubbers” have been placed in many facilities in the upper Midwest that send mercury towards Connecticut.

“Our study suggests these efforts may be starting to pay off,” says Vokoun. “Other researchers in up-state New York and Massachusetts have recently reported declines as well. We hope to continue to monitor at least every 10 years, and perhaps more frequently if mercury levels continue to fall and the removal of a statewide consumption advisory seems possible.”

For the study, lakes were chosen from every region of the state, and fish were collected by boat electrofishing (a sampling technique that generates an electric field in the water to stun fish so they can be easily netted). Additional fish were donated by anglers.

Fish were euthanized and the fillets (the muscle meat) removed, blended together, and analyzed for mercury contamination levels.

The study also experimented with a new non-lethal biopsy method to determine mercury levels in the fish. Some states have already transitioned to the biopsy method as a research technique.

“Our study validated the biopsy method for Connecticut,” says Vokoun. “Future studies can now conduct this type of non-lethal monitoring without taking fish from the wild.”