Hogan gives testimony on budget proposal

BY RICHARD VIELLEUX
UConn President Michael Hogan, while acknowledging the dire straits facing the state economy, said that the governor’s proposed budget, if not adjusted, would make it nearly impossible for the University's Storrs-based programs to continue the quest to become one of the nation’s top public universities. He said it would also have serious implications for the future of the UConn Health Center.

He made his remarks during testimony to the legislature’s Appropriations Committee on Feb. 13.

During a discussion that touched on the economy, the governor’s budget proposal, tuition, rescissions, and the University’s contributions to Connecticut, Hogan told the committee that cuts of the magnitude proposed – $34 million short of current services in fiscal year 2010 and another $50 million short in 2011 for Storrs-based programs, with shortfalls of $7 million and $12.5 million, respectively, at the Health Center – would be devastating to the University.

“It takes decades to build a world-class university, but only a year or two to bring it down,” he said.

The budget proposal – and Hogan’s testimony – was only the beginning of a journey that will run until at least June 3, the official closing date for the session.

Hogan told the committee the University has already sliced more than $12 million from its current year’s budget, as a result of a 3 percent rescission mandated by the governor in November.

“The reductions of more than $12 million were extremely difficult to execute, due to their magnitude, timing, the University’s commitment to provide the highest quality academic experience to our students, and our commitment to provide financial aid that goes beyond statutory requirements,” Hogan said. “Nevertheless, due to creativity and the hard work of Provost Peter Nicholls and the leadership of our schools and colleges, we were successful in managing these reductions, without compromising quality, accessibility, or jobs.”

The new reductions, however, would be more difficult to make, Hogan said, explaining that the proposed 5 percent cut was

Study shows defensive medicine widespread

BY KRISTINA GOODNIGHT
The cost of “defensive” medicine – tests, procedures, referrals, hospitalizations, or prescriptions ordered by physicians fearful of lawsuits – is huge and widespread, according to a study by the Massachusetts Medical Society and UConn Health Center researcher Robert Aseltine Jr. The study is based on a survey – believed to be the first of its kind – that was completed by more than 900 physicians in Massachusetts. It asked about their use of seven tests and procedures: plain film X-rays, CT scans, magnetic resonance imaging, ultrasound, laboratory testing, specialty referrals and consultations, and hospital admissions.

About 85 percent reported practicing defensive medicine, with an average of between 18 percent and 28 percent of tests, procedures, referrals, and consultations and 13 percent of hospitalizations ordered for defensive reasons. Such practices were estimated to cost a minimum of $1.4 billion per year in Massachusetts.

The study, “Investigation of Defensive Medicine in Massachusetts,” is the first to specifically quantify defensive practices across a wide spectrum and among a number of specialties. It also is the first to link defensive practices across a number of medical specialties – anesthesiology; emergency medicine, family medicine, internal medicine, general surgery, neurosurgery, orthopedics, and obstetrics/gynecology – directly with Medicare cost data.

The survey, conducted between November 2007 and April 2008, queried physicians in eight specialties: anesthesiology, emergency medicine, family medicine, internal medicine, general surgery, neurosurgery, orthopedics, and obstetrics/gynecology.

“Defensive medicine is not only the ordering of medically unnecessary tests, prescriptions, specialist referrals, invasive procedures, and hospital admissions,” says Aseltine, who is director of the Health Center’s Institute for Public Health Research. “It can also be the avoidance of high-risk procedures or even high-risk patients.”

Neurobiologist recognized for research on brain cells

BY CINDY WEISS
Akiko Nishiyama, associate professor of physiology and neurobiology, is an unlikely iconoclast.

She is a quiet presence in her own busy laboratory group of postdoctoral fellows, graduate students, research assistants, and undergraduate researchers.

But after years of struggling to get her ideas and papers accepted, she is now gaining recognition for her research on cells in the brain.

Her invited lead review paper in the January 2009 issue of Nature Reviews Neuroscience covers the state of research into NG2 cells, a type of glial cell in the central nervous system that she began studying more than 20 years ago.

Once described as housekeeping cells that support neurons and remove debris, glial cells are now thought to have a much more active role in the brain and spinal cord.

There are many more of them than neurons in the brain. Nishiyama has been at the forefront of scientists who have found that one type of glial cell, NG2, gives rise to another type that makes insulating sheaths – myelin – around neurons.

NG2 cells are a little like stem cells in that way, says Nishiyama, who also has a grant from the state’s stem cell initiative. It is debatable, however, whether NG2 cells, like stem cells, are multipotent – able to give rise to many other types of cells – or whether they have an unlimited ability to renew themselves.

Their role as precursors to myelin-producing glial cells leads to potential applications in treating disease. Multiple sclerosis,
A two-day conference bringing together 30 democracy scholars from around the world will take place Feb. 27 and 28 at the Thomas J. Dodd Research Center.

The University of Connecticut Democracy Institute Conference will feature 10 panels, two keynote addresses, and a workshop on human rights. The event, which begins Friday, is free and open to the public. Registration is at 11:15 a.m. Participants will discuss topics including human rights, political participation, political theory, and political development focusing on a variety of regions in the world.

On Friday, Feb. 27, Ian Shapiro, Sterling Professor of Political Science at Yale University, will give the keynote address at 6:45 p.m. He will discuss “Luck, Leadership, and Legitimacy in Transitions to Democracy: Lessons from South Africa and the Middle East.”

A luncheon and keynote address on Saturday, Feb. 28 will feature UConn’s UNESCO Chair in Human Rights, Ami Omaru-Otunnu.

The program will conclude with an interactive workshop on the relationship between the democracy and human rights.

The conference was organized by graduate students in the political science department. Sponsors include the Human Rights Institute, UConn’s UNESCO Chair, the political science department, the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, and the Louis Gerson Fund.

Conference on democracy set for Feb. 27-28

Stuti Akella performs A Memory, A Monologue, A Rant and A Prayer: Writings to Stop Violence Against Women and Girls at von der Mehden Recital Hall on Feb. 16.

Expert on gravity to give two talks on Einstein

Eric Adelberger, emeritus professor of physics at the University of Washington, will give a public lecture, "Short-Distance Gravity: From Newton to Einstein to Stringy," on Thursday, Feb. 26. It will take place at 7 p.m. in Room P38, Gant Science Complex. A reception will follow.

He also will give a talk on "Testing Einstein’s Happiest Idea," at the Physics Colloquium, on Friday, Feb. 27 at 4 p.m. in the same location.

Adelberger is a member of the National Academy of Sciences, and a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the Institute of Physics, and the American Physical Society. He received the American Physical Society Bonner Prize for outstanding experimental research in nuclear physics in 1985. In 1992-93, he was a scientific associate at the European Organization for Nuclear Research in Geneva.

He has given named lectures as the Loeb Lecturer in Physics at Harvard University, Nordberg Lecturer at the Goddard Space Flight Center, Selove Lecturer at the University of Pennsylvania, Van Buren Lecturer at the University of Michigan, and Leigh Page Prize Lecturer at Yale University.

His research focuses on gravity, the fundamental force whose origins remain mysterious. Adelberger founded the Eot-Wash Group that has made many technical advances in torsion-balance technology. These developments have led to extraordinarily precise experimental tests of Einstein’s Equivalence Principle, measurements of Newton’s constant G, searches for hidden extra dimensions by testing Newton’s Inverse-Square Law down to distances smaller than a human hair, and highly sensitive tests of the isotropy of space.

The lecture is part of the Phi Beta Kappa Visiting Scholar Program, which brings distinguished scholars to selected campuses to contribute to the intellectual life of the institutions. It is co-sponsored by the physics department, the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, and the local chapter of the Phi Beta Kappa. Phi Beta Kappa is the nation’s oldest academic honor society.

Talk on future of libraries slated for March 10

Is Google threatening the very existence of libraries? David W. Lewis, dean of the University Library, Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis (IUPUI), a respected voice in envisioning academic libraries of the future, will address that question in a presentation titled, "Libraries in the Age of Google, or Not ...." The talk will take place on Tuesday, March 10, at 10:30 a.m., in Konover Auditorium at the Thomas J. Dodd Research Center.

Lewis holds a bachelor’s degree in history from Carleton College, an M.L.S. from Columbia University, and two certificates of advanced study in librarianship, one from Columbia University and one from the University of Chicago. He has worked at SUNY Farmingdale, Hamilton College, Franklins and Marshall College, Columbia University, and the University of Connecticut. He joined IUPUI in 1993 as head of public services, and has been dean of the university library since 2008. Lewis has written on reference services, library management, and scholarly communication.

The lecture is part of the Phi Beta Kappa Visiting Scholar Program, which brings distinguished scholars to selected campuses to contribute to the intellectual life of the institutions. It is co-sponsored by the physics department, the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, and the local chapter of the Phi Beta Kappa. Phi Beta Kappa is the nation’s oldest academic honor society.

A Memory, A Monologue, A Rant and A Prayer: Writings to Stop Violence Against Women and Girls at von der Mehden Recital Hall on Feb. 16.
Board of Trustees approves administrative measures

By Karen A. Grieben

The Board of Trustees has agreed to merge the physical therapy and kinesiology programs into a Department of Kinesiology and to eliminate the master’s and Ph.D. programs in music education.

The merger of the two departments is actually a success story resulting from the closure of the School of Allied Health and the transfer of the physical therapy program to the School of Education, Provost Peter J. Nichols told the board.

“We moved the programs because we thought there might be a commonality between physical therapy and kinesiology, and the collaboration between the two departments has turned out to be extremely successful,” he said.

The two departments proposed the merger in order to enhance research opportunities, he said.

“We’re both relatively small departments but offer very strong components,” says Professor Cara Marsh, head of kinesiology.

“I think what we’ve come up with is a more holistic approach – from the lab to the bedside,” he adds. “By combining physical therapy’s clinical reputation and expertise with kinesiology’s research reputation and expertise, the new team can be more creative in research collaborations within our new department, across the University, and with other groups.”

The doctoral program in kinesiology is ranked number one in the country, tied with Penn State, a much larger program.

The music education programs were closed because of low participation, although the board did approve a new master of arts program with a concentration in music.

“The discontinuation of the doctoral program was considered in the context of available resources, enrollment levels, graduation rates, and placement statistics over an eight-year period,” said Nichols.

The current master’s program does not meet the requirements for teacher certification, he added.

Moving it to the Neag School will align it with other teacher preparation programs.

The trustees also approved closure of the Connecticut Center for Survey Research Analysis and the Center for Contemporary African Studies.

The CSRA has accumulated a $700,000 deficit and is unable to support itself, Nichols said.

Nichols also told the trustees that an ongoing five-year review of centers and institutes has resulted in plans to close the Center on Aging and Human Development, the Center for Healthcare and Insurance Studies, the Frederick G. Humphrey Center for Individual, Couple, and Family Therapy (which will continue its work as a clinic); and the Institute for Children, Youth, and Families at the Stamford campus.

The review also resulted in a three-year renewal for the Connecticut Center for Economic Education, and five year renewals for the Marine Sciences and Technology Center and the Center for the Study of Culture, Health, and Human Development.

Nichols also announced that the urban studies programs at Storrs and the Tri-Campus have been merged.

“The action will reduce organizational redundancies, without sacrificing the substance of two popular interdisciplinary majors that draw between 30 and 40 undergraduates each year at Storrs and 60 to 70 undergraduates each year at the Tri-Campus,” Nichols said.

In other business, University President Michael Hogan told the trustees that budget considerations have led to elimination of the position of vice president for public engagement, and vice provost for public engagement, and vice provost for multicultural and international affairs, and a freeze on the search for a vice president for research.

Workplace health promotion focus of Health Center, Pratt & Whitney study

By Carolyn Pennington

Health Center researchers are embarking on a three-year ergonomic and health promotion study with Pratt & Whitney, a United Technologies Corp. company based in East Hartford.

The effort will help improve the workplace for Pratt & Whitney employees and provide information for quality of life improvements at companies nationwide.

The research will take place at three sites: Pratt & Whitney’s Global Service Partners network; Cheshire Engine Center, Connecticut Engine Repair Operations, and East Hartford Repair Operations.

The study is funded through a five-year, $5 million grant from the United States Department of Labor’s National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health. The grant helped create the Center for Promoting Health in the New England Workplace, one of three national WorkLife Centers of Excellence. The Pratt & Whitney study is one of the Center’s major research projects.

Pratt & Whitney employees design, manufacture, and service aircraft engines, space propulsion systems, and industrial gas turbines. Researchers will gather data and provide recommendations to reduce the potential for employee injuries, while improving overall workplace health.

“The Pratt & Whitney participatory ergonomics program provides a fertile environment for programs that can add significantly to the national effort to improve quality of life in the workplace and health care,” says principal investigator Dr. Martin Cherniack, director of the Health Center’s Ergonomic Technology Center.

The study will include extensive economic analyses to evaluate both actual health care burden and the avoided costs associated with preventive interventions. The research involves a comparison of two different approaches at two separate sites: one is a “best practices” program reflecting current state-of-the-art approaches; the other is a “participatory” program, where health interventions come out of a joint labor-management design team. The information gathered is intended to help prevent on-the-job injuries and illnesses.

Nearly 4,000 Connecticut workers reported a job-related illness in 2006. Another report by Health Center researchers said the overall illness rate in Connecticut was 27.7 per 10,000 workers was higher than the national average of 24.6 per 10,000, driven by Connecticut’s higher rates of hearing loss and repetitive trauma injuries.

Workers in the manufacturing sector reported the highest number of occupational illnesses.

“Occupational injuries and disease can have major impacts on worker health, productivity, and employer costs,” says Nicholas Warren, an occupational and environmental expert at the Health Center. “Prevention efforts can reduce both diseases and costs because, in theory at least, all occupational diseases are preventable.”

Nancy Hitchins, environment and health safety manager for Pratt & Whitney Global Service Partners, says, “Launching this ‘first of its kind’ project in the nation’s research-to-practice program at Pratt & Whitney is an acknowledgement of the company’s strong tradition of innovation in workplace health and safety in labor-management cooperation.”

On-street parking can revitalize downtowns, researchers say

By Michael Kirk

A UConn engineering professor and his graduate students have received a national award for their paper on the role on-street parking can play in helping to revitalize downtowns and conserve land.

Norman Garrick, an associate professor of civil and environmental engineering, Ph.D. candidate Wesley Marshall, and graduate student Gilbert Hansen were recognized by the Washington, D.C.-based Transportation Research Board for an outstanding paper in policy and organization.

The paper suggests that downtowns with on-street parking are more vibrant, safer, more pedestrian-friendly, and use land more efficiently than those without it.

The three looked at West Hartford, Norwalk, Mass., and Brattleboro, Vt. – which all feature on-street parking within the downtown area – and compared them to the downtowns of Avon, Glastonbury and Someret Square in Glastonbury, which do not.

“We found that on-street parking plays a crucial role in benefitting activity centers,” says Garrick. “On-street parking is more convenient, uses less space, slows traffic down so it’s safer for pedestrians, and helps create an atmosphere that encourages more walking, biking, and use of public transportation.”

“This is a lesson for Hartford, Norwich, and other U.S. cities that are in the midst of downtown redevelopments, and are seeking to move away from projects that feature vast parking areas that waste valuable land, create dead zones, and discourage foot and bike traffic,” he adds.

Packing in a surface lot typically uses considerably more square feet per space than on-street parking.

The researchers estimated that if an average town center with approximately 2,000 spaces were to provide 15 percent of its parking turbide instead of off-street, it would save more than 2.3 acres of land.

Even during the busy holiday season, according to Garrick, off-street parking in the areas studied reaches only 59 percent of capacity, while on-street parking is at 95 percent.

Garrick says nearly every town in the state has street space available that could be reallocated toward on-street parking, enabling some of the land that is currently used for inefficient off-street parking lots to be re-used.

Garrick and Marshall authored a related study two years ago showing that even mixed-use places like West Hartford provide far more space for parking, even during the holiday season.

They suggested that the land in these areas could be used more efficiently.
Training, promoting compliance, are tasks of chemical safety unit

BY SHERRY FISHER

Today Stefan Wawzyniecki's task is to read a two-inch thick booklet of new rules and regulations about laboratory safety at universities. Tomorrow, he'll be in Hartford for a DEP meeting. Another day, he'll be training faculty and staff about laboratory safety and chemical management.

Wawzyniecki has been UConn's chemical health and safety manager since 1990. His unit is part of the University's Department of Environmental Health and Safety (EHS), which includes radiation safety, biological health and safety, and occupational health and safety. The department deals with regulatory matters, and ensures that faculty, staff, and students work in healthy and safe environments.

Wawzyniecki, a board-certified industrial hygienist, hazardous materials manager, and chemical hygiene officer, was recently honored with the 2008 Tillmanns-Skolnick Award from the American Chemical Society (ACS). The award recognizes outstanding, long-term service to the ACS's Division of Chemical Health and Safety. In addition, UConn's chemistry department, headed by Steven Suib, received the ACS's College and University Health and Safety award. That award recognizes the most comprehensive laboratory safety program in higher education (undergraduate study only).

Promoting compliance

The chemical health and safety unit develops policies and procedures, conducts training, responds to chemical-related problems, and performs lab inspections, hazardous waste audits, and investigations of accidents and spills.

"We're tasked with promoting University compliance with OSHA, EPA, the state DEP and other safety regulations," Wawzyniecki says. "Employees at the University work in a variety of settings, including facilities, research labs, art studios, and food, farm, and custodial services. For example, if a chemical, such as paint or degreasing solvent, is used in a facility, it has to be managed properly while it's being used, and handled safely when the person is done with it. My job is to oversee both ends of the spectrum."

Training faculty, students, and staff is an important component of the program, Wawzyniecki says, noting that when DEP inspections are conducted, nothing is overlooked. "Even rags or wipes that may have been used for chemical cleanups are checked to ensure that they're disposed of properly," he says.

Wawzyniecki offers year-round training in hazardous waste management and laboratory safety. "There will always be more regulations on the way, not fewer," he says.

He says people don't always know that they're working with materials that are potentially hazardous. "An artist working in a studio may not even realize that he or she is working with something that is hazardous, like paint solvents and photo processing chemicals. In addition to protecting themselves from the chemicals, proper management of the waste paints, solvents, and chemicals is an inherent part of the overall environmental health and safety program at UConn," he says.

Computers are another issue, Wawzyniecki says. "They can't just be thrown in the trash. Even a circuit board is considered hazardous. That's why training is so important. It's one of the biggest services we offer to the University."

Wawzyniecki says training is mandatory, and the goal is to get full compliance. "I've tried to get a feeling for all the employees who work in labs or might have a safety or environmental issue," he says, "but the University's population is somewhat transient. Also, we're home to many international faculty and students who come from places with different laws and regulations. It's challenging."

If there is a demolition on campus, EHS is involved. "We'll work with Facilities Operations, Architectural and Engineering Services, and the Office of Environmental Policy, who may be working with a contractor, to make sure the demolition debris is managed properly," he says.

Popular course

Wawzyniecki also teaches a course on hazardous waste operations in the allied health department. The popular course includes a trip to a mock hazardous waste site, where students dress in protective suits with self-contained breathing apparatus. They perform various remediation tasks, such as cleaning out an underground storage tank.

"They say the best part of the course is putting what they've learned in the classroom into practice," says Wawzyniecki.

The three-credit course is also attractive to students because they receive a certificate that shows they've completed an OSHA-recognized 40-hour class in hazardous waste operations. "It's great for the job market," Wawzyniecki says, noting that the certificate helps graduates seek jobs with engineering firms and in industry, where evaluating industrial processes or contaminated properties for chemical pollutants is important in complying with environmental regulations.

Robert Aseltine, director of the Health Center's Institute for Public Health Research, and Martha Lawless, a student in UConn's Ph.D. program in public health.

Defensive medicine continued from page 1

Aseltine says the study is the first try to quantify the costs of defensive medicine "from the ground up," by asking physicians about their actual practices.

Other studies have tried to determine the cost of defensive medicine by reviewing medical records or by looking at overall health care costs and trying to determine practices that could be classified as defensive.

Because defensive medicine is largely "in the eye of the beholder," Aseltine adds, asking physicians directly about practices taken solely to avoid malpractice claims provides more accurate information.

A study published in the New England Journal of Medicine in 2006 analyzed more than 1,400 malpractice claims and found that in almost 40 percent of cases, no medical error was involved.

The uncertainty surrounding malpractice claims helps drive the increase in increase testing and other defensive practices.

"The fear of being sued that is driving physicians to defensive medicine is dramatically increasing health care costs and threatens the success of health reform efforts," says Dr. Manish Sethi, a researcher with the Department of Orthopedic Surgery at Massachusetts General Hospital. Sethi is a member of the Medical Society's Board of Trustees and its Committee on Professional Liability.

For the full report on the investigation of defensive medicine in Massachusetts, go to www.massmed.org/defensivemedicine.
Family studies professor helps students understand aging

BY SHERIF FISHER

Laura Donorfio describes her teaching philosophy as practical pedagogy. “We do not just the content area that I try to get across,” says Donorfio, an assistant professor of human development and family studies in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. “I want students to understand what they can do with that content and theory once they graduate and go out into the real world. I teach them the way the course material is relevant to their everyday lives, their families, and their communities, and how they can use it in their careers.”

Donorfio teaches courses on adulthood and aging, family, society, death and dying, human sexuality, and public policy and the family.

She was recently recognized for teaching excellence when the Association for Gerontology in Higher Education awarded her the Distinguished Teacher Honor. The award will be presented this month at the Association’s annual meeting.

Donorfio earned her doctorate in family studies at UConn in 1996, and worked for several years in the corporate world before joining the University faculty.

She says aging isn’t a subject most people are eager to study: “People don’t want to age. Death and dying isn’t a topic people want to talk about. I have to take these topics to another level.”

Keeping students engaged is the key to their learning, Donorfio says. “I’m interested in students being involved and thinking about what they’re learning.”

Donorfio of course is always interested in student involvement. Last semester, Donorfio worked with a group of students interested in death, dying, and bereavement.

Some of the ideas they came up with included a trip to a funeral home, and an event to celebrate the lives of older adults. “I try to get across, ‘You can make a difference.’”

Donorfio’s students have included former students Autumn Stokes, who took Donorfio’s course on death, dying, and bereavement. “I was hesitant to take the class. She presented an emotional topic in a soothing and comforting manner.”

Marion Buonocore, another former student, says, “You can feel her excitement and get caught up in the energy. She has not only given me the educational background I needed, but also intensified my desire to work and care for older adults.”

Online journalism expert discusses Internet’s impact on the media

Emmy-nominated Fox 61 news anchor Rick Hancock is teaching three courses this semester, including Advanced Online Journalism. Hancock is teaching in residence with the journalism department in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Hancock was selected in 2003 as an Academic Fellow by the Hearst Knight Challenge for Specialized Journalism.

He recently sat down with staff writer Colin Poitras to discuss the current state of the news business, and how UConn is preparing journalists for the future. These are edited excerpts from the interview.

Q: What do you feel newspapers, broadcast television, or radio must do to stay relevant in a world dominated by multimedia and the endless boundaries of the Internet?

A: Create multimedia. Create content that’s relevant, understandable the power of the Internet. The Internet’s greatest power is its level of interactivity. That’s not in our nature as journalists necessarily—to engage with the public. We produce a story, write a story, we broadcast a story, and that’s it. We followed all the solid tenets of journalism, what else is there to be said? Why would you question my authority about what I produced? Well, the Internet has allowed people to question that, engage, share, debate, add to the conversation, and that’s been a culture shock to a lot of journalists who never had to deal with that, especially journalists who have been in the field for a number of years. The Web has democratized news and information in a way that some journalists are still struggling with.

Q: It sounds like journalism today needs to redefine itself and its relationship with its market.

A: Journalism is journalism. How we approach it is what’s changing. Telling great stories, factual stories, transparent stories, speaking truth to power, all those really important elements of journalism—that’s not going away. How we engage with our public? That is changing and that’s something we have to come to grips with. How do we produce our content? How do we distribute our content? These are things we need to think of. It’s more of a mindset.

Q: Do you think the Internet will be the demise of newspapers?

A: Will the Internet destroy journalism? No. I think it’s going to increase our ability to communicate. Short term will there be fewer journalists? Yes. In 2008, we lost thousands and thousands of journalists from the payroll. But that doesn’t mean that that’s the end of journalism. I’ve always advocated that entrepreneurial journalism is something we should all be considering. Journalism is a business. We have to understand it’s a business. People are looking at it as a commodity to turn a profit. I think the Web and digital media, mobile media, have created a whole bunch of very unique opportunities for us to dominate some of that space.

Q: Are your students … seeing opportunities beyond traditional formats like print, TV, and radio?

A: They want to be journalists. They want to tell stories. They have nothing to do with the technologies. I teach online journalism and I teach a class—Publications and Practice—and we have students who are creating an interactive journalism website. So we put them through a boot camp of learning Photoshop and Dreamweaver [software] and non-linear editing, and it’s like “Wow, I want to be a journalist.” I just want to tell stories. Why do I need to learn all this kind of stuff? But they realize when they apply for internships and when they apply for jobs … that they … need to be in that space to be competitive.

Q: What is your online journalism class like?

A: In Intro to Online Journalism, students don’t touch any applications for the first two weeks of class. In fact, I have them reading a book called Wir, the Media, by Dan Gillmor … about where we are in the media. It needs to be put in context. There was a process for how we got here. Then I have them create a blog. But … they just can’t be sitting in their pajamas writing and rifiing about the news. They have to go out and do some original reporting. So I teach them these basic elements of “online” journalism, but it’s still journalism. Who, what, when, why—sometimes how much. We’re going to be incorporating all those things you are learning in [other journalism] classes, but we’re going to be introducing some of these multimedia tools that you now have at your disposal. And you now have to make the decision, do you use them? Or when do you use them? Online journalism classes are primarily that … it’s getting them into the right framework.

Q: Where do you see the world of journalism five or 10 years from now?

A: I think you’re going to see a lot more migration to digital platforms again out of the Web, mobile devices, gaming systems. … As far as newspapers, we see it right now. They are struggling. Some are folding. … Those that can survive, those that can’t, die. But the industry of journalism will never die. It’s how we produce it and consume it in the future that’s going to change.
Connecticut Transportation Institute NEUTC Graduate Fellowships
Engineering Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Gaudio, M. Extension Conn. Dept. of Social  $137,218 8/08-6/09
Community Design and Transportation Safety: Towards a “Vision Zero” Road Fatalities Plan

Garrick, N. Civil & Environmental  Dept. of Transportation/ $75,901 9/07-8/11
Veteran Diversion Evaluation

Ellis, D. Plant Science Conn. Dept. of  $50,000 10/08-6/09
USGS Co-sponsorship of “Fifth International Workshop on the Analysis of Multi-Temporal Ramate Sensing Imagery”

Cao, C. Mechanical Engineering Company Inc. $24,170 7/08-10/08
Image Sensing and Sleeping Deprivation Systems for Smart Home Cages

Barrett, J. Extension Conn. Dept. of  $38,688 11/08-11/09
Development of Statewide Tools to Assess and Manage Grasslands Resources in Connecticut

Schiffler, R. Mathematics Natl. Science Foundation $43,292 11/08-8/10
Cluster Algebras and Tilting Theory

Schweitzer, J. Physics Natl. Science Foundation $30,500 1/09-12/09
Schiffler, R. Mathematics Natl. Science Foundation $43,292 11/08-8/10

Super, C. Human Dev./Family Studies Children’s Trust Fund $290,000 10/08-9/11
Family Development Training: Effects on Agency Culture and Client Experience

Wagner, D. Ecology & Evolutionary Biology Conn. Dept. of  $9,600 11/08-6/09
Urban Ecology: Curriculum Field Testing

Wagner, D. Ecology & Evolutionary Biology Conn. Dept. of  $9,600 11/08-6/09
Classification and Biomass Estimation of Aquatic Invertebrates in Coastal Wintertime Black Duck Habitat

Wexler, S. Human Dev./Family Studies UConn HDFS College Career Pathways Program $50,000 7/08-4/09

Brain cell research continued from page 6
for example, destroys myelin.

While Nishiyama has championed the study of NG2 cells, even giving them a new name, polydendocytes, her interest in them is based on careful observation that has sometimes challenged accepted concepts.

Twenty years ago, Nishiyama was a postdoctoral fellow with William Stallcup in La Jolla, Calif., at what is now called the Burnham Institute. Stallcup’s lab had been the first to isolate the NG2 molecule, around 1980, and the first to discover that it is expressed by cells in the brain. Nishiyama’s contribution was to clone it, identify its primary structure, and characterize the cells in the brain that express it.

The first time she presented a paper on the existence of NG2 cells in the normal adult brain, Nishiyama recalls, people dismissed her results as an artifact. The second time, some wanted to test her ideas. It took five years to gain credibility.

“She had to struggle to get our papers accepted,” she says.

Prevailing opinion can be daunting for young scientists, she notes.

She recalls how one of her students did experiments over several months but did not see neurons being generated from NG2 cells, as many scientists in the field would not see neurons being generated from NG2 cells, as many scientists in the field would have expected.

“I cannot see neurons. What should I do?” she asked Nishiyama.

“I had to convince her each time that what she was seeing was the real truth, as long as she had taken all the necessary controls and done the experiments correctly,” Nishiyama says.

An experiment that Nishiyama’s lab at UConn developed with transgenic mice in 1998, shortly after she arrived at UConn, has since developed several mouse lines that have a fluorescent marker in their NG2 cells and in all the cells that develop from them. When the marker shows up in oligodendrocytes in the mice, it is clear that the fluorescent oligodendrocytes developed from the fluorescent NG2 cells.

These experiments provided the first concrete evidence of the role of NG2 cells in multiple sclerosis. Previously, scientists had done Pett’s disease experiments on NG2 cells and theorized that they gave rise to oligodendrocytes.

Nishiyama attended medical school in Japan, earning an MD and training as a neuropathologist. Halfway through her residency, she decided that she wanted to learn more about the mechanism of the disease process, so she switched to a molecular neurobiology lab for her Ph.D. degree.

She worked at the Cleveland Clinic Foundation, in a group studying multiple sclerosis.

“While Nishiyama has championed the study of NG2 cells, even giving them a new name, polydendocytes, her interest in them is based on careful observation that has sometimes challenged accepted concepts.”

Carolyn Cumming, left, and Maria Madjar, both seniors, take part in UConn’s Hunger Banquet, an event to raise awareness about hunger. During the event, some participants received a large meal, while others were given only rice and water.
CALENDAR Monday, February 23, to Monday, March 2

Items for the weekly Advance Calendar are downloaded from the University’s online Events Calendar. Please enter your Calendar items at: http://events.uconn.edu/items/! Please follow the instructions to submit your event. On Monday for inclusion in the issue published the following Monday.

Note: the next Calendar may include events taking place from Monday, March 2, through Monday, March 9. Those items must be in the database by 4 p.m. on Monday, Feb. 23. If you need special accommodations to participate in events, call 860-486-2943 (Storrs), or 860-486-2563 (Farmington), or 860-517-5389 (Law School).

Academics
Friday, 2/27 – Mid-semester progress Friday, 8 p.m. 9 p.m. due to students from faculty.

Libraries
Bommer Babble Library. Monday–Thursday: 7:30 a.m.–2:30 p.m.; Saturday: 10 a.m.–10 p.m.; Sunday: 10 a.m.–2 a.m. Dodds Library. Monday–Thursday: 7 a.m.–10 p.m.; Friday: 7 a.m.–10 p.m.; Saturday: 10 a.m.–5 p.m.; Sunday: 1 a.m.–7 p.m.; closed Friday–Sunday. Pharmacy Library. Monday–Thursday: 8:30 a.m.–10 p.m.; Friday: 8:30 a.m.–10 p.m.; Saturday: 10 a.m.–5 p.m.; Sunday: 10 a.m.–10 p.m.; closed Friday–Sunday.

Health Center Library. Monday–Thursday: 7 a.m.–11 p.m.; Friday: 7 a.m.–7 p.m.; Saturday: 9 a.m.–5 p.m.; Sunday: 10 a.m.–10 p.m.; closed Friday–Sunday. Law Library. Monday–Thursday: 8 a.m.–11 p.m.; Friday: 8 a.m.–9 p.m.; Saturday: 9 a.m.–5 p.m.; Sunday: 1–9 p.m.

Avery Point Campus Library. Monday–Thursday: 8:30 a.m.–7 p.m.; Friday: 8 a.m.–4:30 p.m.; closed weekends.

Greater Hartford Campus Library. Monday–Saturday: 10 a.m.–5 p.m.; Sunday: 10 a.m.–5 p.m.; closed Sunday.

Stamford Campus Library. Monday–Thursday: 8 a.m.–9 p.m.; Friday: 8:30 a.m.–4 p.m.; Saturday: 11 a.m.–4 p.m.; closed Sunday.

Terrington Campus Library. Monday–Thursday: 10 a.m.–4:30 p.m.; closed Friday–Sunday.

Waterbury Campus Library. Monday–Thursday: 8 a.m.–5:30 p.m.; Friday: 9 a.m.–4:50 p.m.; closed Saturday.

University IT
Help Desk. Call 860-486-0657. Ph.D. Defenses

Pharmacy Library. Monday–Thursday: 8:30 a.m.–10 p.m.; Friday: 8:30 a.m.–10 p.m.; Saturday: 10 a.m.–5 p.m.; Sunday: 1 a.m.–7 p.m.; closed Friday–Sunday.

Avery Point Campus Library. Monday–Thursday: 8:30 a.m.–7 p.m.; Friday: 8 a.m.–4:30 p.m.; closed weekends.

Greater Hartford Campus Library. Monday–Saturday: 10 a.m.–5 p.m.; Sunday: 10 a.m.–5 p.m.; closed Sunday.

Stamford Campus Library. Monday–Thursday: 8 a.m.–9 p.m.; Friday: 8:30 a.m.–4 p.m.; Saturday: 11 a.m.–4 p.m.; closed Sunday.

Terrington Campus Library. Monday–Thursday: 10 a.m.–4:30 p.m.; closed Friday–Sunday.

Waterbury Campus Library. Monday–Thursday: 8 a.m.–5:30 p.m.; Friday: 9 a.m.–4:50 p.m.; closed Saturday.


Thursday, 2/26 – Comparative Pathology Seminar. "Immune Evasion: Cancer and Human Services and Education," by Anna Farrell. 1 p.m., GE Global Classroom, Stamford Campus.

Exhibits

Friday, 2/27 – Performing Arts. "My Heart Skipped a Beat," by Rebecca Canfield. 1 p.m. Adults admission fee: $10 Museum of Natural History members, $15 non-members. Call 860-486-4460 for more information.

Saturday, 3/7 – Women's Basketball vs. Villanova, 7:30 p.m., Gampel Pavilion.

Saturday, 2/28 – Men's Basketball vs. Providence, 7 p.m., Gampel Pavilion.

Saturday, 2/27 – Authors Event. "What You Can Make A Difference," by Rebecca Canfield. 1 p.m. Adults and children ages 8 and above, children must be accompanied by an adult. Admission fee: $10 Museum of Natural History members, $15 non-members. Call 860-486-4460 for more information.

Saturday, 3/7 – Women's Basketball vs. Butler, 7:30 p.m., XL Center, Hartford.

Photography supplied by the Jorgensen Center for the Performing Arts. Photos of Natural History members, $15 non-members. Call 860-486-4460 for more information.
UConn efforts help curb spread of invasive plants in state

BY ELIZABETH OMARA-DTONUNU

You see them in the parking lots of retail chain stores and fast food restaurants. For example, the Center for Children’s Advocacy, based at the School of Law, promotes the legal rights of Connecticut’s low-income children.

“It growser sees something on the list, they know it’s there for a good reason,” Mehrhoff says. “There’s science behind it.”

Although efforts have focused on Connecticut, their scope goes beyond the state.

In 2002, Mehrhoff launched the Invasive Plant Atlas of New England, a USDA-funded initiative to track the distribution and spread of more than 100 invasive plant species throughout the region. The Atlas is now a virtual network of invasive species programs nationwide.

UConn people are also coordinating efforts to eradicate invasive species, offer alternatives, and spread the word to the public.

“The work is very important in the landscape because of our natural heritage. Invasive species are changing the integrity of the university is our natural heritage. Invasive species, “he says. “Native biodiversity is our natural heritage. Invasive species are changing the integrity of the landscape because of their links to wildlife,” she says.

Another gardening option is using non-native plants that are not invasive.

Mehrhoff and Ellis say it’s important to find invasive plants early.

“With early detection and rapid response – like in the medical industry – the prognosis becomes much better,” says Mehrhoff.

“Even small-scale actions can make a difference,” adds Ellis. “At least you’re cutting down on the supply of seeds that can start new plants in other areas.”

Mehrhoff says invasive species control can be costly, but the cost of not taking action may be higher.

“You can’t easily put a monetary value on the loss of native species that are outcompeted by invasive species,” she says. “Native biodiversity is our natural heritage. Invasives are changing the integrity of the whole system. We are trying to slow that process and where possible, put a stop to it.”

Feb. 23-27 is National Invasive Plants Awareness Week.