School reform organization moves to UConn

BY ROBERT FISHER

A nationally recognized school reform organization has moved its headquarters to the Neag School of Education, the latest step in making UConn a prominent center for urban school reform.

ATLAS Learning Communities, which operates in about 60 schools across the nation, joins Neag's Institute for Urban School Improvement, making the Neag School the home of two reform models and organizations working to reform eight of Connecticut's lowest-performing public elementary schools. The coalition, known as CommPACT, not only will tap the expertise of Neag School faculty but will use ideas based on the work of ATLAS and Accelerated Schools, Schwab says.

Across the nation, public schools have
because the ATLAS program is one of the top school reform programs in the country, " says Richard Schwab, dean of the Neag School. "It has proven you can have schools of high achievement regardless of where they are located and regardless of the entry-level skills of students."

The Neag School's role in urban school reform will expand significantly this year, as UConn leads a new coalition of educational organizations working to reform eight of Connecticut's lowest-performing public elementary schools. The coalition, known as CommPACT, not only will tap the expertise of Neag School faculty but will use ideas based on the work of ATLAS and Accelerated Schools, Schwab says.

The partnership will allow educational researchers from UConn and ATLAS to test ideas on school reform by working with teachers and principals in real classrooms.

"How do you really bring research and practice together?" says Linda Gerstle, executive director of ATLAS. "My hope is UConn will be a long-term home for these ideas. Having a university in back of you helps ensure that school innovation and transformation can be sustained."

Formerly based in Cambridge, Mass., ATLAS becomes the second major school reform group to affiliate with UConn, joining the Neag School of Education, the latest step in making UConn a prominent center for urban school reform.

"This is a wonderful opportunity for us to handle the workload, graduate with distinction, and go on to very exciting careers," says Eugene Chasin, director of the Institute of Urban School Improvement. Accelerated Schools plus, a comprehensive school reform model based at Stanford University, moved to the Neag School eight years ago.

The addition of ATLAS bolsters UConn's role in turning around struggling elementary and secondary schools and helping close the achievement gap that finds many low-income and minority children lagging in reading, mathematics, and other subjects. "This is a wonderful opportunity for us to blaze a trail together," said Chasin.

"With a full schedule of classes ahead of you, it's safe to say you're going to be reading a lot of books, taking a lot of notes, attending a lot of lectures, and cramming a lot of information into your heads," he said. "It might even make you dizzy at times, but you and I both know that with your talent, energy, and a whole lot of discipline, you should be able to handle the workload, graduate with distinction, and go on to very exciting careers that will make us all proud of you."

Hogan told students they would be working hard.

"I know exactly how your parents feel right now, because my wife Virginia and I have four kids of our own — all college graduates," he said. "You've been where they are located and regardless of the entry-level skills of students."
Suicide Prevention Week activities designed to raise awareness

BY RICHARD VELLEUX

This year – like every year – thousands of college students across the country will attempt suicide, according to Barry Schreier, director of Counseling and Mental Health Services. Unfortunately, many will succeed. Suicide is the second leading cause of death among college students, after accidents, he says. UConn is not immune. “We have to do a better job of communicating to students that they’re not alone, that help is available if they’re troubled or depressed,” says Schreier. “And we – faculty, staff, and students – have to do a better job of identifying those who are struggling and are in danger.”

To that end, Schreier and a committee that includes representatives from more than two dozen departments have created a program for Suicide Prevention Week, Sept. 7-13, that includes movies, a keynote speaker, memorial service, information tables, T-shirts and, most importantly, suicide prevention training sessions that will help teach the UConn community how to recognize students who need help.

The training sessions will be offered Monday, Sept. 7 through Friday, Sept. 13, from 10-11:30 a.m. and 1:30-3 p.m. in Room 304C at the Student Union. "QPR [Question, Persuade, Refer] training is a proven program that can save lives," Schreier says. "The training sessions are brief and powerful, and if people can’t make the scheduled sessions during Suicide Prevention Week, then we can bring a session to them. If any department is interested, we will gladly offer a session at their office.”

Schreier says it is vital that members of the University community help identify troubled students because, nationally, very few of the college students who contemplate suicide will visit a counselor on their own initiative. “Too many people think suicide is something for counseling to handle, but it’s not a counseling problem only. It’s a community problem, so there has to be a community solution,” Schreier says.

He expects the 2.5 people who have already been trained in QPR to continue training others year-round. “We can keep running events all year, it’s our friends, teachers, colleagues who are our first responders who can make the difference. That’s why they’re so important,” he says. “Prevention has to go on all year, not just next week, and QPR is the way for us to do this.”

Adopting the theme “Be Aware, Show You Care,” the committee has scheduled a number of other events throughout the week, including a talk at the Jorgensen Center for the Performing Arts on Tuesday, Sept. 9, at 7 p.m. by Ross Szabo, director of youth programs at Mental Health America of Connecticut. Szabo regularly speaks at high schools and colleges and at national conferences about mental health issues.

Additionally, there will be five movies shown during the week, each led by a discussant, including Wristcutters: A Love Story, on Sept. 11 at 6 p.m. in the Student Union Theatre; The Virgin Suicides, Sept. 12 at 10 p.m., also in the Student Union Theatre; Girl, Interrupted, Sept. 8 at 6:30 in the Women’s Center; The Sea Inside, Sept. 11 at 6:30 p.m. at the Puerto Rican and Latin American Cultural Center; and Love and Suicide Sept. 12 at 2 p.m. at the Rainbow Center.

Also scheduled is a student panel discussion, “What Can We Do to Help?” Sept. 11 at 5:30 p.m. at the African American Cultural Center; a concert by the a cappella group Take Note! on Sept. 13 at 7:30 p.m. at St. Mark’s Episcopal Church, and a service for anyone who has been impacted by suicide or would like to participate will be held on the front steps of the Wilbur Cross Building on Sept. 10 at 7:30 p.m.

The committee also has planned an interactive web application through HuskyCT where participants will be able to test their knowledge of suicide prevention while learning about available resources and what to do to help themselves or others who may be considering suicide. The group also has established a web site – www.suicideprevention.uconn.edu – that will remain available resources and what to do to help themselves or others who may be considering suicide.

collect and preserve records documenting its activities during the apartheid era.

The center contains Sen. Thomas Dodd’s papers, including his service as chief trial counsel at the Nuremberg Trials, and holds the Alternative Press Collection, and the papers of naturalist Edwin Way Teale and children’s author Tomie dePaola. It is also known for its collection of Connecticut business history, and the creation and development of Connecticut History Online.

The Dodd Center is a founding member of the Association of Centers for the Study of Congress, an independent alliance of institutions that promotes programs and research opportunities related to the U.S. Congress.

The Society of American Archivists is North America’s oldest and largest national archival professional association.

Dodd Center honored by national archivists society

The Thomas J. Dodd Research Center has received the 2008 Distinguished Service Award of the Society of American Archivists. Director Thomas Wiltse accepted the award on behalf of the center, during the society’s annual meeting in San Francisco Aug. 29.

Established in 1995, the Dodd Center became “a center of campus intellectual life by linking collection development and preservation to public programming and the academic curriculum in a vital and exciting way,” the award selection committee said.

The center, named for the late Connecticut Sen. Thomas J. Dodd, houses the University’s archives, and focuses on building research collections that document the U.S. Congress, human rights, and public policy. It provided assistance to the African National Congress, South Africa’s leading anti-apartheid organization and now its ruling political party, by helping
Incubator start-ups receive funds from state

BY DAVID BAUMAN

Eight start-up companies in UConn’s Technology Incubator Program recently received a financial boost totaling nearly $400,000 from the Connecticut Small Business Incubator Program, through the state Department of Economic and Community Development.

“This is an investment that will leverage federal and private research dollars by creating new technology products and companies,” said Gov. M. Jodi Rell, who announced the grants Aug. 22.

“Technology-based small businesses are vital to the growth of Connecticut’s economy, both now and in the future. They offer high value, high growth opportunities to our workers and communities.”

The Technology Incubation Program provides space and services to enhance the success of early-stage firms that have a link to the University. It is part of the University’s Office of Technology Commercialization, which also includes the Center for Science and Technology Commercialization and the UConn R&D Corp.

The program currently houses 15 start-ups, six at Storrs, seven at the Health Center in Farmington, and two at Avery Point.

“The start-up companies are evidence of an evolving economic landscape in Connecticut and the critical role UConn is playing in that transformation,” says Bruce Carlson, managing director of the Office of Technology Commercialization. “These companies are transforming University discoveries into products that benefit us all.”

In addition to providing start-up companies with the support they need to grow, business incubation also provides a boost to other businesses in the community, he adds. Carlson notes that the national success rate for companies that graduate from incubators is more than 80 percent, and 87 percent stay in the region of their incubator.

The grant recipients are:

• New Ortho Polymers of Farmington, which designs and develops novel polymer orthodontic appliances based on patented, proprietary technologies. The $50,000 grant will be used to evaluate archwire in laboratory clinical trials.
• Life Pharmaceuticals, a natural product drug discovery company at Avery Point that works with field-collected mushrooms. The company will use the $50,000 grant to patent and market its technology.
• Evergen, a biotech company at Storrs that has expertise in animal cloning, transgenesis, in vitro fertilization, embryo cryopreservation, and embryo transfer. The company will use the $50,000 grant to purchase new equipment.
• MakScientific, a Connecticut-based drug research, design, and development company. MakScientific will use its $50,000 grant to file new patents.
• Conversion Energy Enterprises of Farmington, which develops solar products and biomaterials for medical applications. The company will use its $50,000 grant toward obtaining FDA approval for one of its products.
• MystecMD, a company based at Avery Point that is working to reduce the weight and cost of materials in lithium-ion batteries. The company will use the $50,000 grant for equipment to demonstrate the technology’s feasibility.
• Biostars of Storrs, a company that is developing implantable wireless glucose sensors 100 times smaller than current sensors for continuous monitoring. The company will use its $45,000 grant to create a prototype sensor unit.
• Agrivida, which is developing improved corn varieties that will be used to produce environmentally-friendly fuels and chemicals. The $34,000 grant will be used to purchase equipment.

Trays eliminated from dining halls

BY RICHARD VEILLEUX

Spurred by the discovery last spring that eliminating trays from the University’s smallest dining facility also eliminated hundreds of pounds of food waste, Dining Services this fall has removed trays from all but one of the nine dining halls on the Storrs campus.

This is not a production decision but a consumer decision,” says Dennis Pierce, director of dining services. “There’s a trayless movement sweeping the nation. We have to change our culture.”

UConn officials tested the idea in March, when they teamed up with the Office of Environmental Policy and ran a three-week experiment at Whitney and North dining facilities. During the first week of the experiment, dining hall staff weighed food waste, as students continued using trays. Two weeks later – the middle week – was used for education – the trays were removed during dinner, and staff again weighed the waste.

The result? About 740 pounds less food waste. Kitchen staff also ran the dishwasher about 150 fewer times, saving 913 gallons of water and 30.8 kilowatts of energy.

Spread across eight dining facilities for an entire academic year, rather than only a week, that should add up to some significant savings, says Pierce.

“Our tipping fees will also be lower because we won’t dispose of as much waste, and we’ll save money on food because we’ll order less,” he adds.

During the academic year, the dining halls serve 130,000 meals per week.

Pierce and his staff had long suspected that letting students use trays led to waste, because the students tended to pile the trays with food, often far more than they could possibly eat.

“Our staff complained about the waste all the time,” says Pierce. “Then at a conference, I heard about other schools trying to do without trays, so I decided we try it here too. It was a great success.”

Pierce actually eliminated trays at the dining halls this summer, when conferences and sports camps keep dining staff busy.

Since most visitors didn’t know that trays had been available previously, they didn’t seem to mind that there were none. Pierce suspects the reaction may be slightly different as the semester gets underway.

“This phenomenon won’t know the difference, but I suspect there will be a healthy discussion upon the return of our juniors and seniors,” he says. “I hope they’ll soon see that their efforts make a difference. I think the majority of them will appreciate what we’re doing to help our community.”

The only dining hall that will have trays will be at South Campus, Pierce says. South will be allowed to keep trays – about smaller trays than in the past – because of the size of the dining hall and because more conferences are held there than in the other facilities with dining halls.

National food service giant Aramark, which has more than 500 campus partners, recently conducted two nationwide studies and found that taking away trays resulted in a 25 to 30 percent reduction in food waste per person, according to a recent story in the Cleveland Plain Dealer. The study also found that 79 percent of the 92,000 students, faculty, and staff surveyed said they would support “trayless dining.” Aramark officials expect more than half of their campuses will go without trays this school year.

Another food service company, Sodexo, partners with more than 200 campuses that have dispensed with trays.

“A report issued by the National Association of College and University Food Services that looks at trends mentioned consuming this year,” says Pierce. “This year, it said trayless dining is no longer a trend – it’s a given.”

Former Huskies achieve success at Olympics

Six UConn athletes – four alumni, one current player, and a soon-to-be-UConn athlete – represented their countries in the recent Olympic Games. They took home three medals, including two gold.

Dina Taurasi and Sue Bird helped the U.S. women’s basketball team finish atop the podium, Australia 92-65 for the gold medal. Taurasi had seven points and three rebounds in the final game, while Bird contributed four points and two rebounds. The two also earned gold medals playing for the US team at the 2004 Olympics.

Svetlana Abrosimova, who like Bird and Taurasi led UConn to an NCAA championship, helped lead the Russian women’s basketball team to the medal round, where they defeated China 94-81 for the bronze medal.

Abrosimova had seven points and five rebounds in the contest.

A fourth women’s basketball player, Jessica McCormack, who has enrolled at UConn but will sit out the upcoming season as a transfer student from the University of Washington, held her own for the underdog New Zealand Olympic squad, which failed to reach the quarterfinals after losses to Spain, China, and the Czech Republic.

Also in China was Stephanie Labbe, a goalkeeper for UConn’s highly ranked women’s soccer team. Labbe, from Alberta, Canada, was an alternate for the Canadian national team.

On the men’s side, Dudley Dorival, a former UConn track star and field star, was in the Olympics for the fourth time. Dorival, competing for Haiti, ran in the 110 meter hurdles and qualified for the second round, where he finished out of the running.
Researchers studies rates of cesarean sections, malpractice suits

BY KRISTINA GOODNOUGH

There may be a relationship between cesarean delivery rates and medical malpractice rates, according to research by Dr. Jeffrey Spencer, a fellow in maternal fetal medicine at the Health Center. As the state’s medical malpractice premiums increased, the number of cesarean deliveries also rose, according to Spencer, who reviewed the deliveries at Hartford Hospital from 1994 to 2005. During that time, there were 64,767 deliveries, of which 15,021 (23 percent) were cesarean deliveries. Of the 15,021 cesarean deliveries, 8,045 (59.5 percent) were primary or first-time cesarean deliveries, while 6,076 (40.5 percent) were repeat cesarean deliveries.

During the same time period, medical malpractice rates increased substantially. Spencer obtained mean malpractice premiums for obstetricians from the hospital’s major medical malpractice provider and adjusted them for inflation.

The mean premiums for medical malpractice insurance for obstetricians increased from less than $80,000 for an individual physician to more than $120,000.

"When I compared the malpractice rates to cesarean delivery rates prior to 1999, both were declining at a similar rate," says Spencer.

From 1999 to 2005, however, both were increasing, "I can’t say one led to the other or visa versa," he says, but he speculates that rising medical malpractice rates are driving up cesarean delivery rates. Normal vaginal delivery is considered safer than a cesarean delivery for both mother and baby if the birth is uncomplicated. Cesarean deliveries are recommended for complications, such as slow or long labor or indications of fetal distress during labor.

"Most of the large malpractice cases result from a poor fetal outcome, that is, an expected ‘normal’ baby is born with health problems or has a bad outcome for whatever reason," says Spencer. "The MDs get sued because they didn’t do all that was possible for the baby—meaning perform a cesarean.

"Malpractice premiums are a huge expense for physicians," says Spencer. "It’s difficult for them not to practice defensive medicine. But although cesarean deliveries are less risky for the baby, they are more risky for the mom, with longer recovery times, generally, than vaginal deliveries. It’s important to consider whether every cesarean delivery is truly necessary.

It’s possible that there are other factors that may also account for the association," says Spencer, who presented his research at the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists annual meeting last spring. "With our data, we cannot prove a causation but only suggest an association."

Nationwide, cesarean deliveries accounted for 30.2 percent of all deliveries in 2005, compared to 20.7 percent of deliveries in 1999. The rising rate of cesarean deliveries has triggered a debate over whether the increase can be attributed to medical necessity.

Correctional facility served by Health Center receives health care award

BY CAROLYN PENNINGTON

The National Commission on Correctional Health Care (NCCHC) has selected York Correctional Institution in Niantic to receive this year’s NCCHC Facility of the Year Award. This prestigious award is presented each year to only one facility selected from among the 500 prisons, jails, and juvenile detention and confinement facilities that participate in the commission’s nationwide accreditation program.

Health care at York is offered through Correctional Managed Health Care (CMHC), a partnership between the Health Center and the Department of Correction to deliver comprehensive health care to inmates in all of the state’s 18 correctional facilities.

“We are delighted that NCCHC is recognizing the dedication to patient care, the hard work, the consistency, and the creativity of our staff and of the custody personnel,” says Dr. Robert Tretman, professor of medicine and psychiatry at the Health Center and executive director of CMHC. “It’s our vision to become national leaders in correctional healthcare. This is a wonderful milestone along that path.”

York is Connecticut’s only correctional institution for women. It has more than 1,300 inmates ranging from teenagers to senior citizens. The medical unit consists of 64 sub-acute beds, divided into 32 medical beds and 32 mental health beds. Approximately 140 full and part-time employees staff the unit.

Health services are available to inmates 24 hours a day, seven days a week. "It’s like a mini-hospital inside the prison," says Connie Weiskopf, director of nursing and patient care services with CMHC. Weiskopf says the NCCHC’s surveyors were impressed with how the York staff consistently demonstrated excellence in health service delivery and professionalism. They also noted the variety of positive programs available to the population, she says. Those programs include perinatal as well as hospice services and chronic care clinics for hypertension and diabetes. Specialty clinics include infectious disease, ob-gyn, surgical, ophthalmology, dentistry, and oral surgery.

The York Correctional Institution voluntarily applied for and was initially awarded NCCHC accreditation in 2002, but has been continuously accredited since. There are 72 essential and important standards that correctional institutions strive to comply with, and York is compliant with virtually all of them.

The NCCHC’s surveys include certified correctional health administrators, nurses, and other medical professionals. During the re-accreditation process, they conducted more than 65 interviews with inmates, correctional officers, and CMHC staff.

The Facility of the Year Award will be presented at a ceremony Oct. 20 in Chicago, during the NCCHC’s National Conference on Correctional Health Care.
Endangered language is topic of Humanities Fellow’s research

BY ELIZABETH OMAHAN-DUNN
Some 250 years ago, the Itelmen language spoken on the Kamchatka Peninsula in the Russian far east was in decline and expected to survive no more than a generation. It proved more tenacious than predicted, but it is now on the verge of extinction.

Jonathan Bobaljik, professor of linguistics, has spent a decade and a half studying Itelmen. This academic year, thanks to a Humanities Institute fellowship, he hopes to develop a grammatical description of the language and explore related theoretical issues. "The general philosophy of generative linguistics," says Bobaljik, "is that there are certain limitations on how languages work. There's a common core to human language, and there's variation. One way to find out what the limits are is to examine 'exotic' languages, looking for patterns of similarity and differences." Itelmen, he adds, is well suited to such study because it is related to almost no other language.

"Even in the remotest corners of the globe," says Bobaljik, "where languages seem at first blush very different from known languages such as European languages or Japanese, core patterns of human language and grammar are there when you know how to look for them."

A remote population
Bobaljik first became involved with Itelmen in 1993, while still a graduate student at MIT. Putting his Ph.D. temporarily on hold, he joined an anthropological expedition to the remote Kamchatka Peninsula.

The peninsula is accessible only by plane, boat, or dog sled, there are no roads or trains. Officially part of Russia, it was closed to outsiders until 1990. Bobaljik and the anthropologist he accompanied were the first foreigners many of the local people had met.

The Itelmen people traditionally engage mostly in subsistence hunting and fishing. After several centuries of assimilation, their daily language is now Russian, and the number of Itelmen speakers has dwindled to just 30, the youngest being in his mid-60s. Those who speak the language are dispersed in different villages, rarely getting together, and phone communication is sporadic, Bobaljik says.

The researchers spent a year in the field recording the language for further study. They brought the native speakers together for weekly tea gatherings, and taped and transcribed narratives and traditional stories as well as the people's answers to specific questions about the language.

Language and politics
Bobaljik says the survival of a particular language is not related to its intrinsic characteristics. "Whether or not a language survives has nothing to do with language, and everything to do with politics and economy," he says. Under the Soviets, Russian became the primary language and the Itelmen language was repressed for 50 years. "It almost directly parallels what happened to indigenous communities in the U.S.,” says Bobaljik. “There was forced assimilation. Children were beaten for speaking their native language."

Only in the 1980s, did it begin to be legitimate to embrace the native culture, he adds. Bobaljik says Itelmen history offers broader lessons for endangered languages. "When you look carefully at both the decline and the surprising tenacity of Itelmen, you can begin to discern some factors that work in both directions," he says.

"Whether or not a language survives has nothing to do with language, and everything to do with politics and economy," says Bobaljik. "The fate of the language is almost exclusively about politics, but it also partly, in communities this small, comes down to particular individuals and their views."

Traditionally, the Itelmen lived in tiny, scattered settlements, but the Soviet government created larger communities. In two villages, the language died out almost immediately after collectivization; in another two, it survived much longer.

The difference was the village teachers, Bobaljik says. Although the language of instruction in all the villages was Russian, if the school teacher spoke Itelmen outside the classroom, the language persisted — an illustration, he says, of how "in a small community, the culture can be shaped by the values of an individual who has prestige."

Preserving the language
There is currently some local interest in preserving the language, and it is still taught in schools to a handful of children. But Bobaljik says most people are struggling to survive economically, and for them, the indigenous language is not a priority.

The ability to speak Itelmen carries implications for both political and cultural identity. Indigenous people — identified primarily by language — have certain legal rights not accorded to other residents. Some in the government, says Bobaljik, would prefer to believe the indigenous community no longer exists and do away with those rights. He predicts that fragments of the language will persist in ceremonial contexts, fostered by the growth of ethnaturism.

This fall, Bobaljik will immerse himself in the study of Itelmen, working with more than a hundred hours of audio recordings he made in the 1980s with collaborator Susanne Wurmbrand, who is now at Conn. It’s painstaking work that requires listening to particular segments over and over.

He wants to make his work available to the Itelmen people. He has already sent copies of some of the texts he recorded, and helped produce educational material in collaboration with two teachers there. Without museums, he says, "schools are the closest thing to a repository."

Electronic materials are not practical, however, since some of the villages don’t have electricity. "When are you going to do it?" he says. "Send a CD-ROM?"

Jonathan Bobaljik, professor of linguistics, is conducting research on a language known as Itelmen, which is on the verge of extinction.

Jonathan Bobaljik, professor of linguistics, is conducting research on a language known as Itelmen, which is on the verge of extinction.
GRANTS

The following grants were received through the UConn Health Center’s Office of Grants and Contracts in May 2008. The list represents new awards as well as continuations. The list of grants is supplied to the Advance by the Office of Grants and Contracts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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Elizabeth Lucchesi, School of Dental Medicine Class of 2012, accepts her white coat from Dr. Arthur Hand, assistant dean for medical and graduate education. Forty-three dental students and 85 medical students received their white coats, symbolizing their induction into the health care professions, during a ceremony at the Health Center on Aug. 15.
Plan Science's turfgrass program showcased open house

BY DAVID BAUMAN

Different turfgrass species have dramatically different water needs in the summertime, according to turfgrass scientist Jason Henderson, an assistant professor in the Department of Plant Science.

He spoke about low maintenance turfgrass species during UConn’s first Turfgrass Field Day hosted by the University of Maryland’s Department of Plant Science.

Henderson hopes the findings can help turfgrass managers blend the technical expertise of turfgrass researchers in the areas of insect and disease management, according to John Kaminski, an assistant professor of plant science, who helped organize the event.

The morning featured plot tours and presentations by UConn turfgrass researchers in the areas of golf and sports turf management and nutrient and organic management practices, as well as demonstrations of the latest equipment by professional turf equipment manufacturers.

Afternoon workshops addressed disease control, weed identification, organic approaches to lawn maintenance, and a tour of UConn’s athletic fields to see how they are prepared for Division I level competition.

Henderson, who is involved in several research projects in golf and sports turf management, is part of a team of turf scientists nationwide that is investigating the impact of rolling and mowing heights on putting green quality and turfgrass health.

Data from alternative rolling/mowing frequency treatments using identical mowing frequency programs were collected on eight plots at the UConn research facility this summer. Similar rolling/mowing frequency treatments using identical equipment but on different grass species were performed at Michigan State University, the University of Arkansas, and the University of Tennessee.

Henderson hopes the findings will offer turfgrass managers in various regions of the country concrete data on which to formulate management options for their greens.

“Mowing is stressful to the plant,” he said. “The plant is not well growing during those day in August and during 80 degree days in May. That’s why we can reduce mowing and still maintain green speed with rolling, we can protect the plant, reduce disease, and keep high quality greens for golf players.”

“Tract Plan Subverted,” part of the Four in Prints exhibition at the Stevens Gallery at Homer Babbidge Library. See Exhibits.
Students spend summer working with entrepreneurs in Guatemala

BY SHERRY FISHER

Max Chanoch wanted to make a difference this summer. He did just that during a study abroad program, where he helped local Guatemalan entrepreneurs.

Chanoch and nine other UConn students conducted eye exams and sold reading glasses to Guatemalan women who weave for their livelihoods, educated people about the benefits of water filters, and demonstrated how wood stoves are safer and more economical than cooking over an open fire, during an eight-week Study Abroad program in social entrepreneurship.

The students worked with local entrepreneurs and honed their skills at analyzing rural economic development models and practices. They also studied Spanish.

“It was a life-changing experience,” says Chanoch, who is majoring in business management. “You learn about culture and a lot about people and how they live.”

The program is run by the Social Entrepreneurship Study Abroad program in Guatemala, which offers opportunities for university students to have hands-on learning experiences focused on solutions to community problems. The program was sponsored by UConn’s Study Abroad office, the School of Business, and the Honors Program in Classical Languages, and led by Professor Linda Klein, associate dean of the School of Business.

“The program is part of our goal to give our students broader exposure to world issues,” says Klein. “I believe it’s important for School of Business students to understand the positive impact of business on people’s lives.”

Students spent the first two weeks living in the homes of Guatemalans, in rural, traditional communities outside Antigua.

Most of the host families did not speak English. The students studied Spanish for four hours each morning, and spent afternoons in academic sessions discussing topics including the difference between relief and development, and the basics of entrepreneurship.

For the last six weeks, they were divided into four groups (along with students from Duke, Columbia, Notre Dame, and the University of North Carolina, who were also participating in the program) and worked in four different rural areas on “campaigns” or projects run by local entrepreneurs, mostly women.

The primary focus of the campaigns was vision projects, where free vision screenings were offered, and reading glasses were sold.

“Many women weave for their livelihoods, but have no access to glasses,” says Klein. “As they reach their peak production years, their eyesight starts to fail, and they can no longer work.” Reading glasses extend their productive years.

Ricky Bogart, a management major, says, “We facilitated the process and helped out as much as we could with the projects, including publicity. We also brought energy-efficient light bulbs, seeds, water purifiers, and stoves. Once they come to the campaigns for the free eye exams, we also try to educate them about these other projects — how they will benefit them, and how they pay for themselves in the long run.”

Bogart says the experience will help him in his career.

“I want to get an international development, and there’s a lot you can’t learn in books and classes,” he says. “You have to be out in the field to see what works and what methods don’t work, and how to make an organization sustainable. A lot of people were surprised at how involved we actually were with the process. I learned a lot of things I’ll be able to apply in the future.”

Kevin Baht, an economics major, says, “The experience gave me an opportunity to see concepts in action. We offered people products with economic and social benefits. The water filters, for example, have had a huge impact on the people. They save them money because they don’t have to buy bottled water.”

Ross Lewin, director of UConn Study Abroad, says, “It is one of the most important Study Abroad initiatives at UConn because it really makes an impact on the lives of poor people. UConn Social Entrepreneurship is an example of UConn students engaged in the improvement of communities beyond our local, state, or national borders. They have truly exemplified the practice of global citizenship.”

Klein adds, “From the business perspective, it gives our students hands-on experiential learning that blends the academic with application.”

On Oct. 6 students who participated in the social entrepreneurship Study Abroad will present a symposium about their experience. The event will take place from 6 to 8 p.m., in the School of Business, Room 211. Refreshments will be served.

Public service internship takes honors student to nation’s capital

BY SHERRY FISHER

Michael Mitchell spent his summer in Washington, D.C., surrounded by politicians and other national leaders, and made lifelong friends.

Mitchell, a junior majoring in economics and political science, was an intern in Sen. Edward Kennedy’s office during June and July. He was chosen for the internship by the Institute for Responsible Citizenship, which offers internships to 24 of the “most promising black male college sophomores in the U.S.” The organization focuses on developing young men who will sustain a lifelong commitment to public service.

“It was the greatest summer I’ve had in college, or in my life,” says Mitchell, who is in the Honors Program. The students were housed at American University.

Mitchell answered some of the senator’s correspondence and scheduled appointments, but a large part of the internship involved attending hearings. “It was amazing to see the senators and congressmen and congresswomen doing their jobs and trying to solve problems,” he says.

He was required to take notes and read the transcripts of the hearings, and write memos to the senator and staff member in charge of the hearing topic.

“I got a lot of professional experience from the internship,” Mitchell says. “There’s no place more professional than the Senate — there are rules and protocol that you have to follow. I learned a lot. Also, there was a lot of networking and it was fun meeting people who have jobs there, who you can keep connected to.”

Mitchell attended three-hour classes three evenings a week, after working full days. One was a seminar on professionalism in the work world, another focused on federalism and politics, and a third dealt with economic theory.

One evening, when there were no classes, Mitchell and some of his fellow interns got a nice surprise. They were invited to the Supreme Court to meet some of the law clerks.

“We got to talk to law clerks for Justices Antonin Scalia and Clarence Thomas,” he says. “We talked about the career paths they took, some of the things they do on their current job, and what they’re going to do afterwards. Talking to them made me more certain that I want to go into law. They described it as fun, hard work, and rewarding.”

Mitchell says that since about 70 per cent of the students in his program were interested in law careers, many of the events were centered on law and visits to law firms. “The events helped you figure out the different kinds of law you can practice and what law schools you might want to attend,” Mitchell says. “From that standpoint, it really helped me focus on my future.” Of his memorable experiences was working on a project involving international high school students.

“Senators Kennedy and Lugar from Indiana have a joint program called Cultural Bridges where they bring about 500 students to their states from across the world to study in high school,” Mitchell says. “At the end of the experience, they bring them to Washington. “I was picked to help coordinate the event,” Mitchell says, “and being there to hear Lugar speak and watching these kids — knowing I had helped set it up — was amazing.”

Mitchell says the program offered him a chance to live in “one of the most important cities in the world” and was an opportunity to make connections for the future.

He hopes to participate in the program again next summer. After earning a law degree, Mitchell says he would love to go into politics. “I’d like to help people and be able to influence others to make positive changes.”