LAS
Undergraduate Research Initiative
Breaks New Ground
by Bruce Pecho

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

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

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

But no longer in LAS.

This spring, Dean Dwight A. McBride launches the LAS Undergraduate Research Initiative (LASURI). With seed money from the College and generous donor support, the program supports faculty-student research projects in the natural sciences, social sciences and the humanities.

Its mission is to make undergraduate research integral to teaching, learning and scholarship in LAS by providing funding to undergrads and faculty involved in research collaborations.

“One of the reasons I am so passionate about opportunities for undergraduates to participate in research experiences at UIC is deeply personal,” said Dean McBride. “As a first generation college student myself, I—through a series of happy accidents—had an opportunity to serve as Toni Morrison’s undergraduate research assistant when I was at Princeton. That experience truly changed the course of my life and career. It opened up for me the world of research and the kinds of career possibilities that were available in it. Ultimately, it was that experience that led me to pursue an academic research and teaching career.”

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

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

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

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

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Dear LAS Alumni & Friends:

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

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

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

We in LAS are engaged in short and long term planning to ensure that our core mission remains possible—student access to an excellent research caliber education. I know well the impact that LAS has had on the lives of our alums, on the city of Chicago, and on our state and nation. Our alums go on to be leaders and to make important contributions in practically every known sector of our society. The research conducted by our faculty...
Source of LAS Operating Funds 2002-2003 Fiscal Year

Tuition Revenue 68%
Indirect Cost Return 4%
Gifts & Endowment Income 2%
State Funds Appropriation 69%

Source of LAS Operating Funds 2007-2008 Fiscal Year

Tuition Revenue 68%
Indirect Cost Return 5%
Gifts & Endowment Income 2%
State Funds Appropriation 25%

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

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

1979-80 44.8%
1989-90 39.2%
1999-00 32.3%

It would appear that at a time when we need a more highly trained, highly skilled, globally minded workforce than ever before, our states are reducing their support of public higher education. Indeed, studies have shown that nationwide states are funding a shrinking proportion of the costs of higher education. Here is a 20-year snapshot of the national picture of the percentage of higher education funding that was state derived:

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13TH ANNUAL LAS RECOGNITION DINNER

On Wednesday, October 1, 2008, the College honored donors, scholar-ship recipients, and alumni at its 13th Annual LAS Recognition Dinner. Arnold Bodmer, professor emeritus in physics, was presented the Sustainer Achievement Award, the College’s highest honor, in part to acknowledge his generosity and vision for establishing the Arnold R. and Doris G. Bodmer Science Travel Award. The Science Travel Award affords junior or senior undergraduates or first or second-year graduate students in the Natural Sciences the opportunity to travel abroad for science-related study, seminars, workshops or summer sessions. It offers UIC science students the opportunity to broaden their experiences in ways not previously available to them.

Three Bodmer Science Travel Award scholars were honored this year at the LAS Recognition Dinner. William Michael, ’07 graduate cum laude and medicine student, used the award to spend one month in South Africa where he conducted experiments and studied the foraging behavior of the African Giant Rat, which can be trained to detect and sniff out land mines. Carrie Seltzer, a second-year PhD student in Biological Sciences, spent one month last summer in Tanzania investigating the effects of forest fragmentation on seed dispersal by fruit bats in an African rainforest. And Marta Witek, a PhD candidate in Chemistry, participated in a molecular biology symposium on seed dispersal by fruit bats in an African rainforest. And Marta Witek, a second-year PhD student in Biological Sciences, spent one month in Tanzania investigating the effects of forest fragmentation on seed dispersal by fruit bats in an African rainforest.

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

A second LAS Distinguished Professor event brought more guests from Chicago’s education community to campus on January 26, 2009. The opening session of the two-day interdisciplinary conference is a collaboration of themed panel discussions on the study of development and democratization in post-conflict areas of Africa. Day two is a faculty session.

LAS UPCOMING EVENTS

Thursday, April 16, 2009—4 p.m.
LAS Distinguished Lectureship
750 South Halsted Street, UIC Campus
Richard J. Morimoto, Bill and Gayle Cook Professor of Biology, Northwestern University
LAS Alumna Richard J. Morimoto returns to campus to deliver a talk on his research which focuses on the under-lying mechanisms of neurodegenerative diseases including Huntington’s disease, Parkinson’s disease, ALS, and Alzheimer’s disease. A reception will follow.

Friday, April 17, 2009—3 p.m.
Stanley Fish Lecture: Frames of War
UIC Forum, Second Floor Meeting Rooms
Judith Butler, Maxine Elliott Professor at the University of California, Berkeley, and author of Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity (1990) writes on contemporary politics, cultural and literary theory, phi-losophy, psychoanalysis, feminism, and sexual politics.

April 28, 2009—1 p.m.
Conference on Development and Democracy in Post-conflict African Nations
Student Center East, Room 302
750 South Halsted Street, UIC Campus
The opening session of the two-day interdisciplinary conference is a collaboration of themed panel discussions on the study of development and democratization in post-conflict areas of Africa. Day two is a faculty session.

Sunday, March 10, 2009—10 a.m.
LAS Commencement
Tickets are required for this event.
UIC Pavilion
525 South Racine Avenue
Illinois Governor Pat Quinn will address the LAS gradu-ates. This year’s honorary degree recipient will be LAS alumna and renowned evolutionary biologist Barbara Ann Schaal.

LAS Commencement requires tickets for attendance.

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http://connect.las.uic.edu/gift
I look out my bedroom window each morning and see the sun beaming, the birds singing, the endless mountain ranges, fields of lemon trees and olive trees, and smell the salt from the nearby beach. It couldn’t get any better than this. I’m in paradise—also known as the island of Aegina, Greece. on september 15, 2008, I arrived here to start my nine-month adventure with a United States Fulbright Fellowship.

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

I arrived on September 15, 2008, to the Alexander Fleming Biomedical Sciences Research Center (BSRC) located in Athens, Greece. After an extensive application, interview, and Greek visa—I am finally here! In the past few months of living out this dream I have realized that every day of being a Fulbright fellow means another exciting day of learning about science and the Greek culture. My research project takes place at B.S.R.C.-Alexander Fleming under the supervision of my host, Dr. Eumorphia Remboutsika. In Dr. Remboutsika’s laboratory I work with five PhD students on a gene called Sox2. Only a small amount of information is known about this gene, but past research has shown that Sox2 is a stem cell, pluripotency gene that maintains the self-renewal of embryonic stem cells. In other words, an increase in Sox2 levels reverts cells to their embryonic stem cell state. Using mice as the experimental organism, my research analyzes the effects of a conditional by inversion allele that affects the Sox2 gene, which in turn, affects the stem cell fate of cells. So far, I have gained a vast amount of knowledge about lab work and different techniques, and have worked with some amazing technology. For example, I’ve learned how to use FACS analysis, prepare and run PCR experiments, how to photograph and examine neural stem cells under a microscope, how to dissect embryos, and most importantly, how to think like a scientist. I believe stem cell research is important because in the near future it can lead to therapeutic approaches for diseases in humans.

My host, Dr. Remboutsika, has become a friend, mentor, and role model. The first day I arrived in Greece she picked me up from the airport and we went for a swim in the sea and out to a Greek tavern. I think an important part of the Fulbright fellowship is finding a host that is willing to take you in like a family member. I wouldn’t have felt so comfortable and at home here in Greece if it wasn’t for Dr. Remboutsika. When I first arrived in Greece she picked me up from the airport and we went for a swim in the sea and out to a Greek tavern. I think an important part of the Fulbright fellowship is finding a host that is willing to take you in like a family member. I wouldn’t have felt so comfortable and at home here in Greece if it wasn’t for Dr. Remboutsika. There is not one day that goes by that I regret my decision to accept the Fulbright Fellowship to Greece. It was not for the guidance and support I’ve received at uic in the Special Scholarships Program, especially from Beth Powers, this amazing experience would not be possible. Although nothing compares to sweet home Chicago, the thought of leaving Greece soon saddens me. I have made friendships, contacts, and gained knowledge that will last a lifetime and guide my future. 

For more information about Fulbright: www.usip.org/fulbright. The Fulbright Foundation - Greentowers grants to both Greek and U.S. citizens to enable them to proudly teach or conduct research in either the U.S. or Greece. For more information see www.fulbright.gr. Photos courtesy of Jessica Harper.
Many people are concerned about their capacity for charitable giving during troubled economic times. Yet we at the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences continue our work of educating promising young students, carrying out transformative research, and serving our communities. And we continue to rely on the generous donations of our alumni and friends.

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

- **BEQUEST** Making your gift through your will or revocable trust defers it until after your death so that your assets will continue to be on hand for your personal financial needs during your lifetime. A bequest can be a permanent part of your giving plan, or it can be a temporary gift, to be replaced by lifetime gifts after the economy turns around.

- **BENEFICIARY DESIGNATION** Naming LAS as a primary beneficiary of your IRA or 401(k) plan account or of a life insurance policy is another way to defer your gift and in the meantime keep assets you may need during your lifetime. Again, it can be a temporary gift or a permanent part of your giving plan.

- **CHARITABLE GIFT ANNUITY** A charitable gift annuity gives to one or two individuals a guaranteed fixed annuity for life. At a time when most investment assets are vulnerable to loss, a charitable gift annuity offers income that is not subject to market risk and will not decline under any circumstances. Moreover, annuity rates are higher than the yields of money market funds, certificates of deposit and bond mutual funds, and annuities are given advantageous income tax treatment.

- **APPRECIATED SECURITIES** Even though all of the stock market indices have declined recently, you may still own a stock whose value hasn’t declined as much as the index and is worth much more than its cost. Making a gift of appreciated securities is usually more tax-effective than making a gift of cash, because you can deduct the full market value of your shares as a charitable gift and avoid the capital gain tax you would have owed if you had sold them in order to give cash.

- **OTHER ASSETS** You may own assets that don’t produce income for you and are not essential for your financial security—e.g., real estate, savings bonds, precious metals and other collections. Real estate is usually an excellent asset to donate, and many kinds of tangible personal property can also be advantageous gifts.

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

Please consult your financial advisors about which giving strategy is best for your situation. For the proper wording of bequests or beneficiary designations and for information about the other strategies outlined above, please call or write Chuck Coughlin, Associate Dean for Advancement, at (312) 413-3469 or cec@uic.edu.
In recent months PETER DORAN, associate professor of earth and environmental sciences, along with former graduate student Maggie Kendall Zimmerman conducted a survey-based study that indicated overwhelmingly that scientific experts agree global warming is both real and caused by humans. The study’s results appeared January 19th in Eos, the newspaper of earth and space sciences published by the American Geophysical Union. The study surveyed 3,146 scientists on the subject of global warming. The two most important questions on the survey asked 1. Have mean global temperatures risen compared to pre-1800s levels, and 2. Has human activity been a significant factor in changing mean global temperatures? The results were overwhelming, with nearly 90 percent of the scientists answering yes to both questions. “The debate on the authenticity of global warming and the role played by human activity is largely nonexistent among those who understand the nuances and scientific basis of long-term climate processes,” concluded Doran, whose research has led to his ascension in the international conversation on global warming.

Doran was also the lead investigator on a recent NASA mission that sent the robot ENDURANCE to explore Lake Bonney, a body of water in Antarctica that is locked under 15 feet of ice. The robotic probe is designed to draw an underwater three-dimensional map showing the biological and geochemical composition of the Antarctic lake. “The lessons learned from mapping out Bonney will be important for developing strategies for exploring Vostok and icy moons, like Europa,” said Doran. “You’re not going to send people out Bonney will be important for developing strategies for exploring Vostok underwater three-dimensional map showing the biological and geochemical processes,” says Doran. He and Marian are among seven mathematicians in the department’s algebraic geometry group, one of the strongest in the country. “Both are very talented researchers on the forefront of their field,” said David Marker, head of the department. “I’m delighted to see them receive the recognition they so richly deserve.” The award, which includes a two-year, $50,000 grant, is often cited as an indicator of future distinction in science, mathematics and economics; 38 Sloan Fellows have gone on to win Nobel Prizes. The Department of Mathematics, Statistics and Computer Science currently has 15 faculty members who have won Sloan fellowships.

“THERE ARE NUMEROUS LONG-TERM HEALTH CONSEQUENCES ASSOCIATED WITH THE RISE IN OBESITY IN KIDS AND SIGNIFICANT HEALTH CARE COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH THAT,” says FRANK CHALOUPKA, distinguished professor of economics, director of the Health Policy Center at the UIC Institute for Health Research and Policy, and principal investigator of a study being conducted by the UIC ImpacTEEN project. The project was recently awarded a $16 million grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and seeks to provide comprehensive research that helps legislators and policymakers develop effective policy and make informed decisions about funding programs to change youth health behaviors. The study will consider behavioral influences such as nutrition, physical activity, obesity and tobacco use.

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

MARIA KRYSAN, professor of sociology, is the lead author of a report recently published on the racial segregation of neighborhoods. The survey-based experiment, conducted collaboratively by UIC and the University of Michigan, proves conclusively that whites will judge the value of a neighborhood to be higher if the residents of the neighborhood are white and lower if the residents are black. Participants, all white adults, were shown identical neighborhoods that randomly had either black or white people living in them. In neighborhoods with predominantly white residents, the value was 10 percent higher than the value in neighborhoods with predominantly black residents. The survey-of-survey asked participants to judge the value of a neighborhood based on a series of visual stimuli: economic features such as housing, property upkeep, school quality, safety and future property values, and the results showed that all-white neighborhoods were deemed to have the highest value. “These findings demonstrate that ‘objective’ characteristics such as housing are not sufficient for whites to overcome the stereotypes they have about communities with African American residents,” said Krysan.

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LAS UNDERGRADUATE INITIATIVE

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

“What advice would you give an LAS student today?” That is the question we’d like you to answer for the next issue of ATLAS. Send us your bits of wisdom at uactluc.edu.

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

LASING IMPRESSIONS

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NNEDI OKORAFOR

PHD CREATIVE WRITING, 2007

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

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

Nnedi Okorafor is the 2008 winner of the Wole Soyinka Prize for Literature in Africa for her young adult fantasy novel, Zahirah the Windswede. A Pan-African Award, the Soyinka Prize, named after Africa’s Nobel Prize-winning playwright, poet, and political figure, comes with a $20,000 cash prize, and is considered the African Nobel Prize. Photo of Liz Urra by De Diavano.

TED EBERGOLD

BA PSYCHOLOGY, 1998

I thought Professor Steve Fanning was such a bright, inter- esting educator. He also was a member of my College Fellow. His classes were very engaging. I truly think he is UIC’s version of Dan Brown’s character Robert Langdon (from The Da Vinci Code and Angels and Demons). What I enjoyed most about his classroom was his ability to teach history through storytell- ing. Each story he told was so vivid, the details so salient, that I would wonder if he was actually there when the event had taken place. Prior to taking Professor Fanning’s class, I always thought that history didn’t matter until Columbus landed in America; however, his lectures gave me a new perspec- tive on world history. My time spent in his classroom was memorable.

Ted Ebergold currently works at UIC in the Department of Medicine/Section of Nephrology at the University of Illinois Medical Center where he handles many of the department’s business affairs. He has been employed at UIC since April 2002. Ebergold is married with two daughters: Isabella, 4, and Eliza- son, 19 months. Ebergold said that he truly enjoys working at the University—it really has become a second home for him. Photo of Steve Fanning courtesy of Steve Banning.

CATHERINE YORK

BA PSYCHOLOGY 2005, MA PSYCHOLOGY 2007

Among all the wonderful faculty, staff, and students that I interacted with while at UIC, the most memorable person I met was my husband, Nick. Junior year, he joined a student group that I was in called “The Student Alumni League.” We didn’t have much interaction until the group hosted a dance in the Sears Tower. Nicky-nine-stories above Chicago, we were formally introduced to each other and quickly went from “just friends” to dating. We finished our undergraduate degrees in 2005, married in 2007, and are expecting our first child this July. We are both currently working in graduate school at UIC. It seems we just can’t get away from the place that brought us together. I think it is important to get involved in campus activities and join student groups. It can be a great experi- ence and you never know who you might meet.

Catherine Turk is a PhD candidate in Clinical Psychology. She currently works as a research assistant studying adoles- cent alcohol and tobacco use at the Insti- tute for Health and Research Policy at UIC. She is also working in an internship in neuropsychology in the UIC Department of Psychiatry. Photo of Kate and Nick Turk by Michael Byam.

TIMOTHY J. DUZINSKI

BA WITH HONORS ENGLISH 1974

My favorite professor at UIC was Preston M. Browning of the English Department. Preston possessed a gentle nature and profound sense of imagination and possibility. He motivated his students to not just “yak yak yak” about criticism and cri tical theory—he was a kind of throwback in that he really took pleasure in reading the literature, the stories, novels, poems—and engaged his students in a friendly and wide and full of that Southern charm and slight reserve of his, in discussion literature, as well as the profound issues of the day.

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

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