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Inside UNLV

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Faculty and Staff Publication

Biologists Study Stress/Brain Link

by Caryn Key

Fruit flies — tiny creatures whose brain cells closely resemble those of humans — are at the center of a UNLV study concerning the negative impacts of environmental stress exposure on early brain development and behavior.

With a $330,000 National Science Foundation grant, a team from the department of biological sciences recently began the three-year study. Assistant professor Stephen Roberts and associate professor Steven deBelle, along with Ph.D graduate student Xia Wang, will also explore the flipside of the issue to determine if a sensory-enriched environment can positively influence brain growth and function — or even possibly repair damage caused by prior exposure to stressful conditions.

While these questions have been pondered by biological and social scientists for centuries, only recently has the understanding of the genetic, developmental, and anatomical control of brain function allowed rigorous exploration of such issues, said Roberts.

"Few people outside the circles of biology appreciate that the brain cells of the fruit fly are virtually identical to those in humans," Roberts said. "Because of the similarity, studies on these insects can help us understand — and perhaps even improve — the human condition. Equally significant is the fact that fruit flies have been the study organism of several Nobel Laureates in medicine and physiology."

He further noted that the airborne insects can be conditioned for learning — much like the famous dogs used in Pavlov's historic work. The fruit fly is an extremely powerful model system that allows the genetic, developmental, and environmental underpinnings of brain anatomy and function to be identified.

"Using a series of experiments, the trio first intends to discover how exposure to heat stress and environmental toxicants disrupts brain maturation. They have already learned that subjecting developing flies to high temperatures for 35 minutes a day causes significant developmental reduction to a region of the insect brain that is similar to the hippocampus (the center of associative learning) in humans. Interestingly, deBelle said, this heat treatment has little affect on the development of the external anatomy or other brain regions. The group intends to establish how this impairment directly affects the flies' learning and memory."

The next step is to determine whether a sensory-enriched environment, with a constant optimum temperature and pleasing aromas (which to a fruit fly are rotten fruit odors), will result in a "healing" or "repairing" of the impaired brain anatomy and cognitive functions, said deBelle.

The final goal of the project is to use modern DNA technologies to identify the genes and gene products underlying the stress-damage or sensory-enrichment effects.

The latter work will take place in the newly established UNLV Stress Genomics Center, a biotechnology facility located in White Hall. The center houses advanced molecular biology and phosphorimaging technologies.

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Stephanie Racioppo, in blue at right, hugs her best friend, UNLV nursing student Ericka Sjoerdsma, following the university's first White Coat Ceremony for nursing students. More than 50 new UNLV nursing students participated in the event designed to signify their entry into the nursing profession. Above, nursing students Gladys D'Meza, Rosanna Montero, Simone Krieger, and Noni Hoyman look forward to donning their white coats.

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New Databases Used to Increase Recruitment of Top Students

by Gian Galassi

In an effort to increase student recruitment through targeted marketing strategies, UNLV has purchased new databases and search services that will provide enrollment and test data about students around the country and the world.

For example, by a president's planning initiative grant, UNLV has acquired the new databases and accompanying resources that include the ACT's Enrollment Information Service (EIS) and Educational Opportunity Service (EOS), as well as the College Board's Enrollment Planning Service (EPS) and Student Search Service.

According to Karen Emptage, information coordinator for the office of undergraduate recruitment, the new resources will not only help heighten, develop, and refine the university's recruitment efforts but will also help accomplish the goal of attracting increasingly talented students to campus.

"This is pretty exciting because it allows us for the first time to have access to information about students who had not initiated contact with UNLV," said Emptage, who was also the main author of the grant proposal. "This gives us the chance to pursue and attract them to UNLV, instead of just waiting for them to come to us. Ultimately, we hope to steadily mold the incoming classes each fall.

The services will also play an important role in creating an effective transition when the university increases its minimum GPA admission requirement to 2.75 in 2006 and 3.0 in 2010, Emptage said.

Although UNLV already receives the ACT and SAT scores of students who showed an interest in attending the university, the new search services will allow recruiters to contact other individuals who would benefit from attending UNLV. For example, when searching the EIS database of high school juniors who took the ACT test during the 2002-03 school year, there were 31 students around the country who showed an interest in hotel management and scored high enough on their ACT to be considered for UNLV's Hotel Administration.

The Honors College and the College of Hotel Administration will be the first to use the new systems.

by Carol C. Harter
UNLV President

On Revising the Class Schedule

As our institution's enrollment has climbed dramatically in the past several years, we have naturally observed an increasingly pressing need to better accommodate student and faculty schedules and to make the most efficient use of our teaching facilities. As a result, we have been exploring the adoption of an alternative model of scheduling classes that we believe will provide more flexibility to both students and faculty and will allow us to optimize usage of our classroom space.

Although we are poised to move ahead with a plan—and implement it in fall 2004—we are finding that some members of the campus community are concerned about how this change might affect them. Thus, we are continuing to examine options and to gather feedback from the campus. We are still committed, however, to finding ways to achieve the aforementioned goals; hence, I feel it is important that a clear picture of the plan as it exists be communicated to the university community so that productive discussions about it may ensue.

The plan for the new schedule of class offerings calls for a change in the current pattern of Monday-Wednesday-Friday classes and Tuesday-Thursday classes to the following combinations:
- Monday-Wednesday
- Tuesday-Thursday
- Friday (and/or Saturday and/or Sunday)

I should mention that we already offer classes on weekends, however, if resources are available, the course offerings will be expanded to include more combinations of classes on Friday-Saturday or Saturday and/or Sunday. A Class Scheduling Task Force, which represents the interest of various administrative units and each of the colleges, has recommended the class time slots that will now be available Monday through Friday; these times were sent to the university community in an official e-mail on Oct. 21 and presented at a number of open forums held last month, at which members of the campus community were invited to share their input on the new plan.

Although we will ask that all classes start at standard times, a variety of time slots throughout each day are available to accommodate a broad range of scheduling needs. Also, let me assure you that if any faculty member has a compelling reason to schedule a class outside the given time slots, every effort will be made to accommodate him or her. The class scheduling staff has always tried to meet the special needs of individual faculty members, and this practice will continue.

By way of background, I should note that plans for a new class scheduling model have been in development for more than a year. After we had begun exploring changes in this area, a UCCSN space utilization study was presented to the Board of Regents in

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Students in UNLV's College of Engineering are learning that energy conservation is not only good for the community—it may also be good for their careers.

Last year, mechanical engineering student Manuel Galvez used energy-efficient design principles in a senior project that not only earned him top honors in the department's design competition but also helped him secure a permanent position with his employer.

For nearly eight months, Galvez worked with UNLV professors and the local engineering firm FEA Consulting to analyze, design, and develop energy-efficient heating, ventilation, and air-conditioning (HVAC) systems for luxury homes in Lake Las Vegas. It was his experience with the project, he said, that helped him discover a growing niche in his profession.

"All builders are already interested in energy conservation," said Galvez, "but it's not always affordable because the technologies are relatively new and expensive. My project focused on analyzing alternative HVAC options that were both cost-effective and applicable to home design."

While there is no official curriculum in the Engineering College that specifically deals with energy-efficient design and construction, professor Samir Moujaes explained that all students are, at some time during their education, involved in projects that include energy-efficient design concepts.

"As energy prices and availability continue to be a problem, energy efficiency will become even more important to industry," said Moujaes, who developed a personal interest in such concepts shortly after moving to Las Vegas more than 19 years ago. "I think it's very important that we introduce our students to various products and technologies that can help reduce our energy consumption. We want our students to be the ones who help to fill the gaps of knowledge that currently exist with these emerging technologies."

Moujaes believes that UNLV is a particularly good place for students to study energy conservation concepts because the problems driving the trend are so evident in the Southwest.

"The area we live in is not exactly rich in natural resources," he said. "We need to find better ways to cut down on our consumption, which will in turn lead to many other benefits."

Recent studies have confirmed what Moujaes and others in the engineering departments have known for a long time: Nevadans have a lot to gain from decreasing their energy consumption. According to a report released recently by the Southwest Energy Efficiency Project of Boulder, Colo., the state could save upwards of $1.4 billion dollars by 2020 if it adopted more stringent energy-efficient construction standards.

Although Nevada's efficiency standards haven't been updated since 1985, Moujaes thinks it is all just a matter of time. And when it happens, he wants his students to be ready.

"Our students will not only be well prepared in the fundamentals of engineering," Moujaes said, "but they will also be able to appreciate and address the increasing needs of our community and our state. Acquiring an understanding of energy efficient concepts will be a matter of course."

Several projects are either currently underway or in the works that will significantly increase students' exposure to energy efficient design and construction, including one with Nevada Power that has UNLV students and professors conducting energy audits of small and medium-sized commercial properties. Also, professor Moujaes, along with his colleagues Yahia Baghzouz and Bob Boehm, will begin working this winter with students and local developers to build a zero-energy-demand house, which will incorporate several energy-efficient technologies, from photovoltaic cells on the roof to energy-saving appliances in the kitchen.

Funding is also imminent from the U.S. Department of Energy to create a National Center for Energy Management and Building Technology at UNLV. When formally established early next year, the department of mechanical engineering, the Harry Reid Center for Environmental Studies, and the College of Hotel Management will collaborate on the design and development of environmentally sustainable technologies.

As for Galvez, who is now a full-time mechanical designer with FEA Consultants, the education he received at UNLV is leading to new opportunities at work, including a task designing energy-efficient systems for large commercial properties.

"My UNLV education has provided me with more than just a solid foundation in theory and fundamentals," said Galvez. "Ultimately, I know that what I learned there will continue to help me in my career."
Media Research headed by Hal Berghel, director of Funding. Student is chair of Graduate Odell. Markos is chairing New Pat. Play a significant role in advancing the university equipment, facilities, and research centers. The Board Program and year were also. Their academic engineering, during the meeting, psychology professor Chris resulted in a redistribution of responsibilities. Personnel changes include Eric. The new focus will create a CCSN. The emergence of the School of Dental Medicine continues to grow. In August, the second class of 75 students were enrolled, and new faculty and staff have been added to the school's ranks. The new faculty are recognized as outstanding leaders nationally in dental education. Renovations of the buildings on Shadow Lane are moving forward as planned, and during the opening of the clinical facilities there is scheduled for May 2004. The Health Sciences Division is excited to meet new challenges as it moves forward. It will play a significant role in the development of the University goals and agenda as outlined in the university's updated planning document.
Trends discussed include increases in the number of graduate programs, number of graduate students, number of doctoral degrees awarded, number of graduate assistantships, and the amount of financial support going to graduate students. These trends all contribute positively to the university’s goal of meeting the Doctoral/Research Universities-Extensive classification as defined by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

Honors
The college and the Honors Council have been revising the college’s core curriculum in light of the overall revisions in the university’s core curriculum and various challenges to staffing the curriculum. The revisions will alter the requirements for students seeking to become university honors scholars. To be published in the next UNLV undergraduate catalog, these changes will affect those students entering college in fall 2004. The new curriculum will be reviewed for effectiveness and soundness, with an eye to making further changes as appropriate.

In October, the college joined the office of undergraduate recruitment at a Reno reception for Northern Nevada students who had excelled in their high school work. The undergraduate recruitment office arranged to get from the Washoe School District the names of top Washoe County students and invited them to a reception in order to give them and their parents information about UNLV and the Honors College. This is part of expanded recruiting efforts designed to attract top students from all of Nevada and the region.

Hotel Administration
Rachel Shinnar, a Ph.D. candidate in the college, recently spoke at the Latina Style Business Series held at the MGM Grand. This is an ongoing seminar series designed to assist Latina entrepreneurs. The seminar provides Latina entrepreneurs with strategies and tools to start their own businesses or make their existing ones more successful.

The Hispanic community is growing rapidly in the valley and so are the numbers of Hispanic-owned businesses. Shinnar presented the findings of a research project conducted in the summer of 2002 on foreign-born Hispanic entrepreneurs in Las Vegas. This study was conducted through the support of an applied research initiative grant awarded to Cheri Young, a faculty member in the college. As part of this project, 83 business owners were interviewed on their motivations to become business owners; their preparation in terms of business plans, budgeting, and location selection; and the way they manage their businesses.

Shinnar has been invited to publish the findings of her study in Latina Style Magazine, which has a national circulation of 150,000 and a readership of 600,000. It showcases Latinas achievements in a variety of areas, including business, science, civic affairs, education, business opportunities, technology tips, and home entertainment.

Law
Recently, through the generosity of private donors, the law school has established two more named professorships. The law firm of Gordon and Silver has funded a new professorship in commercial, corporate, and bankruptcy law. Individual benefactors Michael and Sonja Saltman have funded a new professorship in alternative dispute resolution.

Because the law school has recently hired new faculty with national reputations in both of these fields, both professorships have now been filled. Professor Robert Lawless, a nationally recognized expert on corporate law and business bankruptcies who came to Boyd last year after serving on the law faculty at the University of Missouri, Columbia, is the new Gordon and Silver Professor of Law. Professor Jean Sterligh, who joined the faculty this summer, also from the University of Missouri, Columbia law faculty, is the new Michael and Sonja Saltman Professor of Law. Sterligh is one of the nation’s leading experts on alternative dispute resolution, with a specialty in the law of arbitration, and is leading the law school’s efforts to enhance its curricular offerings in the dispute resolution field.

Libraries
UNLV has recently joined the small group of universities that is participating in The Chronicle of Higher Education online license test program. The Chronicle is the premier news source for college and university faculty and administrators. Currently, only seven institutions, including Columbia, Johns Hopkins, and Stanford universities, have purchased campuswide access to the Chronicle for their students, staff, administrators, and faculty. Additional participating institutions have been sought so that the Chronicle can further study the impact that campuswide site licensing will have on their individual print subscription business. All editorial content at http://chronicle.com is now available from any on-campus computer. In addition, the Chronicle is available from off campus to members of the UNLV community when they log on through the Libraries’ website at http://www.library.unlv.edu. Call ext. 5-2101 for questions regarding access from off campus.

Sciences
For a city built in the middle of a desert, it is difficult to imagine anything more important than water availability and allocation. The dramatic drop of the Lake Mead water level and the implementation of watering restrictions remind Southern Nevadans constantly of the community’s direct dependence on water for survival. The mission of the Water Resources Management graduate program (WRM) at UNLV is to provide a new generation of professionals with the necessary skills to manage this most precious resource, according to the new director of the WRM program, Lambis Papelis.

Improved water resources management would be, in most cases, best accomplished by an interdisciplinary approach, by professionals having both a physical science and management background. UNLV’s WRM program is one of very few such programs in the country, although a number of prestigious hydrology programs are now realizing that the management component is just as important as their physical science and engineering component. The WRM program is housed in the College of Sciences but faculty from the colleges of Business, Urban Affairs, Engineering, and Liberal Arts, as well as from the Harry Reid Center and the Desert Research Institute, participate in the program and advise and support students. The 15 graduate students currently enrolled in the program have a background reflecting the diversity of the program. Attracting high-quality students who are interested in education leading to improved water resources management practices is a primary goal for Papelis, a water chemist with a master’s and a Ph.D. degree in environmental engineering from Stanford. Papelis, who is also an associate research professor at DRI, focuses his research on water quality, the interaction of contaminants with mineral surfaces and aquifer materials, and the use of spectroscopic techniques to determine the mechanism of these processes.

Urban Affairs
The department of counseling’s curriculum in problem gambling counseling continues to receive national recognition. The National Council on Problem Gambling has approved another course in the department’s compulsive gambling counseling minor, COU 322, Perspectives on Addictions, as an education requirement for the National Certification in Problem Gambling Counseling. The two other courses offered by the department that have already been approved for the certificate are COU 439, Compulsive Gambling Counseling I, and COU 440, Compulsive Gambling II.

“We truly are at the forefront of providing professional-grade education in problem gambling counseling,” said Larry Ashley, addictions specialist and coordinator of the compulsive gambling counseling minor. “With the creation of a certified compulsive gambling counselor credential by the state of Nevada, effective Jan. 1, 2004, UNLV is in the position to be the primary provider of training and education to satisfy the requirements to qualify to meet this new clinical specialty. We are the academic role model for the country.”

The Chronicle is available from off campus to members of the UNLV community when they log on through the Libraries’ website at http://www.library.unlv.edu. Call ext. 5-2101 for questions regarding access from off campus.

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Federal Health Rgs Prompt Changes
by Diane Russell

When you've visited your doctor or dentist in recent months, have you noticed the extra step you're being required to take?

In addition to signing in, showing an insurance card, and, of course, handing over a co-pay, patients now are routinely being asked to sign a "privacy" form. Some dilgent souls may doubt the document completely before signing, but many just as surely sign it and hand it back to the receptionist without giving it much thought.

Not so, Jamie Davidson. Davidson, UNLV's assistant vice president for student wellness, noted that the university is very serious about protecting the confidentiality of the health-care information that students choose to provide to their medical care providers.

And while Student Wellness, which includes the Student Health Center, Student Counseling & Psychological Services, and Jean Nidetch Women's Center, certainly has felt the impact of HIPAA, so too have many other units on campus. For instance, any researcher on campus who deals with patient health information as part of his research must comply with HIPAA, too. "If your role involves protecting health information, you need to be intimately familiar with the HIPAA regulations," Davidson advised.

UNLV's Institutional Review Board, which scrutinizes all proposals to use human subjects in research, will look for assurance of HIPAA compliance as part of the approval process.

While implementing the changes necessary to make sure that UNLV complies with HIPAA has often been "a pain" — to use Davidson's to-the-point description — the regulations are without a doubt in the best interest of health-care consumers, he said.

"HIPAA absolutely raises the bar," he said. "It provides substantial safeguards to ensure the privacy of information that should be private. And at the same time, it gives patients more control over their personal information." A patient, for instance, may review her file at a doctor's office and has the right to add supplemental information to that file, he said.

HIPAA, Davidson pointed out, has sharp teeth. He who ignores it takes a costly risk, he said, explaining that an individual can be fined up to $250,000 and imprisoned for up to 10 years for violating the regulations.

"Every reason in the world exists to take HIPAA regulations very seriously."
Raschko Climbs Ladder of Success

by Gian Galassi

Kevin Raschko has traded in his toolbox for an in-box.

In September, Raschko - a former UNLV carpenter, painter, and shop supervisor - was selected from a pool of national candidates to become the university's new facilities manager.

But don't let the new clothes, new office, and professional title fool you.

Beneath his neatly ironed shirt remains a blue-collar work ethic.

"You can take the man out of the shop, but you can't take the shop out of the man," Raschko said, pointing to a hidden behind the door of his new office at the Campus Services Building. "Some of the guys have been teasing me since I've been in here because they know I'm a very hands-on person and that I don't mind getting dirty on a job."

The ladder is, after all, a fitting symbol for Raschko, who's been climbing one - both literally and figuratively - since coming to UNLV as a student worker in 1990.

Ever since then, he’s been learning how the campus works. As the first student worker ever to be employed in the trades at UNLV, he served for four years as an assistant to various "shops" on campus and learned the basics of multiple trades. Then, shortly after being hired in 1994 to a permanent position as a maintenance repair specialist, Raschko earned his bachelor's degree in history and entered a craftsman training program to become a carpenter. After four more years of honing his woodworking skills and learning other trades, he decided that it was time to try his hand at management. In 2000, he became the supervisor of the campus paint shop.

"I always knew I wanted to move up," said Raschko. "All the other jobs I worked in were very rewarding but they were no longer challenging me in all the ways that I'd hoped. I felt a bigger need and wanted to get into shaping the way the work was being done on daily basis."

Although Raschko admits that he does occasionally sneak out at times to "get his hands dirty," he is right where he wants to be. In his new position as facilities manager, he is responsible for many of the "structural" trades on campus he once worked for, including the painting, plumbing, roofing, sign, moving, carpentry, and welding shops.

"But long before Raschko considered making UNLV part of his own career plan, he says he knew the campus was a good place to work. He credits his father, Leo Raschko, who has worked at UNLV since 1980 and is now director of publications and reprographics, for providing him an early glimpse of what his own future would hold.

"It was my father's experience that initially got me interested in working here," Raschko said. "I remember being impressed with both the security of his job and the way people always seemed to work together to get things done."

Raschko intends to bring that spirit of teamwork to his new job. "My position was vacant for a year and a half before I was hired," he said, "so one of my goals is to help get the various shops working even closer together than they already are."

As for his future, Raschko says it's too early to think about it yet. But whatever it holds, he says he intends to make UNLV an important part of the plan.

"UNLV has always been very good to me and it's also been very rewarding," Raschko said. "That's not to say that there haven't been any challenges along the way, but that's what has made it such a good job."

Harter

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spring 2002. The primary concern raised by members of the board at the time was that UCCSN institutions were not using their instructional space to optimal efficiency, particularly on Fridays and Saturdays. Following that presentation, we evaluated our plans in the context of the issues raised and determined we should gain more feedback from members of the campus community. We set about gathering input from individual members of the student body and faculty through a survey and also from the Faculty Senate and student government.

We were continuing to refine our plans when Chancellor Jane Nichols officially charged each of the UCCSN institutions with developing plans for improving instructional space utilization/class scheduling policies and procedures in August 2002. As I mentioned previously, we are now poised to implement the plan and have begun sharing information with individual departments as they prepare next fall's class listings.

While these scheduling changes will address space utilization considerations, perhaps more importantly, they will also help UNLV better accommodate its students by providing them greater flexibility in the times classes are offered. The new scheduling will also provide faculty with larger blocks of time to support research and service, and many may find the new schedule preferable to the old one. Yet, we realize this plan requires a change in our routines; I hope members of our campus community will be adaptable as we work to better serve our students and to improve the utilization of our teaching facilities. We will continue to seek feedback on the effectiveness of this new plan and will evaluate its success over time. Meanwhile, I appreciate your understanding as we work toward making this change. We will update you as more information becomes available.
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