Graduation ceremonies scheduled

Schools, colleges plan separate events

BY RICHARD VIEILLEUX

UConn officials are putting the finishing touches on arrangements for Commencement weekend May 10-11, when 11 of the University’s 14 schools and colleges will celebrate the graduation of students in the Class of 2008. The three other schools – law, medicine, and dental medicine – will celebrate their students’ achievements May 18.

This year, nearly 7,000 students will receive associate’s, bachelor’s, master’s, doctoral, juris doctor, dental, or medical degrees during the events, the first time the University has held separate ceremonies for all the schools and colleges. Additionally, at 3 p.m. on May 10, the Army and Air Force ROTC programs will hold commissioning ceremonies.

“The schools – education, fine arts, and pharmacy – agreed to present with individual ceremonies last year, and all three thought it was a success,” says Michael Darre, chair of the Commencement Committee and University Marshal. “So this year we extended the idea across the board. Our student population has outgrown the dual ceremonies we’ve held in Gampel Pavilion in the past, and holding individual ceremonies in different locations has been successful at a number of other universities. It’s much more intimate, especially for the smaller schools."

Only the graduate ceremony, which will be held at 2 p.m. on Saturday, May 10 in Gampel Pavilion, will remain the same, although the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences’ (CLAS) Commencement, which takes place at Gampel Pavilion at 4 p.m. May 11, will closely resemble those of previous years. CLAS is the largest of the University’s schools and colleges.

Graduating students will bear from a wide range of speakers, including a legislator, an engineer, a pharmacist, an artist, a business executive, and a judge.

The master’s and doctoral students will be addressed by Garry Wills, an author and business executive, and a judge. Wills will receive an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree. Gladstein, retired chief operating officer of Soros Fund Management, currently serves on the boards of several leading global companies and a number of high-profile hedge funds. He has been a member of the University of Connecticut Foundation Board of Directors since 1998.

With gifts made independently and through the Marsha Lilien Gladstein Foundation, Gladstein has supported human rights, Hillel, the UConn Health Center, and the School of Business at UConn.

Also during the ceremony, Charlotte Bunch, a women’s and human rights activist, author, and organizer for 40 years, will receive an honorary Doctor of Laws. Bunch, who played on UConn’s undefeated and national champion 1995 women’s basketball team and is a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of CLAS, Lobo also won a gold medal in the 1996 Olympics, and played for three Women’s National Basketball Association (WNBA) teams. She is currently a women’s basketball analyst for CBS and ESPN.

Other ceremonies and speakers include:
- Saturday, May 10, at 9 a.m. in Rome Ballroom: School of Pharmacy (D.Pharm.). About 100 Doctor of Pharmacy graduates will be addressed by Gerald Gianutsos, an associate professor of pharmacology at UConn, coordinator of the pharmacology/toxology graduate program, and director of the pharmacy honors program. Gianutsos was named speaker by virtue of being elected Teacher of the Year by the graduating class.
- Saturday, May 10, at 9 a.m. in Rome Ballroom: School of Dental Medicine (DMD). About 100 students will receive their doctoral degree.
- Monday, May 12, at 11 a.m. in Gampel Pavilion: School of Medicine (MD). About 100 students will be addressed by Gerald Gianutsos, an associate professor of pharmacology at UConn, coordinator of the pharmacology/toxology graduate program, and director of the pharmacy honors program. Gianutsos was named speaker by virtue of being elected Teacher of the Year by the graduating class.
- Friday, May 9, at 4 p.m. in Gampel Pavilion: School of Architecture (B.Arch., M.Arch.). About 100 students will be addressed by Michael Monfredi, chair of the Architecture Department.
- Saturday, May 10, at 9 a.m. in Rome Ballroom: School of Business (B.S., M.B.A.). About 100 students will be addressed by Kathy Lobo, chair of the Business Administration Department.
- Saturday, May 10, at 9 a.m. in Gampel Pavilion: School of Public Health (B.S., M.P.H.). About 100 students will be addressed by Michael Monfredi, chair of the Architecture Department.

Enhancement of summer sessions recommended

BY RICHARD VIEILLEUX

A faculty oversight committee that studied UConn’s summer and intersession programs says the University should take advantage of several opportunities to enhance the programs, and offered a series of recommendations to do just that.

The sessions, the committee said, offer undergraduates a chance to improve their chances of graduating in four years and to enrich their learning by taking courses that may not be available or practical during the regular academic year.

The group said focusing on the special sessions gives UConn an opportunity to make the Storrs and regional campuses busier and more vibrant during periods that are traditionally quiet.

The committee also recommended some adjustments to the University calendar to accommodate intersession schedules.

“There are three primary findings,” says Veronica Makowsky, vice provost for undergraduate education and regional campus administration, and chair of the oversight committee. “One, we have to use our resources wisely, maximize the efficient use of our campuses. Secondly, for some students, summer and intersession programs are an opportunity to catch up and finish in four years, but others would like to carry double majors or study abroad and still complete their degree in four years. A third issue is enrichment.”

Provost Peter J. Nicholls believes the recommendations are feasible.

“Our students need robust summer and intersession programs in order to graduate in a timely manner, and to explore new or continuing interests through innovative and challenging courses,” he says.

Nicholls also assigned three administrators – Steve Jarvi, assistant vice provost for student success, Registrar Jeffrey von Munkwitz-Smith, and Margaret Lamb, director of the Individualized Major Program – to implement the recommendations and report on progress each semester.

Nearly 3,500 students enrolled in Summer Session I last year, down from more than 3,900 in 2004 but a slight rebound from a low of less than 3,400 in 2006.

“The essential idea is to get more students engaged in summer school and intersession,”
and Hartford and Bridgeport had from voter rolls. Properly remove deceased voters and town clerks had failed to out whether local registrars of vot- ers and town clerks had failed to out whether local registrars of vot- ers and town clerks had failed to out whether local registrars of vot- ers and town clerks had failed to out whether local registrators of voting in Connecticut elections. Their investigative story, written by Dufresne, ran on the front page of The Hartford Courant on April 20, spurring a press conference the next day at the state Capitol, as election officials began investigating the situation. Secretary of State Susan Bysie- wicz called on the State Elections Enforcement Commission to find out whether local registrators of vot- ers and town clerks had failed to properly remove deceased voters from voter rolls. According to Dufresne and the New Haven led the state with 370 deceased voters registered, and Hartford and Bridgeport had nearly 300 each. But the state’s big cities weren’t the only places the dead could vote: Groton had 92 dead people registered, Brooklyn had 110, and Windsor had 128. More than 300 of the dead who were registered have been counted as voting in recent elections. In some cases, people had never been recorded as voting in a town until after they died, the investiga- tion showed. Students who led the reporting were Greg Bordonaro, a senior; Melissa Bruen, a senior who is editor-in-chief of The Daily Cam- pus; Shawn Beals, CLAS ’07, who graduated with a journalism major in December and now works for the Courant; Katie Jordan, a junior, and James White, a senior. Also reporting were students Nicole Bozuto, Beth Wexalo, Ryan Murphy, Brock Wehry, Ryan O’Connor, and Paige Billings. Dufresne marshaled and ana- lyzed state data on more than 2 million eligible voters, starting last summer, comparing it with lists of dead people in public records in the state Department of Public Health and the Social Security Administration. Students fanned out to cities and towns around the state last fall to check the records and interview registrars. “We never assumed that the data was correct,” says Dufresne. He attributes the dead voter registrations to benign errors, in- cluding clerical errors, rather than corruption. Town registrators of vot- ers do not get official notification of deaths, and the state voter data are not always correct, he notes. To read the story, go to www.courant.com/news/ politics/bc-deadvoters0420.ar- ttpz20067169723.story

Correction

Donations in memory of Frank Labato, former director of environmental health and safety, may be made to the American Cancer Society, P.O. Box 1004, Meriden, CT 06405-1004. The Audubon Society, who traveled to Steers to catch a glimpse. “They truly are gorgeous birds,” says Chris Elphick, an assistant professor of ecology and evolutionary biology who specializes in ornithology and conservation biology. “This was very rare.” Once all last year’s fruit was gone from the trees outside CLAS, the Bohemian relocated to another crab apple tree outside the Goodyear building of the Northwest residence halls, where it was joined by a new flock of migrants. To date, as many as nine Bohemian Waxwings have been sighted throughout campus. Elphick said it was most likely an inadequate food supply and insufficient breeding habitats that caused the birds to migrate so far south.

Journalism project reveals ‘dead voters’ By Cindy Weiss

Journalism students led by Marcel Dufresne, an associate pro- fessor of journalism who teaches investigative reporting, found that hundreds of dead people are counted as voting in Connecticut elections. Their investigative story, written by Dufresne, ran on the front page of The Hartford Courant on April 20, spurring a press conference the next day at the state Capitol, as election officials began investigating the situation. Secretary of State Susan Bysiewicz called on the State Elections Enforcement Commission to find out whether local registrators of voters and town clerks had failed to properly remove deceased voters from voter rolls. According to Dufresne and the New Haven led the state with 370 deceased voters registered, and Hartford and Bridgeport had nearly 300 each. But the state’s big cities weren’t the only places the dead could vote: Groton had 92 dead people registered, Brooklyn had 110, and Windsor had 128. More than 300 of the dead who were registered have been counted as voting in recent elections. In some cases, people had never been recorded as voting in a town until after they died, the investigation showed. Students who led the reporting were Greg Bordonaro, a senior; Melissa Bruen, a senior who is editor-in-chief of The Daily Campus; Shawn Beals, CLAS ’07, who graduated with a journalism major in December and now works for the Courant; Katie Jordan, a junior, and James White, a senior. Also reporting were students Nicole Bozuto, Beth Wexalo, Ryan Murphy, Brock Wehry, Ryan O’Connor, and Paige Billings. Dufresne marshaled and analyzed state data on more than 2 million eligible voters, starting last summer, comparing it with lists of dead people in public records in the state Department of Public Health and the Social Security Administration. Students fanned out to cities and towns around the state last fall to check the records and interview registrars. “We never assumed that the data was correct,” says Dufresne. He attributes the dead voter registrations to benign errors, including clerical errors, rather than corruption. Town registrators of voters do not get official notification of deaths, and the state voter data are not always correct, he notes. To read the story, go to www.courant.com/news/politics/bc-deadvoters0420.arttpz20067169723.story

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Birds rare to state sighted on campus

By Ashley Sporleder, CLAS ’08

During the past couple of weeks, small groups of visitors have been seen walking along North Eagleville Road, Broo- nells in hand, their eyes focused on the trees. They weren’t tourists or pros- pective students. Instead, they were bird watch- ers and they had one goal: to catch a glimpse of the rare Boh- emian Waxwing that a gradu- ate student had spotted perched among a group of more common Cedar Waxwings in a crab apple tree outside the CLAS building. The sighting was only the third time in the past 15 years that a Bohemian Waxwing – the rarest of the species named for their red wing tips resembling drops of sealing wax – is known to have made the long journey from the northern forests of Canada to settle in Connecticut. While groups of Cedar Wax- wings, which have a distinct brownish, gray color and yellow underbellies, are common during winter and occasionally summer too, the Bohemian is not nor- mally seen in New England. Larger in size, and character- ized by a deep gray hue, whitewings, reddish under-tail, and a more wary appearance, the Bohemian Waxwing’s arrival provided a treat for birdwatchers from across the state, including the director of the Connecticut Audubon Society, who traveled to Steers to catch a glimpse. “They truly are gorgeous birds,” says Chris Elphick, an assistant professor of ecology and evolutionary biology who specializes in ornithology and conservation biology. “This was very rare.” Once all last year’s fruit was gone from the trees outside CLAS, the Bohemian relocated to another crab apple tree outside the Goodyear building of the Northwest residence halls, where it was joined by a new flock of migrants. To date, as many as nine Bohemian Waxwings have been sighted throughout campus. Elphick said it was most likely an inadequate food supply and insufficient breeding habitats that caused the birds to migrate so far south.

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University recertified by NCAA

The University of Connecticut has been recertified by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), affirmation that the institution operates its athletics program in conformity with the operating principles adopted by Division I membership.

Similar to the University’s reaccreditation process for its academic operations, the NCAA certification is conducted on a 10-year cycle. UConn last went through the process and was certified in 1998. Also similar to reaccreditation, the certification follows a comprehensive, year-long self-study of the athletics division’s operations, a site visit by a peer review team, an NCAA certification committee’s review of the self-study, and a report by the peer review team.

The self-study includes a review of governance and commitment to rules compliance; academic integrity; equity; student-athlete well-being.

Ronald Schurin, an associate professor of political science and former executive assistant to then-President Michael Meany, who chaired the self-study committee, says the division – and the University – did well virtually across the board.

“We’re blessed,” says Schurin, “in that we’ve been successful on the field while operating a program that is integrated into the mission of the University.”

He says the site visit team and the NCAA itself praised the academic support provided through the Counseling Program for Intercollegiate Athletics (CPIA). “In fact, the NCAA asked if they could share with other schools the report on the CPIAs activities,” he says.

He notes that the self-study team found the institution goes the extra mile in assuring that student-athletes receive appropriate educational support. “We’re very mindful that the emphasis in the phrase ‘student-athlete’ is on the word ‘student’,” he says.

“We’re also doing well with equity, where we’ve been a national leader in promoting access,” Schurin adds.

Schurin says the self-study committee and several sub-committees, comprising about 60 volunteers, also found conformity to NCAA rules and regulations “in every important area.”

The University has 650 student-athletes participating in 24 intercollegiate sports at the Division I level, the highest level of athletics in the collegiate ranks.

“I’m pleased to learn that the University has been certified by the NCAA following a full review of our athletics program, as part of the NCAA’s ongoing, mandatory, certification process,” says University President Michael J. Hogan. “I’m very proud of our athletics administration and coaches, our student-athletes, and the many staff members who do so well representing UConn in intercollegiate athletic competition.

The NCAA certification is a testament to the quality of our program and the principles we seek to cultivate.

Jeffrey Hathaway, director of athletics, says the NCAA certification is a testimony to the commitment of our entire University. He notes that many athletics division staff members, other UConn staff and faculty members, campus administrators, and friends of the University participated in the recertification process.

“The operating principles the NCAA requires each member school to follow are a priority to our Division I program and all who are part of the UConn community,” he says.

“I also wish to recognize our student-athletes and coaches who represent the University each and every day,” Hathaway adds. “The passion and dedication of all these involved have allowed us to be successful academically, athletically, and in the development of outstanding leaders in our communities.”

New graduate course on teaching offered

By Ashley Sorender, CLAS ’08

The Institute for Teaching & Learning (ITL) and the Graduate School are offering a new Summer Institute College Instruction that will run from May 12 through 23.

This Institute is the graded core course for the graduate certificate program in college instruction that is intended to boost the teaching skills of graduate students and teaching assistants and provide them with a significant teaching credential.

The course carries three credits and is intended primarily for graduate students who are in the early stages of their Ph.D. program and who intend to take other courses to complete the nine-credit certificate in college instruction.

The Institute will consist of 10 days of morning and afternoon classes, seminars, and workshops that will focus on such topics as syllabus creation, good pedagogical use of PowerPoint, and engagement in the classroom.

It is designed to enable graduate students to develop instructional material using the best practices in course design; integrate educational technology into courses, deliver effective classroom instruction; create assessment and evaluation methodologies that match learning and instructional objectives; and document course and teaching achievements.

“Many graduate students plan for a career that involves teaching,” says Keith Barker, director of the Institute for Teaching and Learning. “This Summer Institute, as part of the graduate certificate, will for the first time provide the opportunity for any graduate student to obtain a credential in teaching.”

The Institute has a capacity of 20 students. To apply, students must complete and submit an application form, along with a current resume and a one-page statement that addresses their career goals, specific teaching interests, why they wish to participate in the Institute, and how they anticipate the learning will contribute to their program’s courses.

Candidates must also solicit one confidential letter of recommendation from a UConn faculty member.

Applications are due by 4:30 p.m. on Friday, May 2. For more information, go to web.uconn.edu/itl/SummerInstitute.html.

Neuroscience researcher working toward a cure for MS

by Chris DeFrancesco

If finding a way to grow nerve cells’ protective coating were the only challenge, multiple sclerosis would be a more manageable disease.

But researchers at the UConn Health Center say MS also takes it toll on axons, the nerve cell extensions that carry nerve impulses. The devastation hinders the ability of neurons to communicate with each other, resulting in debilitating neurodegenerative disease.

“The long-term disability of MS is caused by degeneration of axons that have lost their myelin sheath – their protective coating,” says Rashmi Bansal, an associate professor of neuroscience. Bansal recently won a grant from the National Multiple Sclerosis Society.

Bansal’s previous research found that myelin disease such as MS is caused by degeneration of oligodendrocytes, while one response was positive, the other was a negative pathological one. So that raises the question of what the fibrinolase growth factor is doing. Is it good or bad to have a lot of it in MS lesions?”

Bansal’s grant, more than $600,000 over three years, is for the next step. She and her research team, including postdoctoral fellow Miki Furusato, are working with mice that are missing the key genes that code for certain proteins in the cell. In MS, the disease is caused by a lack of the protein called myelin sheath – this protective coating – and the loss of neurons.

“In this grant we have proposed experiments that will allow us to address these questions.”

In addition to her own research projects, Bansal is carrying on the work of professor of neuroscience Steven Pfeiffer, a colleague who died last year. During his 38 years at the Health Center, Pfeiffer developed an understanding of the molecular mechanism of myelination and the pathology of human disease such as MS.

“My goal – like many research- ers – is that somehow in our lifetime we’ll be able to see our research from the bench get to the clinics and help the people with multiple sclerosis,” Bansal says. “That’s the main ambition and dream for us.”

Rashmi Bansal, associate professor of neuroscience at the Health Center, continues her research with a grant from the National Multiple Sclerosis Society.

UConn is embracing modern scientific advances such as proteomic analysis, an approach aimed at discovering new proteins. Bansal and her team, including postdoctoral fellow Akahiro Ishii, will continue the pursuit of the proteins in human myelin, which was a major focus of Pfeiffer’s research.

“Molecular composition is well known to have some major proteins,” Bansal says. “This proteomic analysis will allow us to determine the minor components – and minor doesn’t mean unimportant: the smallest components could be the ones that are the most important. This study will provide us with several novel targets to go after and will form a valuable foundation for understanding the molecular mechanism of myelination and the pathogenesis of human disease such as MS.”

Bansal’s grant was one of two other grants since 1999, and she has won funding from the National Institutes of Health over that same period. Her goal – like many researchers – is that somehow in our lifetime we’ll be able to see our research from the bench get into the clinics and help the people with multiple sclerosis, Bansal says. “That’s the main ambition and dream for us.”
Female faculty in math, science find support in group

by Chad Weiss

Its acronym may sound frivolous – WIMSE – but whynot is the name, asit describes the work of Women in Math, Science, andEngineering.

This ad hoc group of female faculty and students who discuss issues such as hiring and retaining women in technical disciplines, achieving equity in resources and treatment, and "making sure these issues stay in the forefront of people's attention," says Amy Howell, professor of chemistry. Howell, along with Maria Rubio, associate professor of physiology and neurobiology, have shepherded the group for the past five years or so, but its membership is not limited to women in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

A fluctuating group of up to 25 female faculty members, the CLAS pharmacy, engineering, and agriculture get together on the Storrs campus two or three times a semester for a WIMSE lunch. WIMSE's larger mailing list of 130 keeps the lines of communications open among women at the Storrs and regional campuses and the Health Center who are in the STEM disciplines – science, technology, engineering, and math.

"These are disciplines where women remain underrepresented," notes Howell.

The dearth of women in the sciences is a national problem that is getting attention. The American Chemical Society's magazine, Chemical & Engineering News, recently reported on the U.S. House of Representatives diversity caucus's public meeting to map an agenda for getting more women and minorities into the sciences.

One panelist at the meeting was quoted as saying that female universities have not progressed very far, despite an increase in the number of Ph.D.s that academia produces. WIMSE was formed in part to address the needs of women who are already at UConn, to lend support and keep women from feeling isolated in their disciplines.

The group grew out of a National Sciences Foundation grant proposal six years ago to find ways to improve the campus environment for women in STEM disciplines. UConn did not receive the grant, but CLAS dean Ross MacKinnon provided support to get WIMSE started.

"I had never thought there could be a group like this," says Rubio, who earned her Ph.D. and MD at the University of Alicante in Spain and worked at the National Institutes of Health and the Max Planck Institute of Experimental Medicine in Goettingen, Germany, before joining UConn.

When she arrived at the University, her department was located in an annex on the back side of Horsebarn Hill, far from other departments and other female chemists. It has since moved to the Pharmacy/Biology and Torrey Life Sciences buildings.

WIMSE provided "a way to meet more of the University," she says. In WIMSE, women can meet colleagues at all stages of their career and find support and research collaborators.

"We want to be a resource for people trying to navigate their way through tenure," says Howell.

Last year, WIMSE sponsored an all-day career forum for female faculty, postdoctoral researchers, and graduate students in STEM disciplines. More than 80 attended.

It was clear there's a need for training in successful career development and in how to negotiate, Howell says, as well as for interaction among people with common interests.

Although the number of female graduate students in the sciences appears to be increasing, members of the group say, many of those seeking higher degrees plan to work in corporate labs or non-academic settings.

Howell says young women have a hard time seeing how they could juggle the demands of family life with the demands of getting tenure. Rubio says she sees more female graduate students than male switch from a Ph.D. program to a master's. "I don't think it's bad for women in science to be aware of these issues," she says.

"You get the sense people recognize that this cohort of 130 women is an important group," says Howell, "and that there is still work to be done."

One of the perennial issues that members of the group raise is the need for year-round child care close to campus. Infant care and day care are thin on the ground the summer – prime time for research – are especially important, they say.

Another important issue is the need for mentors for graduate students and postdoctoral scholars.

WIMSE will probably remain an ad hoc forum rather than a structured organization, says Howell, because its members are already so busy. Even so, his voice is being heard. President Hogan recently met with the women and asked them to identify their priorities.

The consensus, says Howell, is that the top priority is the recruitment of women in STEM disciplines.

Commencement ceremonies continued from page 1

Saturday, May 10, at 10:30 a.m. in Jorgensen: School of Social Work. Nearly 150 students will receive master's degrees. They will be addressed by Dr. Gary Bader, past president of the National Association of Social Work (NASW), and chair of the National Social Work Foundation. Bader, Bailey, who was named national and Massachusetts Social Worker of the Year in 1998, is an associate professor at the Simmons College Graduate School of Social Work.

Saturday, May 10, at 5 p.m. in Jorgensen: School of Fine Arts. Joseph Volpe, the director of the CTCLAS, will address nearly 200 students who are completing the drug degree program in the School of Law.

Saturday, May 11, at 9 a.m. in Gampel Pavilion: College of Agriculture & Natural Resources and Ratcliffe Hicks School of Agriculture. Roger Newton, a UConn graduate best known as co-discoverer of the cholesterol-reducing drug Lipitor, will address nearly 400 bachelor's and associate's degree candidates. Newton is former senior vice president of Pfizer Global Research and Development and chairman of the atherosclerotic drug discovery team at Warner-Lambert/Pfizer (now Pfizer). He is now managing director of Esperance BioVentures and an adjunct associate professor of pharmacology at the University of Michigan. Newton earned a master's degree in nutritional biochemistry from UConn's College of Agriculture and Natural Resources in 1974.

Saturday, May 11, at 12:30 p.m., in Rome Ballroom: Center for Continuing Studies. More than 350 students who have earned the Bachelor of General Studies degree will be addressed by Valerie Lewis, former Connecticut Commissioner of Higher Education. Lewis worked for many years in the Department of Higher Education, including more than seven years as commissioner. In 2003, she was elected national president of the State Higher Education Chief Executive Officers organization.

Sunday, May 11, at 2:30 p.m., in Rome Ballroom: Center for Continuing Studies. More than 140 students earning degrees in Nursing will address the advisory board of the School of Engineering.

Sunday, May 11, at 4 p.m., in Jorgensen: School of Engineering. More than 50 engineering undergraduates will receive their degrees. The speakers will be Kevin Bouley, president and CEO of Aviation Industries of Holland, a global technology and IP advisory research firm, and Paul Adams, vice president of engineering at Pratt & Whitney. Bouley, a 1980 graduate of UConn's Business School, joined Nerac in 1981 and acquired the company in 1999.
Online global component added to insurance law curriculum

BY SCOTT BRIDGMAN

International students have come to Hartford for many years to take courses from among those the UConn Insurance Law Center offers on how insurance works in the United States. Beginning next year, there will be a new course offered online, that will include material taught by professors in China and Italy.

Distance learning has been evolving at the Insurance Law Center for years, but this is the first time UConn law students will be exposed to insurance as it functions in the European Union and China.

The UConn Insurance Law Center is unique in its focus, according to Peter Kochenburger, its executive director. That’s not surprising, given that Connecticut employs by far the highest concentration of insurance workers in the nation. Many of the Center’s students who pursue a master’s degree (L.L.M.) in insurance law are employed in jobs related to the industry.

Kochenburger says the decision to add an international flavor to the curriculum makes sense: "The concept of insurance is universal, although implemented differently around the world. In the United States, for example, each state regulates insurance as it sees fit, but in the European Union, there is significant uniformity across national borders.”

He says the Center will always focus on U.S. law, but is likely to add more comparative courses, since insurance companies often do business around the world, and many students have – or will have – jobs that will require them to know something about international insurance.

Professors Pierpaolo Marano of Italy’s University of Calabria and Richean Li of Beijing’s University of International Business & Economics were his most influential teachers.

"Self-teaching," he adds, “is an important component of online courses.”

International award highlights respiratory therapist’s achievements

BY CHRIS DEFRANCO

Mardi Hayden, a Health Center respiratory therapist, earned national recognition earlier this year, when she was named Cambridge Who’s Who Professional of the Year in the respiratory therapy field.

Hayden last year became a member of the Cambridge Who’s Who Registry, an index of executive, professional, and entrepreneur biographies in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom and Australia. Each year, just two male and two female members in each discipline are named Professional of the Year, based on their accomplishments, academic achievements, leadership and service.

Respiratory therapists make sure patients get the oxygen they need when they have difficulties with breathing, whether the culprit is asthma, bronchitis, emphysema, pneumonia, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, sleep apnea, or a premature infant's underdeveloped lungs.

Central to Hayden’s selection was her 24 years as a certified respiratory therapist and prenatal-pediatric specialist at the Health Center. During that time she has cared for babies with a gestational age of 24 weeks (born 16 weeks premature), adults in their 90s, and patients of all ages in between.

She also won an American Red Cross Heroes of Greater Hartford Award in 2001 as a member of a Neonatal Transport Team that made a three-hour drive during a nor'easter to care for a premature infant in respiratory distress.

"Mardi has the can-do attitude and goes beyond the extra step in giving the best patient care,” says respiratory therapy supervisor Janet Schoeneweit.

Hayden works on the typically busy evening shift. She also has helped train other respiratory therapists over the course of her career.

The Health Center has 22 full-time respiratory therapists and 10 who work on a per diem basis.

“Our respiratory therapists are highly-skilled professionals who have to be able to care for a variety of patients, ranging from neonates to geriatrics,” says Ellen Leone, director of nursing at the Health Center. “They play a critical role on our Neonatal Transport Team and Rapid Response Team.

We simply could not offer these services without them.”

Respiratory therapists deal with all aspects of breathing issues, including life support, and as part of the Rapid Response Team at John Dempsey Hospital, are among the first to assess patients before they need intensive care. In addition, every Neonatal Transport Team has a respiratory therapist.

"Basically, we're the bones of the medical field,” Hayden says. "We see the patients before the doctors do a lot of times. We're there on the front lines.

Respiratory therapists also counsel families of patients who require oxygen at home, including instructing them how to use and clean the equipment. Respiratory therapists may start their day working with babies and end up responding to a call from the emergency room.

"It's changing every day from when I started – the medical equipment has grown by leaps and bounds,” Hayden says. “We're able to maintain and preserve quality of breathing easier now. It changes from day to day, so I never come into work knowing that I'm doing the same thing every day.”

It's that ever-changing dynamic of the field that appeals to Hayden. That, she says, and the sense of accomplishment when she sees a patient recover.
Promotion, tenure recommendations approved

The Board of Trustees approved the following promotion and tenure recommendations at its meeting on April 15.

Promoted to Professor
Amy Rossosia Bagtzoglou
Civs & Environmental Engineering, School of Engineering
Jonathan Bobaljik
Linguistics, College of Liberal Arts & Sciences
Melissa Bray, Educational Psychology, Neag Scho of Education
Robin Cote
Physics, College of Liberal Arts & Sciences
Antonio Garindia
Pathobiology & Veterinary Science, College of Agriculture & Natural Resources
Jean Givens
Art & Art History, School of Fine Arts
John Harding
Finance, School of Business
Alex Kornver
Physics, College of Liberal Arts & Sciences
Evan Markus
Psychology, College of Liberal Arts & Sciences
Nancy Rodriguez
Nutritional Sciences, College of Agriculture & Natural Resources
Carolyn Tesche
Molecular & Cell Biology, College of Liberal Arts & Sciences
Stephen Trumbo
Ecology & Evolutionary Biology, College of Liberal Arts & Sciences
Glenn Warner
Natural Resources Management & Engineering, College of Agriculture & Natural Resources
C. Michael White
Pharmacy Practice, School of Pharmacy
Quing Zhu
Electrical & Computer Engineering, School of Engineering
Promoted to Professor and Granted Tenure
Bartly Berger
School of Law
Olu Ogsibue
Art & Art History, School of Fine Arts
Granted Tenure as Professor
Craig Denegar
Physical Therapy, Neag School of Education
Vasli Kharchenko
Physics, College of Liberal Arts & Sciences
Promoted to Associate Professor and Granted Tenure
Thomas Blum
Physics, College of Liberal Arts & Sciences
Jennifer Brunnering
Kinesiology, Neag School of Education
John Chandy
Electrical & Computer Engineering, School of Engineering
Robert Colbert
Educational Psychology, Neag School of Education
Joanne Conover
Physiology & Neurobiology, College of Liberal Arts & Sciences
Jun-Hong Cui
Computer Science & Engineering, School of Engineering
Dharmika Dharmapala
Economics, College of Liberal Arts & Sciences
Gabriel Fentaey
Chemistry, College of Liberal Arts & Sciences
Wendy Glenn
Curriculum & Instruction, Neag School of Education
Swapan Ghokhale
Computer Science & Engineering, School of Engineering
Joery Graf
Molecular & Cell Biology, College of Liberal Arts & Sciences
Jeffrey Kinsella-Shaw
Physical Therapy, Neag School of Education
Gregory Kneidel
English, College of Liberal Arts & Sciences
Kangho Lee
Music, School of Fine Arts
James Magnuson
Psychology, College of Liberal Arts & Sciences
Ivan Mandou
Computer Science & Engineering, School of Engineering
Dorothy (Betz) McCoach
Educational Psychology, Neag School of Education
Monika Mc Dermott
Political Science, College of Liberal Arts & Sciences
Laurent Michel
Computer Science & Engineering, School of Engineering
Kristine Nowak
Communication Sciences, College of Liberal Arts & Sciences
Mark Overmyer-Velazquez
History, College of Liberal Arts & Sciences
Theodore Rassussen
Animal Science, College of Agriculture & Natural Resources
Michael Rentro
Mechanical Engineering, School of Engineering
Zeki Simsek
Management, School of Business
Jong Tang
Mechanical Engineering, School of Engineering
Kimberli Treadwell
Psychology, College of Liberal Arts & Sciences
Guiling Wang
Civil & Environmental Engineering, School of Engineering
Shih-Lun (Alex) Wang
Communication Sciences, College of Liberal Arts & Sciences
Robert Wyss
Journalism, College of Liberal Arts & Sciences
Susanne Yelin
Physics, College of Liberal Arts & Sciences
Promoted to Associate Clinical Professor
Fei Wang
Pharmacy Practice, School of Pharmacy
Promoted to Senior Extension Educator
Dona Ellis
Plant Science, College of Agriculture & Natural Resources
Promoted to Professor-in-Residence
Timothy Dowding
Operational & Information Management, School of Business
Other Promotions
Jill Livingston
University Assistant Librarian, University Libraries

This list was supplied to the Advance by the Office of the Provost.

Summer session
continued from page 1

Nicholls says, “We need to make more use of our camps during these traditional down times, and students need certain courses to complete degree requirements and finish in four years. So we need to focus our efforts on such offerings.” Several of the recommendations have already been implemented, including advising students who take only 12 credits per semester – and their parents – that the relatively brief intercession or six-week summer courses offer them a chance to make up credits.

Additional recommendations include further aligning summer and intercession courses to students’ wants and needs, offering flexible scheduling, and ensuring a variety of course offerings – especially courses that during the semester create “choke points” or required courses that are currently difficult to obtain.

Nicholls says that establishing a desirable menu of summer courses, with small classes and interesting subjects, will boost enrollment. That, in turn, could help finance other recommendations tied to making the summer experience more enjoyable, he says.

Those recommendations – increased transportation options, plentiful parking, student programming at all campuses that continues into the evening, increased recreational activities, and adding tables, benches, and outdoor coffee bars – would all require funding.

“Building the size of our summer and intercession programs will provide the needed revenue to enable many of the improvements we envisage for our undergraduate student experience,” he says.

Recognizing challenges presented by the calendar – Summer Session I begins the day after undergraduate commencement, Summer Session II ends only a week before the start of fall semester – the task force also suggested experimenting with a five-week Summer Session II, which would allow professors and facilities personnel more time to prepare for the fall semester.
May Babcock

BY SHERRY FISHER
Her first drawing class at UConn clinched May Babcock’s decision to major in art.

“It was my first studio class, and I really loved it,” says Babcock, who will graduate in May with a bachelor of fine arts degree in painting and printmaking. “The professors were exciting; the students were excited. We were all into it, and doing well.”

So she put her plans aside to major in art history, opting instead to take that as a minor. “Right now, I’m taking 18th-century European art, and I’m really enjoying it,” she says.

Babcock says that landscapes and figures are the subjects of her paintings and prints. “I work a lot from observation,” she says. She is currently creating monotypes and lithographs.

Her studio classes are time-consuming, but that hasn’t prevented her from earning a 3.9 grade point average, she says. “I try to do my best in each class I take.”

She says the studio classes take a lot of extra energy, “but I love the end product.” Babcock has enjoyed, and been inspired by, students and professors in the art department’s print shop. “Everybody there works really hard and makes great work,” she says.

She notes that the art program offers opportunities to explore different areas in the field. “There is a lot of intermingling among the concentrations, like design, illustration, and photography. You don’t have to stick strictly to one. You also get to know other students and see each other’s work.”

Babcock says her professors were “very encouraging, but sometimes very hard on you. A month later, you realize that their criticism made you work even harder to do the best you can do”.

Babcock, who plans to attend graduate school at Louisiana State University, says her focus in both painting and printmaking gave her an edge when applying to grad school. “They saw me as well rounded,” she says.

Her future plans include teaching at the college level and continuing to exhibit her work.

Colleen Deasy

BY SHERRY FISHER
Deasy, a human development and family studies and English double major in early childhood and helping others has always been his dream.

“When and thanks to UConn, my dream came true,” says Dessalines, who is graduating in May with a master’s degree in nutritional sciences. Dessalines grew up in Haiti. “At UConn, I’ve had the opportunity to work in a department that is doing cutting-edge research,” he says. “I’m lucky to have Professor Rafael Perez-Escamilia as my major advisor and mentor. A student couldn’t ask for anyone better to work with.”

Dessalines’ research focus is on vitamin A, found in sweet potatoes, which make up an important part of the daily diet of poor Haitian families. “Vitamin A deficiency is a real problem in Haiti,” he says.

He hopes that the International Potato Center will introduce new varieties of sweet potatoes, developed in Peru, to Haiti. “These sweet potatoes, called orange fleshed, have much more vitamin A than the white fleshed sweet potatoes that are grown locally,” Dessalines says. “If they were grown in Haiti, they could help enormously in alleviating vitamin A deficiency and also help farmers develop sustainable agriculture, where they won’t have to worry about vitamin A supplements.”

He is working through a project funded by the International Center for Tropical Agriculture.

Dessalines went to Haiti and conducted four studies assessing the importance of sweet potatoes in the diet and nutrition of the community and the severity of food insecurity.

“My partial report to the international potato center in Peru revealed that there is definitely a need for these orange fleshed sweet potatoes,” he says. They will soon be grown and propagated there.

Dessalines says he values his experiences at UConn and would recommend the institution to others “in a heartbeat.”

His future plans include pursuing a Ph.D. in public health and continuing to help alleviate food insecurity in his native country.

Zachary Penwell

BY SHERRY FISHER
Penwell, who will graduate in May with a bachelor’s degree in exercise science, had been searching for a program that would prepare him for a career as a strength and conditioning coach.

“UConn had it all,” he says.

Penwell, who is married and has two children, came to UConn after serving more than six years in the Air Force, including deployments to Kuwait, Korea, Afghanistan, and Iraq. Before that, he studied for two years at Western Washington University.

“I knew that at some point I wanted to finish and get my degree,” he says. “When I started looking at schools, three criteria had to be met. I wanted to work with high caliber athletes, become involved in research, and work with professors who are well known in the field. Nowhere else came close to what I found here at UConn.”

Penwell says he is learning from “the best in the field,” specifically mentioning William Kramer, professor of kinesiology, and Ge-rard Martin, the head strength and conditioning coach in the Division of Athletics.

“The resources are incredible, on both the research side and the applied side,” says Penwell, who has worked on research projects including one about resistance training and its effect on bone mineral density. He also currently works with the UConn strength and conditioning staff training the baseball team, and assists with men’s and women’s soccer, track and field, ice hockey, and swimming and diving.

“I’ve had great hands-on experience,” he says.

Penwell has decided to pursue a master’s degree in kinesiology at UConn, where he has a graduate assistantship. “I’ll have a couple of teams that I’m directly responsible for,” he says.

His future goal is to work overseas. “I’d like to get a job with a third world country’s Olympic team,” he says. “My wife is a midwife, and we’ve both done medical missions overseas. We want to go somewhere where there’s a real need. I would have my job, and we would also set up a free maternity health care clinic.”

Colleen Deasy, family studies and English

BY CURRAN KENNEDY, CLAS ’08

The debate on how to improve education for the nation’s poor has been going on for decades, but Colleen Deasy is forging ahead with a new campaign, determined to produce results.

Deasy, a human development and family studies and English double major in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, brought Jumpstart, a national organization that pairs college students with preschool children, to the University of Connecticut.

She organized 45 other student volunteers to work with pre-school youngsters from low-income families in Connecticut, helping to prepare the children for elementary school.

“Preschoolers are at a really interesting age and there’s a lot of potential to do something beneficial,” Deasy says. “Studies have shown the importance of early intervention, so we work on language, literacy, problem solving, and social skills. We work with children whose families are living below the poverty line, because studies have shown that these children typically start school behind their more affluent peers in all of those areas.”

After graduating in May, Deasy will continue her education at Boston College Law School, where she plans to get a JD and a joint master’s degree in education.

“I’ve always liked children and what I’m doing is trying to instill my love of reading and writing in these young kids,” she says. “I’d like to represent families with special needs and make changes to the school system so it’s more family-friendly and serves children with special needs better.”

Deasy says UConn’s Office of Community Outreach has been very supportive: “Service is very important to me and I owe a lot of my personal and professional growth to Community Outreach. The staff there inspired me to bring Jumpstart to campus, and through that I’ve learned a lot of valuable skills that have taught me the value of service.”