University wants your 2 cents on Pitt benefits

F aculty and staff now can let the University know what they think of Pitt’s employee benefits.

Pitt’s Benefits Department, in cooperation with the Staff Association Council (SAC), is launching an internal benefits survey online at the Human Resources website, www.hr.pitt.edu. The survey link will be operational until Jan. 31.

According to John Kozar, director of Benefits, the survey is soliciting opinions on Pitt’s current benefit offerings.

Questions also are included to obtain feedback on the University’s Benefits Department customer service and internal communication, and opinions on additional benefits or services that should be considered. The survey takes approximately five minutes to complete.

A summary of the results will be released in February, he said.

Sherry Viann Shrum, chair of the SAC’s benefits committee, urged employees to complete the survey.

“Benefits are very expensive to the University and during these tough economic times it is critical that the current benefit packages being offered to staff members are fully utilized and that staff members understand all of the benefits that are available to them,” Shrum said. “It is equally important that staff members are able to voice their opinion on the benefits being offered and that they have a high level of satisfaction with those benefits.”

The survey addresses both those concerns, she said. “It will also give the University some insight on benefits they might want to offer in the future and help them gauge their cost effectiveness,” Shrum added.

—Peter Hart

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

In a Dec. 18 University Update, Chancellor Mark A. Nordenberg stated that while the University expects to move ahead with some appointments, the hiring review process has been implemented “with the expectation that levels of hiring will be significantly reduced during the current year, as we wait for the economy to stabilize.”

In addition, the five super responsibility center heads (Nordenberg, Executive Vice Chancellor Jerome Cochran, Provost James Maher, Senior Vice Chancellor for Health Sciences Arthur Levine and Vice Chancellor for Budget and Controller Arthur Ramicone) are responsible for determining where in their units to find their areas share of the state money that likely will be withheld at the end of the fiscal year.

In the School of Arts and Sciences, adjustments are being made in the classroom. Faculty are not being laid off, nor are teaching loads increasing, said Senior Associate Dean James Knapp. However, “We are asking chairs to make sure the faculty resources we have are being as well used as we possibly can.”

Rather than order across-the-board cuts, Knapp said A&S administrators are counting on department chairs to determine where savings can be found. “We’re trying to do things in an intelligent way,” he said.

That includes canceling classes that fail to meet minimum enrollments (unless there is an extenuating reason to keep them), combining low-enrollment sections of the same course into one, and offering some courses less frequently.

It also means that some part-time faculty are finding they no longer are needed as A&S attempts to put as many tenure-stream faculty into the classroom as possible.

Knapp said some faculty course releases for administrative work are being eliminated and some courses are not being filled.

In addition, “we are not necessarily replacing courses,” when, for example, a faculty member is out on medical leave, he said.

Faculty have been very under-...
A fter 66 years, the library of the Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic has shut its doors. Dec. 19 was the final day for patrons — mainly faculty, researchers or family members of WPIC patients — to walk into the library to use the collection of works on psychiatry and behavioral sciences.

“There is a large core, who like to come to the library,” said Barbara Epstein, director of Pitt’s Health Sciences Library System, of which the WPIC library was a part. But, she said, library users have become scattered with more and more faculty in remote offices, so “fewer and fewer have been using the on-site library,” she said.

Neither WPIC president Claudius Roth nor psychiatry department chair David Rupiner would comment on the reason for the library closure or plans for the space it is vacating.

Thousands of volumes of books, bound journals and other materials from the library will find new homes at HSL’s Falk Library, where space is available, or perhaps in other libraries. Planning is key.

In the physical move, calculations must be made to determine which books are used or not. Sorting mainly will be based on the frequency of use. Sorting mainly will be based on the frequency of use.

During the transition, print materials from the WPIC library will be available upon request (via HSL for affiliates of UPMC and the Schools of the Health Sciences Library System for other WPIC patrons), although there may be brief periods when certain portions of the holdings will be unavailable.

“Next year, there is a timeline and a plan of attack,” Epstein said, noting that there is an art to moving a library. Movers, for instance, need to realize that materials are sequential and cannot be rearranged together. Calculations must be made to ensure print materials fit on the shelves.

“It’s going to be a big job,” said Epstein, who has moved libraries before but never in a closed and dismantled a collection.

In addition to the physical work of moving the materials, technical aspects are daunting as well. The work will be done electronically, although some physical sorting will be required.

Reports will be run to determine which books are used or not. Duplicates will be culled and little-used works will be sent to the HSL5 storage facility in Leetington Technical Park, Epstein said.

“The history of psychiatry is comparatively short, many seminal works were published in the early 1900s. Historical gems such as first editions will be sorted out for special consideration. The library may also be a collection that may be offered some materials, Epstein said. “It is our challenge and it is our responsibility to try to educate [legislators] and new job, Supowitz said. “It would be Pol

Schools of the Health Sciences Library System, is heading up the dismantling of the WPIC library, which closed last month.

Hailing Pitt’s successes to legislators won’t be hard, Supowitz said. “Pitt has a good story to tell. Everything at Pitt goes well over the long dozen or so years.”

Citing the new technologies at Carnegie Mellon University, Supowitz noted: “We really have to try to educate [legislators] and open their eyes to the fact that Pitt is in a difficult economic period research universities are one of the best engines for recovery. That has to be an important part of the discussion.”

In addition, Supowitz said that in western Pennsylvania job creation largely has come through the region’s universities and colleges. “We’ve more than shouldered our share of the burden,” Supowitz said.

Looking at the long term, the current strategy of maximizing the number of positions with the WPIC community,” Epstein said, recalling as it a space for many receptions and events. “It was a big recruiting tool,” she said, noting that just a few years ago, there were general and other line items reporting, in December Rendell instituted a $7.2 million in funding for the School of Medicine, Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic, Pitt’s dental clinic and the Center for Public and Health Practice, which comes through the Department of Public Welfare with matching federal funds, also are expected to receive a $1.1 million, or 6 percent, cut.

The expected reductions would be more than $11.1 million from Pitt’s combined 1992-25 million in state support.

Pitt’s overall FY09 budget is $1.7 billion.

The state’s financial picture has continued to worsen as the University officials report that general fund collections are lagging 6.8 percent through the first half of the fiscal year.

Although the governor has made the cuts in Pitt’s appropriation contingent on the economic situation, Associate Chancellor for Commonwealth and City/County Relations Paul Supowitz said, “It would be Pol-

Due to the current economic climate and Pitt’s failures to improve its funding, the University is facing a $1.1 billion budget deficit and has already cut $650 million in spending. In addition, the University has already cut $400 million in spending and is facing another $1.1 billion budget deficit.

In the midst of these financial challenges, the University is working to improve its funding and is considering a number of options, including increasing tuition, reducing expenses and seeking additional funds from the state.

In the long term, the University is looking to the future and is focusing on initiatives that will help improve its financial situation.

One such initiative is the University’s plan to increase its endowment, which currently stands at $1.5 billion. The University is seeking to raise $1 billion in the next five years to support its academic programs and research initiatives.

Though the University is facing financial challenges, it remains committed to its mission of providing a high-quality education to its students.

The University will continue to work with the state and federal government to secure additional funding and to explore new revenue streams.

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plastic-free liquid called Tritan, which it touts as being compliant with FDA, European Union and Japanese Ministry of Health and Welfare food safety standards. The company says disposable Nalgene and baby bottle producer Evenflo are among manufacturers that have turned to Tritan in light of consumer demand for BPA-free products.

James Fabisiak, a researcher in Pitt’s Department of Environmental and Occupational Health, pointed out that health risk controversies represent a two-edged sword. The public nature of the debate creates an opportunity for the common good, but the intense focus on one chemical also can divert attention from other dangers.

That’s not to say public attention can’t have positive effects on health, he noted, citing success in decreasing lead in the environment by legislating its use out of gas and paint, thanks to public demand and ensuing government action.

“People are very much aware of what we expose people to in food and the atmosphere,” Fabisiak said. “That might be a little counterintuitive, but always easy to show something is unsafe than safe.”

But that may not represent an improvement. For instance, health concerns about butylated hydroxytoluene, or BHT, a preservative that’s used in everything from margarine to CDs and electronic equipment.

Other combinations of potentially disrupting chemicals can enter the water supply through leachate from landfills, discharges from wastewater treatment plants and sewer outflows, exposing fish and other wildlife to multiple chemicals that can affect endocrine function.

Endocrine disrupters have been associated with infertility, reproductive impairments, early onset of puberty; endocrine-related cancers. “BPA poses in aquatic environments,” their review of additional toxicology studies reveals that aquatic environments aren’t protected sufficiently from BPA effects at concentrations of 0 micrograms or less per liter established by earlier researchers.

The researchers say that suggests that the effects on aquatic creatures’ survival, growth, development and reproduction “may start to begin at extremely low concentrations that are environmentally relevant and are not reported in surface waters in China, Germany, Japan, the Netherlands and the USA.” (Additional information is available on the Pitt Center for Healthy Environments and Communities website at www.chech.pitt.edu/Documents.html.)

Although BPA isn’t known to accumulate in the body, more study is needed to examine the effects of long-term exposure, the researchers say.

Pitt’s Fabisiak recommends that consumers take a cautious, reasonable approach.

All chemicals can be toxic in certain concentrations, he noted. And evaluating the dangers can be complex.

“Analyzing chemical mixtures that may be more indicative of actual exposures is difficult because such experiments are more unwieldy than those focused on a single substance, he said.

Timing also may play a role in interferes, but it’s difficult to pinpoint for study, especially in humans. Exposure to a substance at a critical point in development might yield adverse impacts while no effects might be observed during other stages, he noted.

Accounting for other subtle contributors also can be hard to tease out, raising further questions.

For example, a review using National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey data associated elevated urinary levels of BPA with higher rates of diabetes and cardiovascular events. But, is BPA the cause? Individuals differ widely, not only genetically but also in habit and lifestyle choices. Perhaps those with higher levels of BPA are canned vegetables more than fresh vegetables. Were those who are fresh veggies more health-conscious overall? By their lifestyles could they have been exposed to more BPA or to less? “It’s hard to know, particularly when you’re studying it years later,” Fabisiak said.

Concerned consumers need to educate themselves on where they may be exposing themselves to BPA and how they may avoid those exposures, Fabisiak said. “I don’t think there are that many people doing some sort of BPA ‘free’ diet. And we’re just getting into it.”

But, who, and at what amount?

Practically speaking, Fabisiak says, his rule is “don’t do excess.”

Controlling the dose may be more practical than outright banning. “If the chemical industry and wastewater can be regulated to control BPA, then that would be protected, it would be better than banning it,” he said. But, there are likely to be other exposures. How to find that safe dose?

On its website, the FDA states that it believes FDA-regulated products containing BPA are safe and that exposure levels from food contact are below those that may cause health effects, a position it says is consistent with BPA risk assessment conducted by the European Food Safety Authority and the Japanese National Institute of Advanced Industrial Science and Technology.

“At this time, FDA is not recommending that anyone discontinue using products that contain BPA while we continue our risk assessment process. However, concerned consumers should know that several alternatives to polycarbonate baby bottles exist, including glass baby bottles,” the site’s BPA page states.

Likewise, while a Canadian government fact sheet on BPA states that its current research indicates BPA does not pose a health risk to the general public, uncertainty about the potential effects on infants and children has prompted the government to move forward with requiring that plastic baby bottles. It also plans to establish maximum BPA concentrations in wastewater to limit release of the chemical into the environment and to work with manufacturers to reduce levels of BPA in infant formula. The Canadian government advised that adults do not need to quit using polycarbonate bottles, tableware or containers, but that those concerned about BPA migrating into food during heating may wish to switch to glass or other alternatives.

But are there good alternatives?

In a request for proposals for a recent round of seed grant funding, Pitt’s Mascaro Sustainability Initiative presented the development of alternatives to chemicals such as BPA as one research challenge related to sustainable design.

“We dangle ideas which fit our criteria,” said MSA director Beckman, adding that MSA seeks proposals for areas representing a “really big problem from a social sustainability or a nation’s economy standpoint” in an effort to “fringe the bill.”

The RFP acknowledged the existence of widely used chemicals such as PVC, brominated flame retardants, phthalates and bisphenol A that are sources of controversy due to the combination of high economic value and drawbacks such as human or ecological toxicity.

“Many of the shelf-alternatives to these have been proposed, the alternatives typically do not match the original product in price and performance. There is a strong need to eliminate problematic chemicals from the environment through innova-

Pitt appeals OSHA citation

Pitt has appealed a citation issued by a federal agency as the result of an incident in a University laboratory.

On Sept. 24, lab worker Patricia Boyle was working on her right hand while feeding a macaque monkey, requiring hand surgery and a lengthy stay in the hospital.

Following an investigation, the U.S. Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA) cited the University Nov. 21 for two serious violations, according to OSHA spokesperson Leni Fortson. Pitt failed to provide adequate training for its lab technicians and there was insufficient safety equipment, including protective gloves, inside the Regional Biocontainment Laboratory in the Biomedical Science Tower 3 where the incident took place, Fortson told the University Times last month.

The citation carries a $25,375 fine, she said.

On Dec. 11, Pitt appealed the citation. By law, that appeal comes under the purview of the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Review Commission, the independent federal agency that serves as the court system to adjudicate disputes arising from contested work place safety inspections.

Commission executive secretary Ray Darling Jr. confirmed the appeal had been filed, but said a hearing date had been set.

Boyle could not be reached for comment.

“—Peter Hart

Accounting for other subtle contributors also can be hard to tease out, raising further questions. For example, a review using National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey data associated elevated urinary levels of BPA with higher rates of diabetes and cardiovascular events. But, is BPA the cause? Individuals differ widely, not only genetically but also in habit and lifestyle choices. Perhaps those with higher levels of BPA are canned vegetables more than fresh vegetables. Were those who are fresh veggies more health-conscious overall? By their lifestyles could they have been exposed to more BPA or to less? “It’s hard to know, particularly when you’re studying it years later,” Fabisiak said. Concerned consumers need to educate themselves on where they may be exposing themselves to BPA and how they may avoid those exposures, Fabisiak said. “I don’t think there are that many people doing some sort of BPA ‘free’ diet. And we’re just getting into it.” But, who, and at what amount? Practically speaking, Fabisiak says, his rule is “don’t do excess.” Controlling the dose may be more practical than outright banning. “If the chemical industry and wastewater can be regulated to control BPA, then that would be protected, it would be better than banning it,” he said. But, there are likely to be other exposures. How to find that safe dose? On its website, the FDA states that it believes FDA-regulated products containing BPA are safe and that exposure levels from food contact are below those that may cause health effects, a position it says is consistent with BPA risk assessment conducted by the European Food Safety Authority and the Japanese National Institute of Advanced Industrial Science and Technology. “At this time, FDA is not recommending that anyone discontinue using products that contain BPA while we continue our risk assessment process. However, concerned consumers should know that several alternatives to polycarbonate baby bottles exist, including glass baby bottles,” the site’s BPA page states. Likewise, while a Canadian government fact sheet on BPA states that its current research indicates BPA does not pose a health risk to the general public, uncertainty about the potential effects on infants and children has prompted the government to move forward with requiring that plastic baby bottles. It also plans to establish maximum BPA concentrations in wastewater to limit release of the chemical into the environment and to work with manufacturers to reduce levels of BPA in infant formula. The Canadian government advised that adults do not need to quit using polycarbonate bottles, tableware or containers, but that those concerned about BPA migrating into food during heating may wish to switch to glass or other alternatives. But are there good alternatives? In a request for proposals for a recent round of seed grant funding, Pitt’s Mascaro Sustainability Initiative presented the development of alternatives to chemicals such as BPA as one research challenge related to sustainable design. “We dangle ideas which fit our criteria,” said MSA director Beckman, adding that MSA seeks proposals for areas representing a “really big problem from a social sustainability or a nation’s economy standpoint” in an effort to “fringe the bill.” The RFP acknowledged the existence of widely used chemicals such as PVC, brominated flame retardants, phthalates and bisphenol A that are sources of controversy due to the combination of high economic value and drawbacks such as human or ecological toxicity. “Many of the shelf-alternatives to these have been proposed, the alternatives typically do not match the original product in price and performance. There is a strong need to eliminate problematic chemicals from the environment through innova-
The University never sleeps, even when most of us are snug in our beds. A look at the “dark” side of Pitt.

The majority of Pitt staff members work during the day, usually Monday through Friday. But for those who work night turn — and especially those who work rotating shifts — it’s a different world on campus.

Five staff members in Facilities Management recently discussed how their nontraditional schedules affect their personal and social lives, as well as their professional lives.

All five staff members — Joe LaRotonda and Nate McCoy, assistant managers for custodial services, Darwin Lane, custodial supervisor, and Joe Kosky and Bob Karhalios, operating engineers — maintain that their off-hour service is necessary to see that campus buildings are in good working order and to protect the engineering systems that ensure the smooth continuation of research projects, as well as to create a comfortable, safe and clean environment for the Pitt community. They also all agree that the atmosphere itself at night is tangibly different from the daytime.

Not surprisingly, there are some downsides to working an off-hour shift: Illness seems to be more common, given the disruption of normal eating and sleeping patterns that weaken the immune system, and social lives are challenged severely by unusual schedules and working patterns on the weekends.

But they say that there are also positive aspects of their shifts, including avoiding rush hour traffic and finding readily available parking.

According to 30-year Pitt veteran Joe LaRotonda, who works a steady 11 p.m.-7 a.m. Sunday-Thursdays schedule, most essential custodial services are rendered at night.

The night shift does the critical building area entrances, corridors, restrooms, classrooms, conference rooms. “I consider those the critical areas because those are the first areas that people see and that get used the most,” LaRotonda said. “You’d think the building’s occupants would realize that. But a lot of times they’re calling us up as the supervisors or managers and giving the daytime guy all the accolades for work that’s been done by the night-turn crew.”

LaRotonda began working at Pitt in 1977 as a driver for food services, a year later he was hired as a custodian for the 6 a.m.-2:30 p.m. shift.

“Now assistant manager of custodial services, he is in charge of approximately half the buildings on campus and oversees a dozen supervisors. He estimated that about 20 percent of his job is paperwork, including keeping track of payroll and filling equipment orders.

“The majority of my time is spent out in the field doing a checks-and-balances system,” LaRotonda said. Supervisors check on the custodians’ work and LaRotonda checks on the supervisors. “So we have a variety of eyes looking at the areas around campus. I’ll take a building a night. I don’t tell anybody which one.

Are there footprints in the hall? Is there dust build-up on the ledges? Is there trash? I’ll go through the building, check restrooms, the corridors, the common areas, the entrance points.”

He keeps a daily log sheet with a quality checklist, ranking areas as “below standards,” “meets standards” or “above standards.”

LaRotonda also is responsible for summoning custodians for snow-clearing duty.

“A couple years ago, we incor- porated using custodians for snow removal. So I have to make the judgment when they’re needed.”

Because they are custodians and not grounds crew, some of them resent this duty, LaRotonda acknowledged.

“I get a hold of the supervisors over the walkie-talkie radio to get their people out, basically to do the front entrances and outside stairwells and go out to the sidewalk. Then I jump in the truck with Nate (McCoy) and we start delivering salt to the various places.”

While LaRotonda considers his job both important and satisfying, his 11 p.m.-7 a.m. shift is far from his preference.

“I loved the 6 a.m.-2:30 p.m. shift which is my ideal shift for my natural biological clock, getting up at 4 and off work at 2:30 and being home before 3,” he said.

In the early years he worked different shifts, but “sadly, I’ve been on the night shift pretty much for 20 years of the 30 I’ve been in Facilities.”

He acknowledged that his schedule likely was a factor in the failure of his first marriage.

“She worked the day shift and we couldn’t spend a lot of time together,” LaRotonda said.

Nancy, his second wife, currently is not working outside the home and that makes it easier to coordinate their schedules, he added.

Adjusting his normal sleeping patterns has been a years’ long battle, he said.

“I try to sleep as soon as I get home, somewhere about 7:30 or 8. But I’m not always able to sleep. If I have to, I take a sleeping pill,” LaRotonda said. “I get up about 1 or 2 o’clock and then I’m up for the whole day. So, I get about five hours sleep.”

Similarly, adjusting his eating patterns has been a challenge.

“I usually don’t eat a real meal till about 5 or 6 o’clock in the afternoon, and we usually eat a breakfast then. Then we have another meal about 9 o’clock, and that’s dinner,” he said.

During his shift, he limits his eating to the occasional snack and lots of coffee. “If you eat a heavy meal on the night shift, it will put you out,” he said, something he’s learned from experience.

LaRotonda more or less maintains the same sleeping and eating patterns on the weekends. “I might go to bed around 4 or 5 in the morning on Saturdays, to get a little extra sleep,” he said.

Vacations, however, are a different matter, because after a few days off he reverts to his built-in biological patterns.

“Everything definitely changes. I go back to a ‘normal’ schedule,” he noted.

LaRotonda said there are some positives to working night turn.

“The advantages right now are parking and no traffic coming in. The roads are usually clear. I live in North Huntington and it takes me a half-hour to get to work. If I worked a daylight shift, I don’t even know how long it would take me,” he said.

Nate McCoy, LaRotonda’s counterpart, performs the same duties but on a slightly staggered shift. A 10-year Pitt staff veteran, McCoy works a steady 2-10 a.m. shift Monday-Friday.

Like LaRotonda, he oversees 13 supervisors who are accountable for the 220 or so employees in Facilities Management’s custodial and building services.

“My biggest responsibility is to ensure that our beats will be cleaned to departmental standards. I also do payroll, so I do ordering for the department and I do training for the custodial department,” McCoy said.

McCoy primarily manages 10 buildings but is on call for problems that may arise campus-wide.

“My responsibility is the William Pitt Union, Posvar Hall, Mervin, Erick Fine Arts, Barco, the Cathedral, Bellefield, Stephen Foster, Craig Hall and the child development center. But I’m really responsible for the whole campus, so there are times I’ll go to different buildings like BST3 and Trees Hall,” he said. “I always have a radio, and my supervisors have my
Darwin Lane, left, and Joe LaRotonda

There’s also a peacefulness to the nighttime campus that McCoy enjoys. “When I compare working in the Cathedral in the daylight hours as opposed to working during night turn, it’s different. There’s more of a peaceful, serene feel, instead of the hustle and bustle of everyone trying to get to the elevator. You have a different pace; you don’t have the rat-race mentality. Your senses are a little sharper.

That different atmosphere with fewer distractions enables him to be more efficient, McCoy said.

“No one’s coming to my door saying: ‘I need this, I need that.’ The emails I catch up on and reply to when I first get to work, then I don’t have to work and there’s less interference. Consequently, I can get more accomplished. With so much on my plate with all my other interests, that’s important to me.”

Darwin Lane, a custodial supervisor who reports to LaRotonda, has 13 buildings and 10 custodians in his charge. He works the same night shift as LaRotonda, 11 p.m.-7 a.m.

Among his duties are checking critical building areas, establishing priorities for the custodians and training new staff to meet Facilities Management standards, he said.

“Wherever there’s a lot of research going on, I have to stay on top of that. My critical building areas are the BST3, Victoria Hall. Victoria is critical because it’s the nursing school and they do a lot of training. Their skill lab is an area that they always request that we have bussed up.” Lane said.

And with the ongoing Benedum Hall construction, maintenance control over dust has become a priority in that building, he added.

Paperwork, including maintaining the employees’ timesheets, also keeps Lane busy.

While he enjoys his job and his co-workers, he said there are some drawbacks to working the night shift.

“The biggest one is, I’m really a morning person. I’ve been here eight years on night shift,” Lane said. “I’m still not really used to it. I just have to. You could never get used to it, you can only adjust.

“And how well you adjust is based on how well you take care of your body.”

For Lane, that involves lots of vitamins and carefully watching his diet, especially while he’s working.

“You have to stick to water, fruit, maybe a sandwich. Try not to eat the heavy stuff, like anything fried,” he said.

“When I get home after my shift I eat breakfast. I’m a breakfast person, whether it be a bowl of cereal, or hot cereal, pancakes or waffles, or eggs.”

Lane then reads the newspaper and checks his email for updates on his basketball teams.

“I coach basketball at Shadyside Academy, and I need to know if practice or a game is canceled, or if the site changed,” he said.

“One time I saw, that’ll turn on the TV. Eventually, I’ll fall asleep, maybe around 2 or 2 o’clock, so I get about four or five hours. That’s standard for me. I can’t sleep much longer than that. I find myself wide awake. Even if I don’t have my alarm, I’ll get up. Then I’ll get a meal about 6 or 7 p.m.”

His social life definitely is affected, he said. His fraternity works a day shift at West Penn Hospital, so coordinating their schedules is a challenge.

On the other hand, he agrees with other night-turn workers that the shift does have its advantages.

“I live in the Hill [District]. One advantage is not having to fight traffic, unless there’s a lot of things going on, like at the Peterson, then there’ll be traffic,” Lane said. “But, if nothing’s going on, you’ve got plenty of open spots. And as long as you’re not out here by 8 a.m., then you won’t get a ticket.”

Working the night shift also allows him to make early morning doctors’ appointments near “like I can. I still can keep my park- ing space and go to the doctors around here in Oakland, instead of going home and having to come back and look for parking,” Lane said. “Or I can go straight to the Giant Eagle and it’s not crowded at that time. You’re in and out. It’s a good schedule for my coaching basketball,” he added.

Lane recounted two incidents during his tenure that were unlikely to occur on other shifts.

“There’s a different feel to the nighttime. You’re expecting to be the only person in the building and you can get surprised,” he said.

Once he was caught off-guard by a campus police officer who was responding to a report of an intruder in one of Pitt’s buildings.

“She came in with her gun pulled,” Lane said. “That’s what you’re going to get someday, shot. I named her ‘Frisby Fingers,’” Lane said.

Another time, he was summoned by a female custodian. “She went in to clean the restroom in Bencumel and there was a guy in there who had a hammock set up between the door and the stall. He was in there sleeping.”

The custodian guarded the door until Lane arrived.

“When I went in, he had already jumped up, taken the hammock down and crawled up into the ceiling. The tile in the ceiling was missing,” Lane said.

“We called the Pitt police, and one of them crawled up there, but they never found him.”

Joe Kosky and Bob Karabinos are among a handful of operating engineers whose rotating work shifts make it difficult to establish any kind of a schedule.

“Sometimes, I don’t know whether it’s going to be Thursday,” Kosky said. “We start on a Tuesday, come on at 11 p.m., and then we’re done around 7 a.m. Then we finish up the following Tuesday morning at 7 a.m., and then we come back on Thursday.”

Then we get a Thursday and Friday off, then they finish up around the 6th, we start again the 7th for the next seven days.

“For seven days. Then we get a Thursday and Friday off, then we start again on the 6th, we finish up around the 12th, we start again the 13th for the next 12 days.

“For six days. Then we get a Thursday and Friday off, then we start again the 17th, we finish up around the 24th, we start again the 25th. Then we get a Thursday and Friday off, then we start again the 31st.”

Kosky said.

“The biggest one is, you’re really getting used to it,” Kosky said. “You can go to bed a little later. The first few years, you might sleep four or five hours. The sixth day, you might sleep maybe a good seven hours. That seventh day, I try to stay up, to get all the two days off. And then by Thursday, you come in at 2 o’clock, you’re ready to go — and then you go, you hit the wall.”

Kosky said.

“When we’re on what we call the midnight shift, that’s the worst, it’s 3 a.m. It’s always in the summertime when after your shift, the sun’s up, you get that light, you’re walking out in the driveway and then you can’t go to sleep. The kids are at school, and we have people’s kids to take care of. You’ve got to go home and have a shower. It’s time to get the weed-eater out and you just want to kind of pass out and fall asleep.”

Kosky said.

“Bob Karabinos, he has to take off a night shift, too, or call off sick, because somebody has to work that day. It’s too late in the day, you feel guilty.”

The two engineers work in tandem with the other half of the campus buildings under his supervision. Both are licensed engineers. Kosky has associate licensed training as an electrician. Karabinos has 12 years of experience working at the Carnegie Museums as an engineer and mechanic.

Karabinos said, “We share the same schedule and we share the same job. Joe does the north campus, and I do most of the south campus. There’s no overlap, but there are plenty of instances where we’ll help each other, like if there’s a catastrophe out there.”

Such an incident happened on his shift a few months ago when Kosky said Karabinos, who has been on staff for two and a half years.

“It was in Langley Hall,” he said.

“I got a call that there was water coming from a ceiling in an office. I got there and I don’t have a key, but they didn’t have a key and the [campus] police are standing there and they don’t have a key. My partner showed up — Joe — no key.”

Kosky then “carded” a door open with a credit card. “I asked the police for permission for a $5 fine.”

Four-year veteran Kosky oversees 21 buildings north of Fifth Avenue. Karabinos has 25 buildings south of Fifth, including the bioengineering center on Technology Drive and the McGowan Institute on the South Side.

Kosky said, “We’re in touch constantly. The way we look at it is we’re the University’s cheapest insurance policy. We’re here at 3 a.m. till the morning, there is only one of us at both the north and south ends.”

Problems always find us:
The executive committee of Pitt’s Board of Trustees has authorized University officers to issue up to $300 million in tax-exempt bonds to fund current and future capital projects and to refinance any or all of the University’s $6.655 billion in outstanding tax-exempt bonds if market conditions warrant.

The executive committee, in a Dec. 16 session that immediately followed a budget committee meeting, also approved $39.4 million in funding for capital budget projects as an addition to the University’s fiscal year 2009 capital budget.

More than $41.1 million in capital budget projects were approved by the trustees’ property and facilities committee Nov. 7. (See Nov. 20 University Times.)

The seven projects are: the acquisition and site preparation of Robinson Court property; Amos Hall renovation; Van de Graaff Building second floor laboratory renovation and infrastructure upgrades; mid-campus complex research generator installation; William Pitt Union fifth floor renovation; the Pitt-Greensburg recreation center, and South Loop steam line distribution system revisions.

The trustees previously approved $2.5 million for the projects. UPMC will contribute $1.213 million for steam line upgrades.

Art Ramicone, vice chancellor for Budget and controller, said the exact amount of the bonds the University will float has not been determined. Background materials provided to the trustees’ committees estimated some $25.4 million in financing would be needed for capital budget projects anticipated for fiscal years 2010 and 2011. The bond proceeds, the background statement indicated.

Future capital budget expenditures include preservation projects and classroom upgrades. "Unless things freeze up and things get worse we’d continue to do that kind of maintenance," Ramicone said.

"Rates are pretty low these days if you have the type of credit rating we have — double A, which indicates a low credit risk.

"Likewise, rates are good on the other side of the borrowing table. Ramicone noted that the University always is watching for opportune times to refinance existing debt, "just like with a home mortgage," he said.

"If they're favorable — because worse we'd continue to do that kind of maintenance," Ramicone said. "And then we're pretty confident." "Until they need us," Karabinos said. "And then we're pretty confident." "Like I said, we're the University's cheapest insurance," Kosky said.
Registration starts for weight race

T he new year brings the chance for a fresh commit- ment to a healthy lifestyle. The Spring Registration for Pitt’s second MyHealth Weight Race is under- way, hosted by the MyHealth Online at www.myhealthplan.com and clicking on the weight race icon.

The new 12-week competition starts Jan. 26, with final weigh-ins the week of April 17. Information on the race is available at www.hr.pitt.edu/fit- ness/weightrace.htm.

This year, participants can help others as they peel off the pounds. The new race includes a “food raiser” to benefit the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank. Weight racers are being asked to solicit friends, family and co-workers for donations of non-perishable food items for each pound they lose. For instance, a racer who drops 10 pounds and has five supporters who have pledged one food item for each pound lost would collect 10 items from each of those supporters at the end of the race. The bounty will be picked up from participants’ homes in April.

Details on the food raiser and a printable pledge sheet are available at www.hr.pitt.edu/fit- ness/foodbank.htm.

Last year, more than 1,300 weight race participants lost a total of more than three tons over the course of the 12-week team competition supported by the UPMC Health Plan.

This year’s race encourages employees to form teams of three-five members, but also permits participation by individuals and two-person teams.

All participants will be eligible for individual prizes. Members of three-five member teams also will be eligible for team prizes if all members complete the race.

Gift card prizes will be awarded to the teams that achieve the greatest percentage of their team’s weight loss goal. (Random draw- ings will determine the winner in case of ties.) In addition, participants will receive an entry into a prize drawing every time they self-report their weight by the weekly deadline.

Participants will face official weigh-ins at the start and finish of the race and at weeks 4 and 8. Participants will self-report during the other weeks.

Participants will not be permit- ted to set a weight-loss goal that would put them below a healthy body mass index or that would require them to shed pounds too rapidly. The maximum goal permitted in the competition is 25 pounds.

The weight race isn’t solely for those who want to lose weight. Those who want to maintain a healthy weight also are eligible to participate.

Organizers are hopeful that many of the people who donned pedometers during the recently completed Pitt Steps It Up walk- ing challenge also will commit to the new weight race.

A new weight race feature is an activity tracker where participants can keep tabs on their activity levels by logging their steps or converting other forms of exercise into their step equivalent.

—Kimberly B. Barlow

Key weight race dates
Jan. 10-18: Team and individual registration
Jan. 21-23, 26: Official weigh-in
Week 1 Jan. 26: Weight race begins
Week 2 Feb. 6: Self-reported weigh-in deadline
Week 3 Feb. 13: Self-reported weigh-in deadline
Week 4 Feb. 18-20, 23: Official weigh-in
Week 5 Feb. 27: Self-reported weigh-in deadline
Week 6 March 6: Self-reported weigh-in deadline
Week 7 March 13: Self-reported weigh-in deadline
Week 8 March 18-20, 23: Official weigh-in
Week 9 March 27: Self-reported weigh-in deadline
Week 10 April 3: Self-reported weigh-in deadline
Week 11 April 10: Self-reported weigh-in deadline
Week 12 April 15-17, 20: Final official weigh-in
April 30: Winners announced

SAC to establish fundraising group

T he Staff Association Council (SAC) will establish a fundraising arm. SAC also announced it will seek to have a council member assigned to a standing provost’s committee.

Those were among the devel- opments discussed at SAC’s Dec. 10 meeting.

The SAC steering commit- tee, which comprises officers and standing committee chairs and co-chairs, has formed an ad hoc committee dedicated to raising money to fund SAC’s charitable activities.

Jennifer Welton, who chairs the research and innovation committee and works in the School of Engineering’s development office, will chair the new ad hoc committee.

The staff group also discussed a web-based survey, Human Resources will conduct this month, on employee satisfaction with Pitt’s benefits package. (See story on page 1.)

SAC’s benefits committee, which oversees such plans as the provost’s pro- pose, hopes to collect data on which benefits are most important in employment decisions and whether certain benefits can be added to Pitt’s package.

SAC also is requesting having a member assigned to the provost’s advisory committee on women’s concerns (PACWC), a committee formed in 1983 to investigate the situation of women at Pitt and identify areas in which the Univer- sity could improve responsiveness to women’s concerns.

According to SAC President Rich Colwell, the staff council had a member on PACWC more than a decade ago, but following a retirement, the position was not continued.

In other developments:

• SAC’s 2007-2008 annual report has been completed by the research and information commit- tee. The report is expected to be posted to the SAC website: www.pitt.edu/~sac.

• SAC’s spring assembly is scheduled for April 11. The assem- bly will feature a marketplace of organizations centered on the theme of “a healthy University.” Representatives from organiza- tions such as UPMC Health Plan, TIAA-CREF and Vanguard, and the fitness for life program are expected to attend.

• Colwell announced this year’s donor of the SAC Endowment Fund for Children of Staff. Sarah Bronson, a junior majoring in human relations at the Pitt-Titusville campus, was awarded $250 for book purchases. Bronson’s mother, Lisa Mayer, is coordinator of services in the Office of Business Affairs at Pitt-Titusville.

Beginning in 2003, SAC partnered with Institutional Advance- ment to establish the $10,000 endowed book fund, a goal that was reached in 2005.

At the Dec. 10 meeting, Col- well said the so-called book fund needed more publicity to drum up a bigger applicant pool. He charged SAC members with getting the word out to staff regarding the book fund. (For more information, go to the SAC website.)

• Monika Lasagio of the salary and job classification committee reported that the committee tempo- rarily suspended its investiga- tion of the redress procedures for staff members who are disas- signed with their salary increase, pending a report expected at the University Senate’s budget policy com- mittee. (See Sept. 11 University Times.)

• The BPC is responsible for moni- toring whether University units’ planning and budgeting commit- tees have procedures in place for employees who wish to contest their pay raises and that those procedures are disseminated to the units’ employees.

The BPC report is expected sometime early in 2009, Lasagio said.

• SAC announced nine new associate members, who are expected to be affirmed at the Jan. 14 meeting.

• Nam H. Do, Center for Innovation in Clinical Learning, Melissa Greyb, Department of Neurology, School of Medicine; Deborah Kecel, Department of Rehabilitation Science and Technology, School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences; Jon-Paul Matychak, Career and Leadership Development Center, College of Business Administration; Charni S. Pote, basic research, School of Medicine; Gail Pelabon, Center for Research and Evaluation, School of Nurs- ing; Carmela Rizzo, Learning

ASK THE DENTIST

By Dr. John Hart

Q: Lately, I’ve noticed that my breath has an unpleasant smell. I’m embarrassed to talk too closely to other people and feel very self-conscious about it. Is there anything I can do to make my breath smell fresh and clean again?

—Edward

A: Dear Edward,

You’re not alone: over 40 million Americans have chronic bad breath. It’s caused by the decay of food debris and naturally occurring bacteria producing odor-causing molecules. Another cause of bad breath is improper or inconsistent dental homecare. Tobacco use, strong foods like garlic, dry mouth, certain infections, and gum disease can also cause chronic bad breath.

Regular professional dental cleanings and check-ups will help prevent bad breath and allow your dentist to detect gum disease and other dental health problems. If the unpleasant odor is of oral origin, your dentist can help treat the problem. Professional breath products are available to help eliminate malodors.

You should also maintain good oral hygiene at home to keep your mouth fresh and clean. Brush and floss daily, and use tongue scraper and antibacterial rinse as part of your routine. Brush the inside and outside surfaces of each tooth, holding your brush at a 45 degree angle to your gums. The best times to brush are after breakfast and before bed.

Bad breath is embarrassing, but the good news is that with regular dental care and the proper homecare routine, it can easily be reversed.
At Winchester Thurston, success isn’t measured solely by test scores, although ours are among the strongest in the region. It’s apparent in a different kind of result: the confidence, social responsibility, and intellectual curiosity that our students carry with them to college and throughout life.

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[www.winchesterthurston.org](http://www.winchesterthurston.org)

412.578.7518

Winchester Thurston is a PK-12, coed independent school with campuses in Shadyside and the North Hills.
The year was 1968. Wesley Posvar was chancellor. Civil rights demonstrations and student activism against the Vietnam War continued on campus.

The new Hillman Library opened its doors and fundraising was underway for a Learning Research and Development Center building. The University Center for International Studies and the Department of Black Studies were established.

On the playing field, the Panthers suffered one of their greatest losses in the Pitt-Penn State rivalry, falling 6-9 in a Nov. 23 game at Pitt Stadium.

Fast forward to 2008. Eighteen of the employees hired in 1968 were among the honorees recognized Dec. 4 as part of the University’s annual long-term staff recognition and reception.

Whether indoors in labs, offices or libraries, or outdoors tending to the University grounds, the long-time staffers have shared in and contributed to Pitt’s growth. Here, several share their memories.

Rosemary Rinella has spent her entire 40 years in the School of Social Work, making her the school’s longest-serving staff member.

Initially hired as secretary to the dean, she now is assistant to the dean. Widely regarded as the school’s institutional memory, among her official duties are coordinating social work’s annual speaker series and serving as assistant editor of its bi-annually published Bridges magazine.

Rinella’s prose is evident and reflects the sentiments of many of her fellow long-time staffers. “The University has grown considerably and become a leading academic and research institution. I have cherished my time at the University where I have met many students, faculty, staff and community representatives along the way,” she said.

Nancy Gilles, manager of benefits/relationship in Human Resources, is another of the 40-year staffers who have spent their entire career in one department. Her initial job title was senior secretary in what then was Pitt’s personnel department.

Among her initial duties was staffing the personnel committees, which reviewed and approved or denied departmental staff requests and which also was in charge of staff classification and salary administration. Other tasks, however, might not seem to be so closely related to personnel duties.

At one time preparing and publishing the campus phone directory and even hand addressing the chancellor’s holiday cards fell to the department, she noted.

Gilles said among the highlights of her daily work is the opportunity to interact with world-class faculty and staff and learn about their professional accomplishments — and now to hear about their children’s as well.

Bobbie Bates started as a clerical aide, pulling class cards and master statistics cards for each student who came into the University Registrar’s office. She now is the office’s records manager, ensuring that historical documents are microfilmed and properly kept and protected off-site. She also assists with athletics’ and veterans’ certification.

Beyond her official duties, she’s sometimes stepped up to tend to fussy babies or entertain small children while their parents conducted their business in the office. “When you work in a student service area, as I have for 40 years, you do all sorts of odd things to aid our students, staff and faculty,” she said.

Among her amusing recollections was installation of the beautiful futility display case Pitt’s carpenters built to hold the Heisman and Sugar Bowl trophies. It was to be secured in a vault in the Scaife Hall registrar’s office, but when they tried to put it in the vault, escorted by campus police, it wouldn’t fit. “They hadn’t measured the door-way to the vault before building the display case,” she said.

One change in the University that impresses Bates is the recognition long-term staff now receive. “I worked here for 23 years before anyone thought about acknowledging long-term employees,” she said.

Groundskeeper John Settles started his Pitt career as a custodian in Physical Plant — it wasn’t yet called Facilities Management. Assigned first to Scaife Hall, then a few years later to the new LRDC building, he became acquainted not only with faculty and staff but also with the Fink School students who kept the LRDC building’s third floor lively in a special experimental classroom there.

In 1988 Settles moved to the grounds crew and was welcomed with a bang. Preparing Pitt Stadi-um’s field and setting up other athletic events were among the grounds crew’s non-landscaping duties.

On his first day on that job, Settles said, he got stuck in the truck on Sutherland Drive to enter the stadium and promptly was hit by a student pedaling a 10-speed bike down the hill. Knocked unconscious, he was picked up off the street by members of the football team and woke in Presbyterian Hospital.

Later assigned to duties at the chancellor’s residence, he got a surprise introduction to the Nordenberg family dog when the shepherd pounced on him in the yard. After the unexpectedly abrupt start to the relationship, “the dog got used to me and we became the best of friends,” he said.

Among the biggest changes he recalls over his 40 years are the demolition of Forbes Field and the construction of Mervis Hall and Forbes Quadrangle, now Posvar Hall.

During his time at Pitt, Settles’ interest in landscape design grew. He has had a hand in selecting replacements for the O’Hara Street elm trees that needed to be removed after being attacked by pests. He also has designed landscaping for Scaife Hall and euonymous plantings outside the Cathedral of Learning. The attractiveness of his work on the middle campus has drawn compliments and even brought him customers for his own side business, he said. “People notice things you do even though you think they don’t,” he said.

Gregory Doss also started as a custodian, moved to the grounds crew in 1976 and now is a crew leader. He became an unlikely celebrity in 1988 after Pitt basketball forward Jerome Lane shattered the backboard at Fitzgerald Field House with a famous dunk during a game against Providence College. Someone had to clean up the glass and replace the basket. That someone was Doss. “I dismantled the basket, took off the clock and the wires,” he said. “I didn’t think anything of it.”

The replacement was toasted as the fastest ever — delaying the game by only 32 minutes — and media attention followed. “I even was stopped and asked for my autograph,” Doss said.

A sports lover, he has enjoyed the chance to talk sports over the years with many Pitt coaches and players. Among the biggest changes is the construction of Pitt Stadium and construction of the Petersen Events Center.

Doss plans to retire April 30.

Betty Edwards began her career as a secretary in the Department of Medicine’s pulmonary division. It was very exciting being there when the first Polio vaccine was developed,” she recalled. “Learning how to type scientific papers and figure out the proper type of graph, I was learning and the arguments for keeping the accounts for our grants was very mind-blowing.”

In 1971 she was recruited to the Division of Infectious Diseases, where she now is office manager. For her, the biggest changes have come thanks to office technologies. She recalls using manual, electric typewriters. “Younger people today think, ‘Typewriters… what’s that?’”

She also oversaw the early发展 of carbon paper, mimeograph machines and making slides for presentations and thank you letters for overhead projectors.

Other advances — the invention of WordStar software, computers and the construction of the walkways that bridge Pitt buildings and UPMC hospitals — all have made her job easier.

Edwards also has a claim to fame — being the subject of a 10-book written by professor emeritus and retired chair of the Department of Microbiology and Immunobiology Monto Hito, for whom she worked from 1971 to 1993. She also taught typing and calligraphy, retooling her work with Hoe when he was honored recently for service to the University.

Edwards said the years have gone by surprisingly fast. “After 40 years, it does not feel like it’s been that long. I really love my job and enjoy working with my co-workers,” she said.

Kenneth Patrene began his career at Pitt in 1968 as a custodian in the brand-new Hillman Library and as a fill-in at several departmental buildings. He later was appointed as a specialis-t/lab manager in the Department of Medicine’s Division of Hematology/Oncology.

Choosing a career in research has required him to be available to conduct one-off experiments regardless of the day or the hour but also has enabled him to help master’s and doctoral students with their research projects and has allowed him to collaborate with amazing research teams, he said. Patrene has co-authored several scientific papers, including one that appeared in Science magazine.

The importance of grant-fund- ing, he recalled, is that the research was more difficult and time consuming in pre-computer days, Patrene recalled. “I also recall not being able to see the submitted grant solely off was not uncommon,” he said.

Among the other changes he’s noted around the University is its growth and expansion, the increase in the diversity of students and the addition of many student services. “It almost makes me want to reinscribe classes after retirement,” he joked.

— Kimberly K. Barlow
Two talented Pitt professors will pick up guitars, bass and harmonicas next week for an hour-long set of blues and more in the Cup and Chaucer Café in Hillman Library.

Chemistry professor Steve Weber and English professor Phil Smith are stepping out of the classroom to perform at 12:30 p.m. Jan. 15 as part of a free Emerging Legends concert series jointly sponsored by the University Libraries System (ULS) and Calliope: The Pittsburgh Folk Music Society.

The series was launched last November and continues with a total of six free concerts featuring local and nationally known artists throughout the academic year. (A full schedule is available at www.library.pitt.edu/uls/news/calliope.html.)

Their audience can expect a mix of blues, ragtime and gospel styles, as well as covers of Grateful Dead, Bob Dylan and Peter Rowan tunes, the professors said.

Smith and Weber, both Calliope board members, have presented educational programs to enhance the experience of students attending Calliope events through the Pitt Arts program, such as teaching a roomful of students to play a simple harmonica tune as a precursor to a blues concert. But, they never have played together on campus in a concert setting.

Now instead of solely enabling students to attend Calliope shows, the folk and traditional music can be brought to them as well. “It’s wonderful way to bring music to the campus by bringing it to the Cup and Chaucer,” Smith said, noting that fellow Calliope board member Richard Miller, ULS director and Hillman Librarian, helped make the new concert series at the library possible.

Weber said he enjoys the opportunity to showcase what he calls “handmade music.” “Without knocking technological advances, he noted that it’s fun to expose students to the simple pleasures that come with the most intrinsic stuff.

Smith and Weber owe their acquaintance with one another to Calliope. They met through Calliope teacher Bill Weiner, with whom both studied guitar. They also have attended summer-camp-style blues workshops together and, with a handful of fellow attendees at the blues week offered by Davis and Elkins College’s Augusta Heritage Center, 11 years ago started their own blues week held each summer in Millwood, Va.

The group of 15-18 musicians each summer invites several professional musicians to instruct them. The week concludes with a house concert. “It’s been a wonderful part of summer,” Smith said.

Smith and Weber don’t play together regularly, although they do get the chance to jam each summer in Millwood. Both professors grew up loving music — Weber was inspired by Bob Dylan, Judy Collins and Buffy Sainte-Marie; Smith enjoyed Pet Seeger, the Kingston Trio and Harry Belafonte. Both played guitar in high school and college and now use it as a way to unwind from the administrative tasks associated with having a department chair.

He found Calliope’s group classes — “I just wanted to go somewhere to play and learn something,” he said — and has continued ever since.

Likewise when Weber returned from Sweden in 1992, he discovered the Calliope guitar class.

Smith has incorporated music into his classes, which reaches a Blues and Balls class, one section is being offered this term. As an English course, the class focuses on lyrics and how traditional oral expression is passed on by memory, then finds its way to written form. Students are welcome to write and present their own ballads as part of the class. Smith’s guitar makes appearances in the class as well.

Weber added that there is less opportunity to incorporate music into his chemistry classes. Because electromagnetic oscillation correlates with the colors of the rainbow, some principles of optics can be illustrated roughly with the guitar. But he uses such illustrations infrequently. In the science classroom, music might better mesh with a materials science course to study, for instance, the factors that contribute to the making of a fine violin. “For chemistry, it’s tough,” he admits.

“My music life is not high profile here,” he said. The responsibilities for a lab and 15 graduate students mean that he definitely has to second place, although Weber does play with the Moonshyn’ Sheldrake. The band has opened for Calliope concert headliners and played such local venues as Club Café on the South Side.

Smith plays with Smackstack Listening, a folk group with roots in Pitt’s history department that performs songs related to American labor.

Academic duties precluded the duo from rehearsing their Cap and Chaucer set together until just a few weeks ago, after final grades were completed. While the fall term was in session, the acoustic professors relied on technology — exchanging recording files or computer files, just as they did in Millwood — along with — as they prepared to showcase their old-style music — Kimberly R. Barlow.
Small local communities lack strong IS capacity

Research conducted by students in the Graduate School of Public and International Affairs found that many small local municipalities lack adequate information systems and do not have sufficient staff or computer resources to use data regularly from neighborhood information systems such as the Pittsburgh Neighborhood Community Indicators System (NCIS). The project, “Strengthening the Turtle Creek Valley Council of Governments Communities Through Collaborative Data Systems,” was conducted as part of a capstone seminar under the leadership of faculty advisor Sabina Deitrick.

The researchers studied community indicator systems within the National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership, a consortium of neighborhood indicator systems from around the country based at the Urban Institute in Washington, D.C. From this review, they identified important issues within a community, such as education, housing and economic development, and collected data relevant to those issues. They also analyzed the communities they studied in the Turtle Creek Valley Council of Governments to gauge their ability to use the data and their technological capacity to work with NCIS.

The researchers used the group as a case study to explore the feasibility of extending NCIS to the Turtle Creek Valley communities and beyond. The project is intended to provide a framework that can be extended to other levels of government.

In analyzing the ways such systems can be adopted by the technologically savvy and those with limited technology knowledge, the researchers found that nearly half of the communities studied lacked the capacity to maintain records on computers and would not be able to dedicate enough trained personnel to use a program such as NCIS on an ongoing basis.

“Neighborhood information systems create practical opportunities for residents and officials to engage in community-building and policymaking that will improve neighborhood conditions,” said Deitrick, professor of public and urban affairs and international development. “Making public data more accessible through web-based applications and mapping tools through geographic information systems, neighborhood information systems can assist those attempting to revitalize distressed communities.”

“In the Pittsburgh region, however, many of our municipalities do not have the capacity to establish good information systems. What can communities and officials do to expand existing neighborhood information systems to more users and more municipalities? This project investigates this question through a case study of the PNCIS and the Turtle Creek Valley Council of Governments. The study concludes that many of Allegheny County’s smaller municipalities lack adequate information systems, web-based public information and internal planning capacity. Councils of Government can fill those capacity and technological gaps with financial assistance from the commonwealth through the Department of Community and Economic Development.”

**Nano chain reaction reported**

Researchers from Pitt and the U.S. Department of Energy National Energy Technology Laboratory (NETL) in Pittsburgh have demonstrated a nanoscale molecular chain reaction on a metal surface, they report in the Dec. 12 edition of Science.

The team found that a single electron caused a self-perpetuating chain reaction that rearranged the bonds in 10 consecutive molecules positioned on a gold surface. As each molecule’s original bond was broken by the reaction, the molecule rearranged itself to form a new molecule.

Study co-author Kenneth Jordan, Distinguished Professor of Chemistry and co-director of the University’s Center for Simulation and Modeling, and his colleagues worked with diethylsulfide molecules — two CH3)2S methyl groups bonded by two adjoining sulfur atoms. The added electron split the bond between the sulfur atoms of one molecule, creating a highly reactive free radical that attacked the sulfur-sulfur bond of the neighboring molecule. The radical split the bond, resulting in a new molecule and a new radical that proceeded to the sulfur-sulfur bond of the next molecule. The process repeated itself through a series of molecules.

Because the demonstrated reaction involved several molecules on a surface, it reframes researchers’ understanding of surface-based chain reactions. “The conventional wisdom held that a surface reaction would fizzle soon after the electron was introduced,” Jordan said. “Our work, however, shows that reactions on metal surfaces can be sustained over long distances.”

Jordan said that the ability to initiate molecular chain reactions and self-assembly has potential applications in information storage and in nanolithography, a process used in producing microchips and circuit boards.

The research was conducted with Peter Maksymovych, who received his PhD in physical chemistry from Pitt in 2007 and is now at the U.S. Department of Energy Center for Nano-phase Materials Sciences; Dan C. Sorescu of NETL, and John T. Yates Jr., a former Pitt Mellon Professor of Chemistry now at the University of Virginia. Maksymovych and Yates carried out the experiments and Jordan and Sorescu performed the supporting theoretical calculations.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12

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The Office of Enterprise Development and Technology Management facilitate the commercialization of technologies developed by University of Pittsburgh health sciences faculty so that the public may benefit from University discoveries and inventions.
Nursing research funded

Four School of Nursing faculty members have received grants from the National Institute of Nursing Research, part of the National Institutes of Health.

• Heidi S. Donovan, Department of Acute and Tertiary Care, received $2.7 million for her research, “Patient and Health Care System Outcomes Following Expanded Endonasal Approach (EEA) for pituitary tumors.”

In EEA, endoscopic procedures are used to remove brain tumors through the nose, instead of having to open the skull and dissect through cerebral tissue, or craniotomy. The study will compare EEA with standard craniotomy on multiple patient and health care system outcomes, including functional and neurological status, return to work, resolution of preoperative symptoms, cost, length of stay and mortality and morbidity.

Donovan’s research is funded through June 2013.

• Paula Sherwood, Department of Acute and Tertiary Care, received $420,353 for her research, “After-hours Communication Support for Hospice Family Caregivers and Patients.”

Caregivers rate communication as essential to the support they receive from hospice providers and perceive the telephone as an emergency back-up tool in pain and symptom management. The study will compare the use of videophones to telephones in after-hours hospice calls to measure patient-reported pain and quality of life for hospice patients and family caregivers.

Sherwood’s research is funded through July 2010.

• Sheila Alexander, Department of Acute and Tertiary Care, was awarded $151,500 for her research, “Long-term Outcomes in ECU Patients: Delirium and Apolipoprotein E.”

Delirium is a disturbance in consciousness with inattentiveness, accompanied by a change in cognition or perceptual disturbances. Apolipoprotein E is a transport substance that delivers lipids to the liver or cells that need more lipids. The study will explore the relationship between apolipoprotein E and the development and duration of delirium in patients in intensive care units.

Alexander’s research is funded through December 2011.

• Karen Courtney, Department of Health and Community Systems, received $2.9 million for her research, “Apolipoprotein E: The role of ApoE in the human body.”

Apolipoprotein E is a transport substance that delivers lipids to the liver or cells that need more lipids. The study will explore the relationship between apolipoprotein E and the development and duration of delirium in patients in intensive care units.

Courtney’s research is funded through July 2010.

Horseradish good for nano-clean up

Researchers have developed a natural, nontoxic method for biodegrading carbon nano-fibers that could potentially help diminish the environmental and health concerns surrounding the manufacture of carbon nanotubes.

The researchers found that carbon nanotubes deteriorate when exposed to the natural enzyme horseradish peroxidase (HRP), according to a report published recently in Nano Letters co-authored by Alexander Star, chemistry professor, and Karen Kagan, director of the Center for the Department of Environmental and Occupational Public Health.

These results open the door to further development of safe and natural methods — with HRP or other enzymes — of cleaning up carbon nanotube spills in the environment and the industrial or laboratory setting.

Both Kagan and Star are associated with a three-year-old Pitt initiative to investigate nanotoxicology.

Star said, “The many applications of nanotubes have resulted in an explosion of their use, but their toxicity remains controversial. Accidental spills of nanotubes are unavoidable during their production, and the massive use of nanotube-based materials could lead to increased environmental pollution. We have demonstrated a nontoxic approach to successfully degrade carbon nanotubes in environmentally relevant conditions.”

The team’s work focused on nanotubes in their raw form as a fine, graphite-like powder. Kagan said that, in this form, nanotubes have caused severe lung inflammation in lab tests. Although small, nano-tubes contain thousands of atoms on their surface that could react with the human body in unknown ways.

“Nanomaterials aren’t completely understood. Industries use nanotubes because they are so unique — they are strong, they can be used as semiconductors. But do these features present unknown health risks? The field of nanotoxicology is developing so fast that we cannot find out, Kagan said.

“Studies have shown that they can be dangerous. We wanted to develop a method for safely removing nanotubes that do not contaminate the environment,” Kagan said.

“The many applications of nanotubes have resulted in an explosion of their use, but their toxicity remains controversial. Accidental spills of nanotubes are unavoidable during their production, and the massive use of nanotube-based materials could lead to increased environmental pollution. We have demonstrated a nontoxic approach to successfully degrade carbon nanotubes in environmentally relevant conditions.”

The study’s authors represent the Pitt Initiative to investigate nanotoxicology.

University of Pittsburgh

Designed for clinicians, lawyers, and students of the humanities and social sciences, this interdisciplinary program emphasizes the philosophical foundation of bioethics and offers opportunities for clinical experience and in-depth research. This program of the Center for Bioethics and Health Law at the School of Arts and Sciences allows students to combine study in ethical theory, philosophy and history of medicine, cultural studies, health law, public law and social sciences.

bioethic@pitt.edu • 412-647-5700 • www.pitt.edu/~bioethic
People of the Times

Three School of Medicine faculty members recently were named fellows of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS).

Dean Devlin, associate professor of psychiatry and human genetics; George K. Michalopoulos, associate professor and chair of pathology; and Herbert L. Needleman, professor of dermatology and pediatrics, were selected for their scientifically or socially distinguished advancement to advance science and its applications.

Devlin, Michalopoulos and Needleman are among the AAAS members who will be inducted as fellows on Feb. 14 during the AAAS annual meeting in Chicago.

Devlin was elected as a AAAS fellow as part of the association’s section on statistics for his novel statistical methods to detect disease-causing mutations and his research on the validity of DNA fingerprinting, IP-brightness and the role of drugs in HIV-induced glomerulosclerosis, which are rare tumors of certain kinds of neuroendocrine tissue.

Michalopoulos was elected as a AAAS fellow as part of the section on medicine for his contributions to understanding the pathways of growth factors that lead to the liver’s regeneration. 

Needleman was elected as a fellow as part of the section on neurosciences for his exemplary commitment to translating findings to public policy, particularly as it influences health care.

AAAS is an international nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing science and its applications for the benefit of the public.

The tradition of AAAS fellows can be accessed in the AAAS news and notes section of the Dec. 19 journal Science.

Dawn Lundy Martin, assistant professor of English, has been elected to the American Association of Arts and Sciences (AAAS) Poetry Prize. Martin is the only poet to receive the AAAS award, which recognizes emerging poets of exceptional promise and distinguished achievement.

Martin is a founding member of the Black Took Collective, a group of experimental black poets, and a participating member of the Third Wave Foundation, and co-editor of “Youth Speaks: Young Activists and the New Feminism.”

Her books include “The Morning Star: An Essay on Race” that was selected for the Poetry Society of America’s National Chapbook Challenge, and “A Matter of Gathering/A Gathering of Matter,” which won the 2006 Cave Canem Poetry Prize.

Presented for the first time this year, the poetry prize was established to honor the memory of longtime AAAS fellow May Sarton, a poet, novelist and teacher of longtime AAAS fellow May Sarton, a poet, novelist and teacher of lifelong young poets during her career.

The AAAS Poetry Prize carries a $2,000 honorarium. In addition, Martin’s work will be published in Daedalus, the academy’s journal.

Three staff members in the Swanson School of Engineering have been named among the inaugural Swanson School Staff Awards. The awards were established by the late Dean of Engineering Gerald Horder to recognize staff who provide outstanding professional service and support to the school and to highlight the accomplishments of staff members. Staff with two or more years of service at the school are eligible.

The staff award recipients are:

• Betty Victor, director of the Office of Administration, who manages the school’s fiscal activities, which includes the university budgets, grants, research, student services and cost centers. She also supervises staff and staff personnel actions and undergraduate probation and dismissal, as well as legal and audit issues.

• Victor has served in various capacities at the school for 50 years. She also has served on various Pitt committees.

• Richard Colwell, who started working at the University in 1985 as an electronics technician. He currently is responsible for maintaining the computer systems, network and servers for several of the school’s departments, in addition to three of the computer centers and various other high-tech laboratories.

Colwell has served as president and vice president of the Staff Association Council and a member of various University search committees.

• Britton Guthrie, who started at Pitt in 2002. Despite being a first-year undergraduate student Guthrie has doubled since she began working, Holder said, Guthrie has continued to maintain an extensive student database, develop solutions to students’ academic concerns and serve as web editor for her depart- ment’s newsletter, the Mathematics Clinic.

She is also a member of the Staff Association Council.

William Brice, Pitt-Johns-

Three faculty members are among those honored by this Excellence in Teaching Award, offered annually by the Faculty Senate.

The consortium was created to expand online course offerings and to provide research opportunities available to students at any of the participating WISE sites. It focuses on the development of career education models in science, technology, engineering and mathematics and professional skills and is funded by grants from the National Science Foundation.

Several faculty in the Schools of the Health Sciences recently received awards or accolades.

Pitt-Johns-Mark M. Ravitch professor and vice chair, and chief of general sur- gery, the medical school’s Pitt-Johns History of Earth Sciences Society regional conference.

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China Humar, a nationally recognized expert in abdominal organ transplantation, has been appointed chief medical director of the Thomas E. Starzl Transplantation Institute and chief, Division of Transplantation in the Department of Surgery at UPMC.

Humar will oversee all clinical and clinical research activities of one of the world's most active transplant programs. He is expected to assume the position by March.

"Dr. Humar is known as a gifted surgeon and a man of integrity and his credentials speak for themselves," said Timothy R. Billet, the George V. Foster professor of surgery and chair, Department of Surgery in the School of Medicine. "His presence at the Starzl Transplantation Institute and chair, Department of Surgery at the University of Minnesota Medical Center and professor of surgery in the Division of Transplantation Surgery at the University of Minnesota School of Medicine.

Arthur S. Levine, senior vice chancellor for Health Sciences and dean of the School of Medicine, said: "With Dr. Humar joining an already outstanding transplant team, the Starzl Institute will continue its distinguished tradition of leading the field in research and clinical advances that improve treatment not only for our own patients but for transplant patients everywhere.

Humar received his medical degree from the University of Ottawa. He completed his general surgical residency at the University of Ottawa and later a surgical fellowship in transplantation at the University of Minnesota. He joined the faculty at the University of Ottawa School of Medicine in 1999. A year later, he became the service director in the Division of Transplantation Surgery at the University of Minnesota and, in 2000, he was appointed as the director of the living donor transplant program. He completed his fellowship in abdominal transplantation surgery at University of Virginia Medical Center and the VA Medical Center in Minneapolis.

His research of interest include partial liver transplants and studies of hepatic regeneration, clinical outcomes, and quality of life. Humar currently is medical director of the liver and living donor programs at the Transplant Center of the University of Minnesota Medical Center and professor of surgery in the Division of Transplantation Surgery at the University of Minnesota School of Medicine.

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CALENDAR

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 15

Senate Budget Policy Committee
Committee Mtg
501 CL, noon-2 pm
Ctr. for Philosophy of Science Talk
“Structural Explanation,” Laura Felline; U of Rome; 817 CL, 12:05 pm

Saturday 17
Greensburg Campus La Cultura Winter Gala
“Supper Celebration at Pitt,” Greensburg Millenium Library, UCP, 5:30 pm (info or reservations 724/745-7919)
Women’s Basketball
Vs. USF; Peterson, 2 pm
Music on the Edge Concert
Clarinets Jean Koppe and pianist Stephen Gouling; Bellefield aud., 8 pm

Monday 19
• University closed in observance of Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday.
Men’s Basketball
Vs. Syracuse; Petersen, 7 pm

Tuesday 20
Faculty & Staff Blood Drive
WPJ lower lounge, 8-4 am pm (also Victoria 1st fl. lobby, 8 am-2 pm)
HSLS Workshop
“The WOW Fact: PowerPoint for Posters,” Sam Lewis; Falk Library, classrm. 2, 10-11:30 am
Basic Research Seminar
“Epigenetics & Chromatin Organization in Human Embryonic Stem Cells,” Paul Sambuc; Cooper Conf. Ctr. classrm. B; C, noon-1 pm

Wednesday 21
Orthopaedic Surgery Grand Rounds
Dominick Tuason, UHAS auid., Montefiore, 7 am
Clinical Oncology & Hematol-ogy Grand Rounds
“Germinal Determinants of Sensitivity & Resistance to EGFR Targeted Agents,” Paúl Antero Janue; Herberman Conf. Ctr. 2nd fl. aud.; 8:30 am
Pathology Research Seminar
“Thymomas: Controversies & Diagnostic Pitfalls,” Cesar Moran; U of TX; 1100 Scaife, noon
Renal Research Seminar
Becky Hughey; Ferr145 Presby, noon-1 pm
HSLS Workshop
“Protein Information Resources,” Anuman Chattopadhyay; Falk Library conf. rm. R, 1-1:30 pm

Thursday 22
Events occurring
Submit by
Jan. 22-Feb. 5
Jan. 15
Jan. 22
Jan. 29
Jan. 5
Jan. 26
March 19
March 12
March 19
April 2-16
April 9
April 16
April 23
April 30
May 7
May 14
May 21
May 28
June 4
June 11
June 25-July 9
July 9-23
July 23-Sept. 3

SUBMIT DEADLINES

For publication
• Reserve space by submitting ad copy one week prior to publication. Copy and payment should be sent to University Times, 308 Bellefield Hall, prior to publication. Copy and payment should be sent to University Times, 308 Bellefield Hall, prior to publication.
• All other ads should be accompanied by a check for the full amount made payable to the University of Pittsburgh.

Events occurring
• Submit by Jan. 22. Submit online at www.utc.pitt.edu/forms/ctisubmit.html.

For publication
• University ads should include a contact number for transfer of funds.
• For University ads, submit an account number through Jan. 18; Sat. 9 am-2:30 pm.

Housing

• Reserve space by submitting copy one week prior to publication. Copy and payment should be sent to University Times, 308 Bellefield Hall, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, PA 15260.
• For more information, call Barbara Delmon, 412/383-4944.

Newspaper

Katz
“Project Leader’s Dual Socialization & Its Impact on Team Learning & Performance: A Diagnostic Study,” Tani Gazimutu, Jan. 15, 101 Meris, 2-3 pm
A&S/Communication
“Toward a Grammar of the Blogosphere: Rhetoric & Attention in the Networked Imagi- nary,” Daniela Pietra, Jan. 16, 1128 CL, 5 pm

Access to University Times, Journals & More Supplement
Submissions & Deadlines for supplement due Jan. 31. Submit online at www.uims.pitt.edu/itunes/ books.html (Info: 4-8684).
Faculty Development in In’tl Business Study Trip Applications for “European Economics in Transition” due Feb. 2. (Info: www.ucis.pitt.edu/cgi-bin/events/uicexatra. php)
In’tl Multi-Conference on Engineering & Technological Innovation Camera-ready full papers due Feb. 4. Email submissions to institute@mail.duq.edu.
In’tl Symposium on Academic Globalization Applications due Feb. 11. Submit online at www.2009isscouncils.org/ A
Provoce’s Faculty Diversity Seminar Application package including CV, syllabus, cover letter & department letter due Feb. 20 to Joanne Nicoll, 820 Alum Hall. (Info: 412/381-9729)

New Life Lady Fitness Gym (www.newlifeladyfitness.com) is currently offering special membership rates to university employees. Visit their website for details on the current membership rates. If you are interested in joining, please contact them at 412/389-4445.

Newspaper

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January

Thursday 8

GSPh Epidemiology Seminar
“Current Controversies in Diabetes: A Pittsburgh Perspective,” Trevor Orchard, AI135 Crabtree, noon-1 pm

Friday 9

Pathology Seminar
“Pathwork (r) Tissue of Origin Test: Application of Genomic-Based Microarray Testing in Difficult Cases of Tumor Classification,” Catherine Dunar, VA Commonwealth U; 1103 Scaife, 10 am

PT Clinical Rounds
“My CI Has Never Seen This Before. Now What?” Case Studies,” Sven Lynch; A115 Crabtree, 7 am-noon

CCSE Seminar
“Classifying & Assigning 2008 TC,” Sven Lynch; G23 Parran, noon-1 pm

Medical Education Grand Rounds
“Anesthesiology: Competency-Based Education: Are We Serious About Practicing What We Preach?” Larry Grupp, U of MI; Scaife lecture rm. 6, 11:30 am-12:30 pm

Monday 12

HSLS Workshop
“Introduction to HSLS Resources & Services at Falk Library,” Mary Lou Klem; Falk Library conf. rm. B, noon-1 pm

HSLS Lunch with a Librarian
“Finding Full-Text Articles,” Mary Lou Klem; Falk Library conf. rm. B, noon-1 pm

Tuesday 13

HSLS Workshop
“EndNote Basics,” Pat Weiss; Falk Library classroom, 1, 10-noon