

Making the past present



While UIS' Lynn Fisher is fascinated by what happened archaeologically 10,000 years ago, she also wants her students to apply the experience of the distant past to the present. "For example, we can look at how past societies affected their environments when they plowed their fields or dug their basements," says the associate professor of sociology/anthropology. "Archeology teaches us how day-to-day life in the past affected the land over long periods."

To bring this home to her iPod-toting students, she likes to literally get them out into the field locally in Illinois where she says, "there's plenty of fascinating archeology." Her academic research also takes her to Southern Germany, where she's investigating the transition from ancient hunter-gatherer societies to the first farmers. She's taken UIS students there twice on month-long digs and will be part of a big multi-university National Science Foundation-funded project there next summer, a project that Fisher calls a "doozie."

"Doing international research is a good way to get your assumptions questioned," she says, talking about both herself and her students. "And doing archeology is a fabulous way to travel. Students live and work in one place and see things tourists and even study-abroad students don't. This is most of our students' first international experience. They're doing fieldwork and lab work, learning some German, getting their complacencies overturned and having new ideas."

She balances her students' fieldwork with lots of writing. "I have my students formulate and write about questions that interest them, such as their hometown's archeological history."

Last fall, Fisher was named a University Scholar, one of 16 from the U of I's three campuses. "That was tremendous and so pleasing because you're nominated by your peers," she says of the award. It comes with \$30,000 of research support over three years from the U of I Foundation.

By Mike Lillich

CHICAGO

Advancing Advanced Placement classes

A UIC researcher was selected to lead efforts to improve Advanced Placement (AP) science classes and redesign high school science curricula, incorporating the latest developments and best practices for teaching science. James Pellegrino, distinguished professor of psychology and education, is the lead researcher in a \$1.8 million National Science Foundation grant to the College Board to redesign AP courses in biology, chemistry, physics and environmental science. Pellegrino says the redesign will focus on an approach that promotes deep understanding of concepts and enhancing students' capacity to transfer understanding to new challenges.



SPRINGFIELD

Online encyclopedia taps tech experience

Raymond Schroeder, director of the Office of Technology-Enhanced Learning and professor emeritus of communication at UIS, has been invited to become an editor at Citizendium, a new initiative of Wikipedia, the online, editable encyclopedia. Schroeder will put his educational technology expertise to use in his new assignment as a monitor ensuring accuracy of posted information.



URBANA

Making reading more fun... in China

An Urbana professor of educational psychology, Richard Anderson is developing a program to make reading more fun for children ages 3 to 5 in China. In collaboration with other Urbana researchers and Beijing Normal University colleagues, Anderson has done extensive work on the psychological processes involved in learning to read and reading for pleasure. Chinese children face early challenges: They must memorize the more than 2,500 characters that comprise the Chinese language, and they don't usually have access to books that they can read themselves. Anderson's program trains teachers to effectively use books developed by the children.

CHICAGO

Preparing special special-ed teachers

Michelle Parker-Katz, clinical associate professor, and Marie Tejero Hughes, associate professor, prepare special-education teachers to work with students with disabilities who come from culturally and linguistically diverse neighborhoods. An \$800,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Education will allow the faculty members in the UIC Department of Special Education to continue the STEP=UP (Special Teachers and Exceptional Pupils = Urban Promise) program and expand it to meet the needs of students in grades 6-12. STEP=UP also has a comprehensive support system to encourage the special-education graduate students to complete their studies and remain in the field.



URBANA

Researching Mesopotamian “time capsules”

Undergraduates were part of a team of researchers examining a collection of small, Mesopotamian signature stones displaying decorative motifs and vignettes that UIC religion professor Wayne Pitard calls ancient “Mesopotamian cultural time capsules.” Pitard, senior Camille Noel and five other students examined and documented each item for a collection catalog and a virtual exhibit on the Spurlock Museum web site. The collaboration, which also included students and faculty at the University of Southern California, employed a networked mentoring environment that included collaboration by email, videoconferencing, on-site visits and a wiki, an online software program that lets readers edit web page content.



CHICAGO

Marketing course wins innovation prize

From product development all the way through to prototyping and marketing, an award-winning interdisciplinary course teaches UIC students best practices in product integration. UIC instructors Albert Page, Stephen Melamed and Michael Scott, professors in business, art and design and mechanical engineering, respectively, and the College of Business Administration won the 2006 Innovation in Business Education Award at an Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business regional conference this year.



URBANA

Saving wildlife

Urbana veterinary students gain practical, hands-on experience working as part of a medical team making diagnoses and developing treatment plans. Some 100 students staffed the College of Veterinary Medicine’s Wildlife Medical Clinic that in 2006 saw more than 2,000 ill or injured wildlife, including a pelican, bald eagle and peregrine falcons. The students also give more than 50 community talks each year to educate the public about native species.

Winning the most important races



Eight-time Boston Marathon wheelchair race champion and Olympian Jean Driscoll (below right) was the speaker at the kickoff of Disabilities Awareness Month on campus in April 2006. The two-degree Urbana graduate, who is now a campus development officer, won seven varsity athletic letters—four in basketball and three in track. And she’s just one of the many inspiring stories since Professor Timothy Nugent (right) in 1948 led the U of I to become the first university to provide a support system for students with disabilities and established what is now the Division of Disability Resources and Educational Services. Early on, competitive sports were part of the program.



The number of U of I firsts in accessibility and athletics is stunning:

- 1949: Organized National Wheelchair Basketball Association and held first national wheelchair basketball tournament.
- 1950: First university to introduce wheelchair curb cuts.
- 1952: First buses equipped with wheelchair lifts.
- 1961: First architectural accessibility standards, which later became national standards.
- 1965: First study-abroad program for disabled students.
- 1977: First university to award varsity letters to disabled athletes.
- 1980: First university to select a wheelchair athlete as its Athlete of the Year.

So the U of I was prepared for the arrival of Driscoll and the other “Rollin’ Illini” in the 1980s when other universities were just getting into the disabled student access game. The U of I athletes—first men and, by Driscoll’s time, women—were way ahead of the competitive games, too.

When Driscoll, who was born with spinal bifida, gives speeches, she tells audiences that disabilities aren’t principles that define a human being, but rather characteristics like hair and eye color. Over the last six decades, she and thousands of other disabled students have come to the U of I, competed, won, lost, learned, graduated, succeeded . . . just like other students.

By Mike Lillich

