Pitt teams score well on NCAA report card

All of Pitt’s 19 Division I sports teams exceeded standards established for academic performance in the latest “report card” issued last month by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA).

Two of Pitt’s teams — gymnastics and men’s basketball — received special recognition from the NCAA for being ranked among the top 10 percent in their respective sports among all Division I programs.

The report measures teams against the academic progress rate (APR) that the NCAA developed seven years ago as a way to gauge college athletes’ progress toward earning their degrees. Scores are assigned based on eligibility, retention rates and degree-completion rates.

The benchmark score of 925 out of a possible 1,000 equals roughly a 60 percent success rate in graduating players within six years.

The NCAA report reflects the four-year average for every team over the academic years 2006-07 through 2009-10. The average APR for all 6,422 Division I teams is 970, up three points from last year’s average.

Thirteen of Pitt’s 19 sports teams improved their scores from the 2010 data, with the largest improvement coming in baseball (up 25 points) and men’s basketball (up 23 points).

Pitt teams’ APR ranged from a low of 955 for men’s swimming to a perfect 1,000 for the gymnastics team.

The 10 Panthers women’s programs recorded no score lower than 970 for the multi-year APR period.

Men’s basketball and football, the two major revenue-generating sports, both fared well compared to Division I peers in the latest report. The men’s basketball team’s score was 985, compared to the national average for all 344 Division I men’s basketball teams’ score of 945.

The Panthers football team’s score was 949, compared to the national average of 946 for all 244 Division I football teams.

Under NCAA policies, teams with an APR below 925 can lose scholarships, and scores below 900 can trigger more severe sanctions, including restrictions on financial aid, postseason competition and practice time.

On the penalty side, 103 teams at 67 schools have been sanctioned for poor academic performance, the NCAA reported. Eight teams — five men’s basketball and three football teams — are banned from competing in the postseason in the coming academic year because of poor performance in the classroom.

In addition, another seven teams faced a postseason ban but received a conditional waiver for the coming year. These teams remain subject to the postseason ban in future years if they do not meet their specific academic performance conditions or implement a NCAA-approved academic improvement plan.

A total of 35 teams did not earn a 925 APR and had a student-athlete leave school ineligible, and thus have lost scholarships. Five teams have lost immediate scholarships and received the first penalty (public warning) as well for posting an APR below 900. Another 16 teams under 900 APR received a public warning, 19 teams received practice restrictions.

The APR breakdown of Pitt’s 19 Division I teams is available at http://web1.ncaac.org/maps/aprRelease.jsp.

—Peter Hart

Oakland: Planning for 2025

Community-initiated planning for Oakland’s future continues into its third phase, following the recent Oakland 2023 community action forum, part of a year-long effort to develop a master plan for the neighborhood.

The forum was the culmination of a five-week series of dialogues in which groups shared their experiences and their vision for making Oakland a better place to live, work and play. (See April 28 University Times.)

The May 12 action forum drew more than 200 people, according to Tara Sherry-Torres, community organizer at Oakland Planning and Development Corp. (OPDC), which is coordinating the project with support from neighborhood institutions and community partners, including Pitt. School of Social Work affiliates are acting as facilitators for the project. The project also has been endorsed by the University Senate community relations committee.

Among forum attendees were a mix of Oakland residents, business owners, landlords, employees of Oakland institutions, students, bicyclists and transit riders.

Attendees voted on the top action ideas to determine priorities for action teams, Sherry-Torres explained. Those priorities are:

• Transportation and pedestrian safety.

Recommendations include improving Oakland-area institutions and public agencies to pool their resources to create a bus loop for intra-Oakland travel; improving safety with better enforcement of traffic laws, and raising awareness.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Walker elected SAC president

The Staff Association Council (SAC) announced the results of officer elections at its monthly meeting yesterday, June 8. Officers serve two-year terms beginning at the conclusion of SAC’s June meeting.

Newly elected officers are:

• President — Deborah Walker, who had been serving as chair of the newly formed staff mentoring committee and a member of the program and planning committee. She defeated Libby Hilf, vice president for marketing and communications. Walker succeeds Gwen Watkins, who did not run for re-election.

• Vice president of steering committee — incumbent Jon-Paul “J.P.” Marychak, who also serves on the marketing and communications committee. He defeated Richard Coblentz, immediate past president of SAC.

• Vice president for marketing and communications — Monika Losango, who had been serving as vice chair of the salary and job classification committee. She defeated Jesse Nicholson, who chairs the newly formed diversity and inclusion committee and is a member of the governance committee.

• Treasurer — Monica Costlow, who defeated Amy Elliott. Both candidates were serving on the program and planning committee, with Costlow serving as committee chair.

Officers are prohibited from chairing any of the standing committees, but they can opt to be a member of any SAC committees.

Results of the election, which was held electronically for the first time, were announced by Barbara Mowery, chair of SAC’s elections committee. SAC members at the June 8 meeting endorsed the election results unanimously.

—Peter Hart
ness regarding alternative means of transportation.

Sherry-Torres commented that transportation concerns have mounted in the Oakland community since the elimination of the 44B Oakland Loop bus route as part of the March 27 Port Authority service cuts.

**Housing issues.** Recommendations include reactivating the Oakland code enforcement task force and engaging community members to enforce codes on negligent landlord, housing violations, parking violations and littering; encouraging investment in the Oakland housing market, and working with police, student groups and community organizations to address noise, underage drinking and nuisance bars.

**Strengthening neighborhood quality and connectivity through investment in community beautification, greening efforts and public spaces.**

Recommendations include connecting West and South Oakland, as well as the Oakland business district, with the Eliza Furnace Trail and Second Avenue by improving steps and trail connections, and developing a series of beautification initiatives to improve the area’s image.

Sherry-Torres said general recommendations at the May 12 forum included surveying residents on their preference for an online community forum or a printed newsletter to raise awareness of local events, services and initiatives, and engaging Oakland coalitions and organizations on a branding campaign to promote Oakland’s assets.

She said 76 people signed up for the three action teams, which will meet during the summer to review the recommendations and develop written action plans. “Over the summer our action teams will pursue a more efficient and coordinated Oakland bus loop, reactivating the Oakland code enforcement task force and sprouting new neighborhood greening initiatives and trail connections,” Sherry-Torres said. “While these action teams work we will also move forward with the broader Oakland 2023 planning process.”

Workshops and strategy sessions will be held in the fall, she added.

By the end of 2011, Sherry-Torres said, the hope is to combine the action teams’ recommendations into a comprehensive Oakland community plan that will serve as a blueprint for improvements.

For more information, call 412/621-7463 ext. 17, email Sherry-Torres at tarat@opdc.org, or visit www.opdc.org/programs/services/plan-partner/2011-community-plan/.

—Peter Hart

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**LEADERS**

Funded education with soft drink/bottled water tax

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To the editor:

Ever since Gov. Corbett announced cuts in educational spending, there has been an outcry that those cuts should be eliminated and funding should continue as before.

There is a simple way to fund education at all levels in the state of Pennsylvania, which would be by imposing a 5 percent or 10 percent tax on soft drinks and a 5 percent tax on bottled water. Soft drinks have no nutritional value and contribute to obesity, which in turn contributes to diabetes and they also contribute to dental care. Tap water is fine to drink, so bottled water is a luxury and people should be able to pay a tax for it if they wish. Also, if enough legislators back the tax on Marcel-Ibus shale gas, then Gov. Corbett’s veto could be overridden.

A. Baumanns

Clinical Professor

Department of Periodontics

School of Dental Medicine

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**LETTERS**

Letters should be submitted at least one week prior to publication. Persons criticized in a letter will receive a copy of the letter so that they may prepare a response. If no response is received, the letter will be published alone.

Letters can be sent by email to letters@pitt.edu or by campus mail to 198 Bellefield Hall.

The University Times reserves the right to edit letters for clarity or length. Individuals are limited to two published letters per academic term. Unsigned letters will not be accepted for publication.

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**New restaurant coming to Schenley Plaza this fall**

A restaurant being built by the Eat’n Park Hospitality Group in partnership with the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy is taking shape near the entrance of the Christopher Lyman Magee Series home run.

Although rain has slowed construction, the yet-unnamed Eat’n Park restaurant is scheduled to open in September, said Mark Broadhurst, Eat’n Park’s director of concept development.

The neighborhood burger-style restaurant will serve alcohol and will feature a simple seasonal menu that will include hearty oven and rotisserie items, Broadhurst said. The restaurant will offer breakfast, lunch and dinner year-round, accommodating 150 patrons with indoor and outdoor seating. Carryout service also will be available.

Breakfast will include quick, handheld items, with brunch offerings on the weekend breakfast menu, he said. Speed also will be emphasized during the lunch hour.

Customers will place their orders before being seated, but restaurant staff will serve the meals and clear the tables. Full service will be offered during dinner hours.

The restaurant is being designed to a LEED-silver level standard, although Broadhurst said it’s not been determined whether to pursue the actual LEED certification.

Natural light will dominate the side of the restaurant that faces the plaza, he said. Other “green” features such as rain barrels, rooftop herb gardens and greenery-filled marquee are incorporated in the design. The restaurant also will participate in composting and recycling practices typical of the restaurant group’s other locations, Broadhurst said.

Jim Griffin, Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy director of facilities, said a sit-down restaurant that would add to the food service offered at four seasonal kiosks has been part of the vision for Schenley Plaza. Although alcohol will be served, drinks won’t be permitted beyond the restaurant, Griffin said.

Plans by another local restaurant group to build on the site were approved in 2006, but the proposed Atria’s restaurant never progressed to construction. Griffin said the Eat’n Park group’s concept would be a unique addition to the plaza. The fact that it’s not a “cookie-cutter, stripmall kind of concept” is attractive, as is the design, which he said coordinates well with existing plaza elements. The use of glass and cedar will complement nearby structures, he noted.

Griffin labeled the plaza a work in progress, noting that the footprint of the plaza has been extended to the area in front of the Carnegie Library and museum as well as to the space adjoining Pitt’s Frick Fine Arts building.

He cited the restoration of the Mary E. Schenley Memorial Fountain as another recent improvement, adding that repairs to the Christopher Lyman Magee Memorial Fountain near the Carnegie Library entrance are in the plaza’s future.

While the plaza’s expansive lawn is intended to be a perennial feature, Griffin said public recreation areas or events someday could be added elsewhere on the plaza.

The public space is intended to serve a broad range of interests, he said, citing the diverse programing that already has included free concerts, yoga and other exercise, pogo-stick competitions, circuses, the International Children’s Festival and celebrations of Bill Mazeroski’s famed 1960 World Series home run.

Griffin said the conservancy is open to new ideas for plaza improvements and activities; public input is welcomed at www.schenleypiazza.org.

—Kimberly K. Barlow
Faculty volunteers sought to “adopt” a Pitt dorm floor

T he Office of Residence Life is recruiting for its faculty associates program. A joint venture of the offices of Student Life and Residence Life and the first-year student experience program, the faculty associates program provides opportunities for first-year students to interact with faculty members outside of the classroom, said Jamie O’Brien at this week’s Faculty Assembly meeting.

(See View From Outside the Classroom columns, April 29, 2009, University Times.)

The goals of the program are to “demystify the ivory tower” for potentially intimidated freshmen, and to increase student retention and satisfaction, said O’Brien, assistant director of Residence Life.

“Interaction with a professional in the field who has a PhD for first-year students can be quite daunting,” especially in the classroom setting, he said. “One of our goals is to provide a venue to promote interaction outside the classroom, in order to open up the lines of communication and to make faculty more approachable.”

A secondary goal of the program is to provide mentoring opportunities for faculty in informal settings. Faculty volunteers are paired with a resident assistant and assigned to interact with students living on the RA’s dorm floor.

“An RA is one of our upper-level student leaders who live and work on a floor. They’re employed by Residence Life and trained to provide the provide activities and events for the first-year students,” O’Brien explained.

Project to close part of Bates Street

Beginning at 10 a.m. today, June 9, Bates Street traffic is expected to experience intermittent delays until 3 p.m. when Bates Street will be closed to traffic in both directions between the intersection of Bates Street and Forbes Avenue, and the intersection of Bates Street and Boulevard of the Allies.

For more information on the university’s construction projects, see www.pitt.edu/construction.

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Some examples of the kinds of out-of-classroom events include coffeehouse visits, movie nights followed by discussions, museum trips, sporting events, ethnic festivals and kayaking, hiking or rock climbing outings.

Some funding is provided by Student Affairs to subsidize the outings, O’Brien noted. He said about 98 percent of the Pittsburgh campus’s roughly 3,700 incoming freshmen live in the residence halls, giving Pitt approximately 90 floors housing first-year students.

“What we’d like to do is provide the faculty associates experience for all our first-year residents,” O’Brien said at the June 7 Assembly meeting, adding that in the last academic year 65 faculty, the highest number in the program’s five years, participated.

“The program is quite flexible, and the RAs do most of the logistics,” O’Brien noted.

Faculty commit to a minimum of five hours a term, with no maximum. They agree to meet with residents at least three times per term, and early in the term are asked to lead a brief orientation session on navigating academics at Pitt.

One outcome of the program has been improved student communication skills, O’Brien maintained.

“One thing holds true in all the interactions: Students don’t communicate in the same ways they used to, and not all communication is terribly appropriate, especially as they move on to the professional level. Using text-speak in emails, for example, is not appropriate in the professional ranks,” he said. Informal interaction with faculty tends to drive that point home in a non-threatening way, O’Brien said.

Following O’Brien’s report, Assembly members suggested that the faculty associates name may not convey properly the program’s focus, slowing recruitment efforts. Members also suggested developing a stronger advertising campaign to recruit faculty, including a greater web presence that includes testimonials from faculty participants.

Assembly member Susan Shainman, who has participated in the program for several years, endorsed it enthusiastically at the June 7 meeting. “I find it really rewarding dealing with first-year students, and the RA does most of the work,” Shainman said, adding that for her the program was mostly fun.

“We had an ice cream social, watched Steelers games and had a Labor Day picnic,” she said.

For more information on the faculty associates program, contact O’Brien at jobrien@pitt.edu or 8-1195.

In other Assembly business:

Nicholas Birch, chair of the Senate bylaws and procedures committee, reported that his committee is reviewing the policy for forming search committees for senior-level positions.

Following the recent search for a new provost, the committee discovered that the policy, which dates to the early 1990s, potentially needs revising. Among the murky issues, Birch said, is which administrators qualify as “senior” under the policy and whether the process of choosing staff and student search committee members should be by selection or election.

As it stands now, the policy says there should be some kind of election but it’s not clear whether the election is by the Student Government Board, for instance, or a vote by all students,” Birch said.

The bylaws and procedures committee will work with the Office of the Secretary, the Chancellor’s office and the General Counsel on the issue.

Assembly members pointed to a number of related issues, such as:

— Whether including the student evaluations in teaching portfolio should be at the option of the faculty member or a requirement.
— To what extent the evaluations reflect actual teaching effectiveness as opposed to an instructor’s popularity.
— Whether the questions on the form should be reviewed and updated.
— How to factor into consideration the relative difficulty of the course and whether the instructor is a “tough grader” — factors that can influence students’ evaluations negatively.
— What weight, for instance, if any to give students’ disparaging comments on a teacher’s appearance or classroom behavior.

Assembly member Linda Frank advocated developing a parallel peer evaluation system, so that educators’ teaching effectiveness will be evaluated by other educators in addition to students.

Pinsky agreed that the issues were worth considering and said he will pass them on to the Senate educational policies committee and the Provost’s office for input.

Peter Hart

JUNE 9, 2011

Shopping for a cause

The Graduate School of Public Health’s spring fundraiser benefiting the Evelyn H. Wei Scholarship Award in Epidemiology held June 3 in Piren Hall drew more than 250 people and raised $3,695.

The fundraiser offered shoppers jewelry, photography, artwork and quilts donated by faculty and staff of the Department of Epidemiology. A silent auction and door prize raffle contributed to the day’s fun.

The scholarship fund was established in memory of Wei, a Pitt researcher and GSPH alumna, who was killed by a vehicle in 2004 near her Regent Square home.

Since December 2004, the fund has raised a total of $45,341.

Contributions can be made directly to the Evelyn H. Wei Memorial Scholarship Fund by sending a check payable to University of Pittsburgh Shaiman, A631 Crabtree Hall, 130 DeSoto Street, Pittsburgh, 15261 and writing Evelyn Wei Fund in the memo line.

Kim Sutton-Tyrell, professor and vice chair for academics in the Department of Epidemiology, who helped organize the fundraiser, shows off some of the goods on sale.

Peter Hart

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Awakening the digital imagination

"The idea is to help faculty and staff and students develop into digital citizens and that happens through the awakening of the digital imagination," he said, pointing to Ben Franklin as a model of innovative curiosity—"who would have felt right at home in the information revolution."

Self taught and with no PhD, Franklin was a scientist, diplomat, writer and publisher. "He was somebody who manifested the kind of integrative learning, the kind of broad lateral thinking with really great expertise in several distinct areas that we say we want our students to be," Campbell said, noting that success in the 21st century will require similar skills.

"We’re all going to have to do a lot of learning and relearning and we are going to have to go to lateral.”

The digital imagination should encourage both the thinking and learning, he said. It is a realm in which learners can self-narrate and self-curate and share what they’ve created. “These things run antithetical to what we do in higher education and in education generally,” he said.

“When the digital imagination is awakened, it is the time to become aware of the possibilities for the sharing of cognition, a lot of interesting disruption happens. A lot of education happens out in the open.

When students come into our schools beginning their life’s work, not getting it over with. ‘They understand that the learning process of learning is also part of what learning produces,’ he said.

“The process and product have a sort of particle/wave interrelation. They discover that they may learn things and have ideas and questions that may have never occurred to their professor and may not necessarily arise in the same way in different courses, in different schools, in different countries, of different ages.

Awakening the digital imagination and empowering students requires a massive faculty development effort, Campbell said.

“Our digital imaginations have to be awakened as well. It’s not easy to do, but it’s incredibly rewarding and it’s actually fun.”

Tivio Campbell’s entire presentation, including discussion of how to acquire the digital literacy and engagement in his classes, visit http://mediaicul.cdfde.pit.edu/media/acad/scholar.html?Default.aspx?ped=36d28bc274f480791e82a25314668.

—Kimberly K. Barlow
A part of the Provost’s newly established University Center for the Interdisciplinary Education of Physicians, professor Basil J. Zitelli, who was named the Edmund R. McClure Endowed Chair in Pediatric Education, celebrated his appointment by presenting his Inaugural Lecture, “Back to the Future, with Apologies to Sir William Oder.”

Oder, founder of the Johns Hopkins medical school, is considered one of the fathers of modern medical education.

A proponent of teaching medical students at patients’ bedside, Oder is credited with establishing the medical residency system.

The advent of advanced medical technologies has increased access to information, improved doctors’ efficiency and enhanced patient safety, Zitelli said. Doctors have access to iPads, iPods, computers and a whole range of scans, blood tests and even genetic tests to help them diagnose and treat patients. “We depend upon technology and our patients and families expect the very best. They expect us to use technology. They sometimes actually come in and demand it,” he said.

“The question is, has technology produced the best health care system?”

Many people believe so, yet technology carries with it a downside as well. Citing a study that found 12,000 deaths from unnecessary surgeries, 800 from infections and 106,000 from the adverse effects of medication, Zitelli noted that some of those deaths could have been due to the overuse of medical technology.

The cascade effect

One risk associated with technology is the “cascade effect” — a chain of events initiated by an unnecessary test that has caught a doctor’s attention. Zitelli cited the case of a 12-year-old boy who came to his clinic with complained of headaches. The boy’s physician referred him to an optometrist, who found a minor refractive error, telling the boy that he was normal, but a CT scan found a minor abnormality. That discovery worried the family and caused them fear that it could be a tumor. Ultimately an MRI showed the same thing, but it was not their fear.

The boy was referred to Zitelli’s clinic, a careful history and physical exam showed the headaches weren’t progressive and there was no family history of migraines. The boy had been under stress due to some problems at school. As it turns out, the abnormality was a benign cyst. Furthermore, by the time the thought of a brain tumor had been removed, the headaches had disappeared.

“An example is fetal monitoring, which can cause anxiety for women in labor, Zitelli said. However, research shows that most cases have normal results and that most babies are normal.”

Another example is fetal monitoring, which can cause anxiety for women in labor, Zitelli said. However, research shows that most cases have normal results and that most babies are normal.

Lab tests: What’s normal?

 Shotgun testing also is a temptation, Zitelli noted, saying that it’s simply not worth the cost of a lot of tests, rather than just the single test they really want.

“However, when it comes to test results, errors are built into the statistical definition of normal. Zitelli explained that norms are defined as two standard deviations from the mean in a healthy population. That means one in 20, or 5 percent of normal results, will be considered as abnormal, he said.

“This is purely a statistical definition, and does not necessarily mean that the patient who had that particular lab test result is, in fact, abnormal.”

As the number of tests increases, the probability of at least one abnormal result rises as well. “If a single test was normal, there’s a 5 percent chance that it will be abnormal. If you have 12 tests the chance doubled — not an unusual number of tests — there’s a 46 percent chance that one of those tests will be abnormal. And if you have 100 tests done, again, that’s not an unreasonable number of tests for patients who have some complex illnesses admitted to the hospital — you have a virtual certainty that at least one of those tests will be considered abnormal,” he said.

“Rather than relying solely on test results, doctors need to evaluate the context. "We have to know what we’re doing and put the results in the context of the particular individual," Zitelli said. "Some of these tests we do may be out of the range of normal but not necessarily be abnormal for the patient."

Zitelli noted that technologies such as electronic medical records and computerized physician order entry (CPOE) significantly cut medical errors, but the introduction of a new technology also has its tradeoffs, sometimes producing other errors.

He said there were growing pains when these systems first were put in place at Children’s Hospital. Test results sometimes were lost in cyberspace and communication issues had to be resolved. Learning the system and the proper syntax took time, too, he said. “Any system, any technology, requires repeated evaluation and refinement,” he cautioned.

Overreliance on technology can delay diagnosis and treatment when technology is not available. How can doctors treat a patient when the computer is down or the MRI machine isn’t working? What happens when unexpected results come back from the lab?

Back to the basics

Citing the term coined by Herbert L. Fred in a medical journal editorial, Zitelli cautioned against “technologic tenesmus” — the uncontrollable urge to rely on sophisticated medical gadgetry for diagnosis, almost to the exclusion of a good history and physical exam.

“IT preys upon the ill-trained, the ill-informed and those who are looking for shortcuts,” Zitelli said.

“To combat the downside of technology, Zitelli urged a return to the basics. “I think we should utilize the history and physical exam to formulate the diagnosis, then use technology to verify it,” he said.

“History and physical exam are noninvasive and are by far the most cost-effective.”

Overreliance on technology also can threaten doctor-patient relationships, he said. If doctors trade the practical tradition of medicine that includes laying on of hands and sitting at a patient’s bedside for sitting behind a large desk with a computer and a shaft of test results, they run the risk of alienating their patients and missing crucial information that could be gained simply by listening.

“Listening is a form of respect,” he said, citing Oder’s assertion that “listening is unspoken caring.”

Reliance on lab tests and technology up to this point has been good physical examinations, he said. “We are getting further and further away from our clinical skills.”

Recent studies showed that a significant portion of residents from U.S. medical schools could not perform a complete standardized abdominal exam accurately, he noted. Fewer than half used the traditional four-part approach of inspection, palpation, percussion and auscultation — visually observing, feeling, causing vibrations to produce a sound and listening.

Another study of pediatricians from academic institutions found that 54 percent reported making diagnostic errors once or twice a month and 45 percent reported making an error that harmed the patient. “When looking at those errors, the diagnostic error generally was the failure to get information through history, physical examination or adequate chart review,” Zitelli said, adding, “Perhaps Dr. Oder was correct when he said medicine is learned at the bedside and not in the classroom.”

Zitelli noted that medical students typically enjoy bedside rounds and that patients’ families typically enjoy bedside rounds, particularly when they’re encouraged to ask questions and when the visits are conducted in a sensitive and respectful manner.

Students gain expertise and confidence from observation and physical examination skills, as well as by observing both normal and abnormal findings, he said.

Improving med students’ skills

Zitelli said he challenges his students to play a game with themselves, to truly examine the aspect of the physical examination to pay particular attention to for a time. One week they listen, look and hear beyond heart sound week; in which students pay special attention to what they hear when listening to the patient’s heartbeat, the next will be “nasal turbanite” week in which students more closely observe patients’ upper respiratory tracts, for example.

He also challenges them to find something in their examination that the resident or attending physician has missed.

Or, when demonstrating infant physical examinations, Zitelli said he sometimes asks his students to tell him what they see without touching the patient. “When challenged in that way, they are able to do a phenomenal physical examination, just by observation.”

All these techniques can help students’ powers of observation, he said. It’s important when walking into the room from whom their powers of observation are tuned up,” he said.

“I believe that technology provides a magnificent means of verifying diagnosis, but the misuse of technology and our patients and the cascade effect and may interfere with patient-physician relationship and lead to estrangement.”

The history and physical examination remain the most efficient and cost-effective means of making a diagnosis. The history and physical examination re-establishes the needed contact between the physician and the patient, Zitelli said, “not performing the laying on of hands,” he said.

“A good history and physical examination demands that we enhance the powers of observation through teaching and continued lifelong practice. Through teaching we can share the joy of the clinical experience with the students and residents,” he concluded.

“I believe Dr. Oder was correct when he said the whole art of medicine is observation and, as the old motto goes, that to educate the eye to see, the ear to hear and the heart to feel, takes time. And to make a beginning to the right path is all that we can do.”

— Kimberly K. Barlow

Robert Morris joins PSC’s Internet hub

Beyond this, said Wendy Hunton, PSC director of networking, “Robert Morris will also enhance the connectivity of the campus’ current virtual research/education networks, thus enabling better connectivity among campuses and other entities more closely related to the PSC’s mission.”

More information about 3ROX is available at http://www.psc.edu/networking.

JUNE 9, 2011

History & exams should be primary diagnostic tools, med prof says

“I think we should utilize the history and physical exam to formulate the diagnosis, then use technology to verify it.”

— Basil J. Zitelli
The $5.8 million transformation of the former Concordia Club into the O’Hara Student Center is largely complete. The University purchased the three-story, 18,000-square-foot building at 4024 O’Hara Street for $2.1 million in December 2009.

The renovation retained much of the building’s early 20th-century charm, while creating a student lounge, large event spaces and student group offices and meeting rooms.

Kenyon R. Bonner, associate dean of students and director of Student Life, said the building will be used for student organization events and activities as well as student-focused programming.

A dozen student groups will occupy offices on the building’s upper floors this fall, but the Writing Center (above, left) and Math Assistance Center (above, right) already are settling into their new spaces.

The focal point of the student center’s first floor is a large student lounge (left) that features seating areas and several flat panel TVs.

Photos by Kimberly K. Barlow
Many of the club’s ornate features remain in the new student center. At left: Box beam ceilings and wood paneling were retained in the student lounge; the University seal was added as a focal point on the grand staircase.

Below: The renovated second-floor ballroom is the student center’s largest event space. The room opened in April with the annual Blue Stars Red Carpet student awards ceremony as its first event.
Guo-Qiang Bi and former Pitt bioengineering faculty member Henry Zeringue. The team fashioned ring-shaped networks of brain cells that not only were capable of transmitting an electrical impulse, but also remained in a state of persistent activity associated with memory formation, Zeringue said. Unraveling the mechanics of this network communication is key to understanding the cellular and molecular basis of memory creation, he said.

Magnetic resonance images have suggested that working memories are formed when the cortex, or outer layer of the brain, launches into extended electrical activity after the initial stimulus. But the brain's complex structure and the fact that neural networks mean that observing this activity in real time can be nearly impossible, the said.

The Pitt team, however, was able to generate and prolong this excited state in groups of 40-60 brain cells harvested from the hippocampus of embryonic rats. In addition, the researchers were able to produce the networks on glass slides that allowed them to observe the cells' interaction.

To produce the models, adhesive proteins were stamped onto silicon discs, cultured and dried. The brain cells then were fused to the proteins and given time to grow and connect. The researchers disabled the cells' inhibitory response then excited the neurons with an electrical pulse. The resulting burst of network activity was able to be sustained for 12 seconds. Compared to the natural duration of a quarter of a second at most, the model permitted an extensive observation of how the neurons transmitted and held the electrical charge, Zeringue said.

Bioengineering doctoral student Ashwin Vishwanathan conducted the work in Zeringue's lab. The work most recently was reported in the Royal Society of Chemistry (UK) Journal Lab on a Chip.

A fluorescent image of the neural network model developed at Pitt reveals the interconnection (red) between individual brain cells (blue). Adhesive proteins (green) allow the network to be constructed on silicon discs for experimentation.

The resulting burst of network activity was able to be sustained for 12 seconds. Compared to the natural duration of a quarter of a second at most, the model permitted an extensive observation of how the neurons transmitted and held the electrical charge, Zeringue said.

Bioengineering doctoral student Ashwin Vishwanathan conducted the work in Zeringue's lab. The work most recently was reported in the Royal Society of Chemistry (UK) Journal Lab on a Chip.

The Pitt faculty members noted that the Feb. 23 report oversimplified electromagnetic radiation by assuming that cellular phone antennas are simple dipoles in which electrons oscillate the length of a linear antenna, such as a on a radio. Modern cellular antennas are much more complex, consisting of complex, repeating shapes that can change the antenna's electric field pattern. These factors could produce substantially different responses from those reported in JAMA, Kosowsky said.

Pitt writers also faulted the report's data analysis as inconsistent and incomplete. Graphs in the paper that illustrate brain glucose metabolism did not include error bars to indicate the uncertainty associated with errors unrelated to the experiment — on the researchers' measurements. As a result, Kosowsky said, the effect of cellular phones on glucose metabolism appears to be highly significant in the plotted data. Yet the NIDA team stresses in their paper that phone use resulted in only a modest increase in metabolism. In short, it's difficult to determine whether the study's result is significant or marginal, Kosowsky said.

The Pitt faculty members also questioned whether the active phone was positioned closer to the left side of the head on which study participants placed the active phone, nor did the researchers' measurements. In addition to the uncertainty associated with the experiment, the researchers' analyses were inconsistent with their data; that their analysis method was prone to statistical biases, and that they did not use a model that realistically represents cell phone radiation and its propagation into the brain.

Kosowsky said, “The brain is not a symmetrical material that operates in a vacuum. It’s a complicated organ with intricate electrical properties that we think were not adequately considered in the analysis of this experiment, as it was described in JAMA.”

“We want to illuminate some potential shortcomings in a study that has been presented as making a significant contribution to the question of whether cellular phones impact brain function and health.”

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Dr. Shaheen will be responsible for overseeing the invited sessions at the two national APS Conferences. In addition, the publication of three newsletter special issues and a set of communications with the executive members of other APS units on issues including, co-organizing the invited and plenary sessions at various meetings.

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University launches pet food drive

Pitt sponsors the pet food drive include the Office of the Chancellor, the Office of Community Relations, the Department of Public Safety and the University Library System (ULS).

For more information on the drive, call Zupcic at 4-7709; or Animal Friends at 412-947-7032.

Donated canned and dry cat and dog food, kitty litter and dog and cat toys can be dropped off through July at the following on-campus collection sites:

• Cathedral of Learning 1st floor ground floor elevator lobby.
• Craig Hall lobby.
• Hillman Hall 4th floor lobby and all ULS Pittsburgh campus libraries.
• Posvar Hall 5th floor lobby.
• Public Safety Building lobby.
• Scaife Hall 4th floor Terrace Street entrance.
• University Library System main floor information desk lobby.

—Peter Hart

Pitt Police Officer Dave Nantz with Officer Riggs, the Pitt police dog trained to identify explosives. Riggs has been named honorary chair of Pitt’s pet food drive.

The service is expected to start in the next fall and spring terms. 10 second-degree students during the past 15 years provide $10,000 scholarships for Wood Johnson Foundation to the Department of Acute Medicine, was invited to represent the discipline of clinical and translational science in academic institutions, industry and philanthropy, as well as among the broader public and governmental leaders at the local, state and national levels.

David Fitz has been named vice president for Academic Affairs at the Titusville campus, effective July 1. Fitz will be responsible for all aspects of academic affairs, including faculty affairs, curriculum review and academic records and registration. He also will serve as a member of the UPT president’s senior staff.

Fitz comes to Pitt-Titusville after having served as the academic vice president for five years at MacMurray College in Jacksonville, Ill. His administrative credentials at MacMurray include serving as assistant vice president for academic affairs, interim chair of the Department of Education, chair of the Department of History and Political Science and member of the faculty status committee.

Fitz earned his PhD in political science at Pitt.

Pitt-Bradford has named Britt Moore as the new head coach of the men’s basketball team. Moore has spent the last six seasons as an assistant coach at Allghert College in Reading, Pa., including the last two as associate head coach.

Moore helped guide the Albright Lions to a 99-57 record, posting 15 or more victories in five of his six seasons as a coach.

The team won the 2010 Middle Atlantic Commonwealth Conference championship.

UPMC signs medical services pact in China

Shanghai, said this is the first of what UPMC hopes will be many agreements to provide medical services throughout Asia.

“UPMC’s reputation for clinical excellence is attracting partners like KingMed. At the same time, by leveraging our clinical successes in western Pennsylvania,” UPMC is able to generate revenue that supports jobs and world-class healthcare and research at home,” Tu said.

The collaboration also is expected to include training, for Chinese pathologists in UPMC’s Pittsburgh facilities, as well as joint academic meetings.
HSLS to serve as regional medical library

The Health Sciences Library System (HSLS) has been awarded a five-year contract from the National Library of Medicine to serve as the regional medical library (RML) for the Middle Atlantic region of the National Network of Libraries of Medicine (NN/LM).

The Middle Atlantic region includes the states of Delaware, New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania.

HSLS is one of eight institutions nationally serving as regional medical libraries contracted by the National Library of Medicine. HSLS faculty and staff will work to promote access to health sciences information by network intermediaries, including health sciences librarians, health care providers, public health professionals, public librarians, educators, community organizations, community colleges, health advocacy groups, faith-based organizations and self-help groups.

The eight RMLs and the NN/LM member network support the National Library of Medicine’s outreach efforts to health professionals and consumers to increase awareness, facilitate access and provide training in the many web-based information services, such as MEDLINE/PubMed, MedlinePlus and Clinical Trials.gov.

Since its authorization by Congress in 1965, the NN/LM mission is to advance the progress of medicine and improve public health by providing health professionals and the public with equal access to biomedical information. The goals of the 2011-16 contracts are: to develop collaborations among network members and other organizations to improve access to biomedical information resources throughout the nation; to develop, promote and improve electronic access to health information by network members; health professionals and organizations providing health information to the public; and to promote awareness of access to and use of biomedical information resources for health professionals and the public, with a particular emphasis on contributions to Healthy People 2020, an effort to identify nationwide health improvement priorities.
Thursday 9
Sr. V.C's Research Seminar
"Inorganic Chemistry in Cancer Diagnosis & Treatment," Stephen Lippard, Scaife aud. 5/6, noon
Provoost's Inaugural Lecture
"A Life in Transplantation," Ron Shapiro, medicine; Scaife lecture rm. 6, 4:30 pm
Office of the Provost/Academic Career Development Postdoc Data & Dine Symposium
"The Postdoctoral Experience: Expanding Scientific Horizons," D. Lansing Taylor, WPU Assembly Room & Ballrum, 5-9 pm
HSLS Lunch With a Librarian
Monday 13
EOH Seminar
"Immigration & Health: Can They Co-Exist?" Marc Schenker, UC-Davis; 560 Bridgeside Point, noon (www.eoh.pitt.edu)
Tuesday 14
Education & Law Event
"14th Annual Samuel Francis School Law Symposium & Special Education Workshop," WPU Assembly Room, 8-10 am-1:30 pm (registration: 7/30 am; RSVP to trn@pitt.edu or 8-1207)
Office of Research/NCREA Workshop
"Managing Interactions & Potential Conflicts With University Spin-offs & Other Small Businesses," S210 Starzl BST, 11:30 am-1:30 pm
Molecular Medicine Research Seminar
"Homeostatic Mechanisms Controlling Adrenergic Receptor Function," Manojkumar Puthenveedu, Children's Hospital Rm. 5th fl., noon

Friday 10
Sr. V.C's Research Seminar
"Direct Observations of Protein Motions During Biologically Relevant Time Scales Using Atomically Detailed Simulations," Lillian Chong; Scaife aud. 6, noon
Monday 13
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"Immigration & Health: Can They Co-Exist?" Marc Schenker, UC-Davis; 560 Bridgeside Point, noon (www.eoh.pitt.edu)
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Wednesday 15
Orthopaedic Surgery Grand Rounds
Kraig Graham, Montefiore 7th fl. LHAS aud., 7 am
Clinical Oncology & Hematology Grand Rounds
"Development of Immunomodulating Agents in Chronic Lymphocytic Leukemia," Asher Channon-Khan, UPMC Cancer Pavilion Herberman Conf. Ctr. 2nd fl. aud., 8 am
Pathology Research Seminar
Hepatocytes Have 2 Different Kinds of Cell Cycles," Joseph Locker, Albert Einstein College of Medicine; 1104 Scaife, noon (6-1000)
Senate Council Mtg.
2700 Posvar, 9 pm

Thursday 16
HSLS Workshop
"Advanced PowerPoint for Presentations," Julia Janicki; Falk Library classroom 2, 9-30-11 am

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HSLS Lunch With a Librarian